

SAJED

POSTCOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

POSTCOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE  
MAGHREB. TRANSGRESSING  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

By

ALINA SAJED, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR: Alina Sajed, B.A. (Romania), M.A. (Romania), M.A.  
(McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor William D. Coleman

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the production of the “native” in literary and photographic narratives in the Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial context. More specifically, I selected a group of a few well-known Maghrebian intellectuals who write in French, who act as mediators of postcolonial difference between France and the Maghreb, while living between the “East” and the “West.” In my dissertation fieldwork, I looked at the politics involved in the production of “home”, “exile”, and of “the native” within literary and photographic engagements of these North African diasporic intellectuals.

Here, I argue that a reading of literary texts offers an alternative understanding of the International Relations of migration and of linkages between postcolonies and postmetropolises. Such an examination involves exploring unexpected claims to a ‘native’ status that brings about a re-thinking of disciplinary boundaries; an incursion into practices of spectrality in visual and literary narratives, whereby the postcolonial diasporic intellectual is engaged in the practice of collecting ‘endangered authenticities.’ Moreover, an alternative understanding of IR can also be perceived from the politics of language and hybridity, which arise for Maghrebian intellectuals living and writing about “home”, and deciding upon audiences in their writings. Out of this politics emerge the categories of the *immigré(e)* and *exilé(e)* that reflect a lived experience of international relations, and an absence of relations that adds to our understanding.

The importance of this insight becomes clear when we confront a contemporary IR of migration written from a more mainstream perspective. Its ahistorical presentation and state-centrism are blind to the continuities of imperialism, where the postcolony is as much within the lived space of the postmetropole as it is outside. Thus I attempt to amplify this understanding of the IR of migration and imperialism through recourse to literary and visual narratives of Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals.



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### Introduction

In Arabic, Maghreb means ‘the land where the sun sets.’ A region defined (and known) as the ‘West’ certainly unsettles commonly held academic (and non-academic) notions of what the West is and where the West lies. To the Arab world on the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean (and beyond), this space is the West, understood also in the form of disparaging comments often made about Maghrebian people as not being ‘real’ Arabs, or about them speaking a ‘dubious’ Arabic.<sup>1</sup> Much of the early globalization literature dealing with global processes seems to distinguish unproblematically between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’.<sup>2</sup> Even critical theory counterposes the particularized, contingent and contextualized space of the local, to the universal(izing) and totalizing projects of colonialism/modernity/Eurocentrism, thus maintaining the global/local binary intact.<sup>3</sup> Taking the Maghreb into consideration, one is puzzled by the precariousness with which such a binary becomes infused when applied to the region. The Maghreb has known a tumultuous and ambiguous history, measured in terms of the waves of invasion that swept through the region. As such, it is very difficult to regard the identity of the region in unambiguous and clearly defined terms. Political, social, economic, and cultural claims to the region have been made, over the centuries, by Berbers, Phoenicians (particularly Carthaginians), Romans, Arabs, Ottomans, French, Spanish, and Italians.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary debates over hybridity are carried out in terms of refutations of foundationalism in the understanding of identification.<sup>5</sup> Also, within postcolonial studies, debates on hybridity are more particularly framed by the

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<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the politics of language in the Maghreb, see chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Robertson (1992), David Held et alia (1999), Jan Scholte (2000), Ulrich Beck (2000). Bauman (1998), and Sassen (2000) conceive of more sophisticated relationships between the ‘global’ and the ‘local.’ However, I argue that they still maintain intact the binary local/global. See Castells (1997), and Tomlinson (1999) for analyses that transcend such a binary.

<sup>3</sup> Consider, for example, the analyses of Ella Shohat (1992), Arif Dirlik (1994), Anne McClintock (1995), Edward Said (1994), Spivak (1999), among others. However, I see Anne McClintock’s analysis in *Imperial Leather* as a sophisticated and delightfully imaginative way to both maintain the binary and subvert it. As it will transpire from the discussion in the concluding chapter, I find Mignolo’s (2000) and Anna Tsing’s (2005) conceptualizations of the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ very compelling, insofar as they allow for both a complex mix of agency and structural determinism to emerge, and for an understanding of the global *as* local and vice versa.

<sup>4</sup> This is not meant to indicate some sort of linear progression in which these particular filters have impacted the region. As discussed later in the methodological section, this listing merely points to the multiplicity of claims and filters that have shaped what we now understand to be the Maghreb. For an account of the history of the Maghreb, see Abdallah Laroui’s seminal study (1977).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (1996), Stuart Hall (2003), Homi Bhabha (2004), Robert Young (1995).

impacts that various experiences of colonialism have had both on the ‘colonized’ and on the ‘colonizers.’<sup>6</sup> To claim that the recent experiences of colonialism in the Maghreb region have produced some sort of hybridised identifications is to understate the degree to which colonialism has been present in the region. The intriguing aspect of the Maghreb is that colonial projects, ancient and modern, and under various guises, have been crucial in the construction of various senses of identification within the region. Moreover, the region itself is hard to define geographically: it is usually said to encompass three countries (including the Berber populations): Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. But contesting views claim that the Maghreb includes also Mauritania, Libya, Western Sahara, and even parts of Spain.

### **The Franco-Maghrebian encounter and its webs of translocal relations**

As already mentioned, the current focus of critical theory lies on specificity, contingency, and particularity - terms which pre-suppose, or at least leave the impression, that locality is, if not disconnected from the global, then perhaps separate and distinct from it. I find this emphasis troubling and prefer to proceed by perceiving the several Maghrebian cultures (commonly known as Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian), which will be the focus of my study, within the ‘web of translocal relationships’ (Dirlik, 1994: 345) of which they are part. The concept of translocality allows me to conceive of relationships in terms of ‘encounters’, *pace* Rosello (2005), who examines the performative dimensions of the (post)colonial encounter between France and the Maghreb. As such, I prefer to examine the *Franco-Maghrebian* web of relationships, which is characterized by translocality. As discussed in the concluding chapter, what I understand by *trans-* in ‘translocal’ or ‘transnational’ is similar to Aihwa Ong’s understanding of ‘trans’ as the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination’ (1999: 4). This definition implies that the web of translocal relationships that circumscribe and shape the Franco-Maghrebian encounter possess transversal, transactional, translational, and transgressive dimensions, which speak as much about moments of agency, resistance, escape, and self-determination, as they reflect instances of determinism, discipline, powerlessness, and silence.

What I have in mind when I speak of the encounter between France and the Maghreb is not the ‘official’ portrayal of histories and characters; nor am I focusing upon the state-centered interactions within this region. Rather this project is concerned with the interactions, movements, transgressions, translations, and negotiations that happen between and among individual and

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Frantz Fanon (1967), Albert Memmi (1985), Ashis Nandy (1989), Ania Loomba (2006).

collective voices and memories, who situate themselves (rather uncomfortably) within the Franco-Maghrebian web of translocal relationships. It is this crossing and interaction among various voices and memories that shapes the Franco-Maghrebian context. In particular, I am concerned with the ways in which the 'native', by which I understand the Maghrebian (de/re)colonized figure, is produced in the literary (and photographic) narratives and strategies of a few Franco-Maghrebian diasporic intellectuals. These persons mediate between worlds (those of the Maghreb and those of France), and undertake a task that Étienne Balibar would characterize as a 'critical labour of memory' (2004), and Mireille Rosello as the task of writing 'stories about the *absence* of stories' (2005: 111).

France's colonial past in North Africa (and elsewhere) is an extremely delicate issue in contemporary French society: debates on the topic have recently become heated and controversial. There seems to be a divide in contemporary historiography that can be summed up as follows. Certain groups of intellectuals claim that the process of decolonisation has not only been successful, but also that there are no significant continuities between the colonial and postcolonial periods. Other groups of historians see instances and markers of undeniable continuity between the two already mentioned time frames.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, France's war with Algeria between 1954 and 1962, in its sheer violence, is an episode in the history of both nations that have marked their struggles for identity and national meaning.<sup>8</sup> In spite of the somewhat reluctant and cursory 'official' visitations of the Algerian War episode by both French and Algerian authorities and 'official' histories, it is not surprising that the study of colonialism has been relegated, within France, to the domain of history.<sup>9</sup> The implications are inescapable: within

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<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of brevity, I am grossly simplifying the ongoing debate and I am glossing over the more nuanced approaches in contemporary French historiography. For insights into the former perspective see Daniel Rivet, *Le Maghreb à l'épreuve de la colonisation* (2002); for insights into the latter perspective see the interdisciplinary works produced by Pascal Blanchard (2003) and Nicolas Bancel (1998). More nuanced positions have been formulated concerning France's colonial past (in particular the Algerian War of independence), such as Etienne Balibar's in 'Algeria, France: One Nation or Two?' (1999). Balibar claims in this article that the decolonization of Algeria was an incomplete process with devastating consequences for both nations. See also Mireille Rosello's *France and the Maghreb: Performative Encounters* (2005).

<sup>8</sup> This argument appears in the texts of many French and Maghrebian intellectuals, such as Balibar (1999 and 2004), Rosello (2005), Benjamin Stora (1998), Hafid Gafaiti (2003), Driss Maghraoui (2003), Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (2005).

<sup>9</sup> By referring to the Algerian War of Independence, I am also drawing attention to the *difference* of the Algerian experience of colonialism, insofar as this region was a settler colony, and not simply a protectorate, such as Morocco (between 1912 and 1956) or Tunisia (between 1881 and 1956). Unlike Morocco or Tunisia, Algeria was seen as an extension of France. According to the official guide to the first colonial universal exhibition in Paris 1855, Algeria was

France, colonialism is best perceived as an anomaly in the history of the French Republic, belonging to the realm of the past, and carrying few repercussions for the present.<sup>10</sup>

It is in this complex context of suppression of memory and neutralization of responsibility, that literary narratives become particularly significant in the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, to the extent that they perform precisely what has not been done within the ‘public’ sphere: the work of memory and responsibility. Thus evocations of colonial violence coexist and share the same discursive/narrative space with exposés on postcolonial violence. Through the exploration of narratives by Franco-Maghrebian authors such as Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Leïla Sebbar, and Albert Memmi, my dissertation investigates the politics of producing the ‘native’, between the memory of the colonial past, and the complexities of the postcolonial present. In here I argue that evocations of the figure of the ‘native’ serve to strategically redeem the colonial defilement of indigenous/local cultures and realities, and rescue their authenticity. Such literary texts undoubtedly perform a work of memory, but their evocation of the past/present converge around the figure of the ‘native’/*indigène* through practices of sanctifying and/or exoticizing the ‘native.’<sup>11</sup> Such practices speak about a desire to take possession of an authentic experience long lost in a globalized and (post)modernized world, and tend to claim authenticity through the purified image of the ‘native.’ More to the point, this dissertation attempts to answer the questions iterated by Rey Chow in *Writing Diaspora*:

“Why are we so fascinated with ‘history’ and with the ‘native’ in ‘modern’ times? What do we gain from our labour on these ‘endangered authenticities’ which are presumed to be from a different time and a different place? What can be said about the juxtaposition of ‘us’ (our

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supposed to become a second France, young, fertile, peopled by the overflow of the Motherland (Blanchard et alia, 2003: 20). However, Algeria’s history is quite closely intertwined with that of Morocco and Tunisia, insofar as Algeria’s bloody war of independence engaged Moroccan and Tunisian solidarity and loyalty. Therefore by using the term ‘the Maghreb’ or ‘Maghrebian’, I do not intend to collapse differences and distinctions into one homogeneous category. The term becomes particularly pertinent to understanding the politics of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter in the context of migration flows between France and the Maghreb.

<sup>10</sup> On coloniality as a temporary anomaly, see the discussion in the concluding chapter.

<sup>11</sup> I use *native/indigène* (and later ‘native/*indigène*’ ensemble), since *indigène* is the term used by French colonial authorities to refer to native populations of colonized areas. I explain the meaning of *indigène* in note 3 of chapter 1. As it will be discussed in the first chapter, the notion of *indigène* carried and continues to carry the connotation of backwardness, savagery, and the imperious need for guidance and civilization (translated in modern discourses and practices as development; for a discussion on continuities between the ‘civilizing mission’ and development theories, see Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney, ‘IR and the Inner Life of Modernization Theory’ in *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (2004).

discourse) and ‘them’? What kind of *surplus value* is created by this juxtaposition?” (1993: 42)

Franco-Maghrebian authors, such as Djebbar, Ben Jelloun, Memmi and Sebbar, conjure figures of defiled ‘natives’ waiting to be restored to their long lost purity. This sort of redemptive practice speaks about the (more than discursive) distance that separates such figures from the diasporic intellectual. I see these authors as diasporic subjects, insofar as their narratives mirror paradoxical diasporic experiences of ‘separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place’ (Clifford, 1997: 255). Here there emerges the contentious notion of “Maghrebian diaspora.” A distinction should be made here: in talking about a “Maghrebian diaspora”, I will discriminate between the intellectuals of North African origin residing in France, who have come there for intellectual and ideological reasons, and the masses of immigrants of the same origin who have come to France (or have been born and raised there) in search of better economic and social opportunities.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, such a distinction is the subject of my third chapter, in which I discern between two diasporic categories, that of the *exilé(e)* and that of the *immigré(e)*.

There seems to be little contention as to whether Maghrebian immigrants form a diaspora, insofar as they see themselves as part of a larger community coming from the Maghreb. They are able to find multiple common affinities, among which the most obvious ones are their religion (most of them are Muslim); their experiences, direct or indirect of French colonialism, and of economic and social marginalization; and their feelings of political and social alienation and racial discrimination. These experiences are shared less, if at all, by Maghrebian intellectuals living in France, although they too can become targets of stereotypical profiling and discrimination. Nonetheless, theirs is a very privileged position because they enjoy both the freedom of movement and the social,

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<sup>12</sup> There are several qualifications that I would like to insert in the context of the distinction between the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)*. First, the intellectuals are migrants themselves and, no doubt, in search of better economic opportunities, just like the *immigrés*. However, these particular intellectuals never identify themselves as migrants. Rather the terms they attach to their condition are ‘exile’ and ‘refuge.’ Interestingly, this implicit horizon of political subjectivity overlaps the existing legal understanding of political subjectivity which discriminates between a migrant (as an *economic* refugee, and hence not an ‘authentic’ refugee), and a refugee (as a political dissident, and hence an ‘authentic’ refugee). Peter Nyers deftly demonstrates how the ‘authentic’ refugees, in the definition provided by the UNCHR, are seen as possessing a subjectivity that constructs them as ‘heroic freedom fighters’ and political dissidents who are fleeing their countries because of political persecution (2006: 50-51). On the other hand, the *economic* refugees are seen as simply driven by ‘despair’, which disqualifies them as ‘genuine’ refugees (ibid.). I find it fascinating how such a discrimination between the dissident and the migrant is being performed within the narratives of the Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals which I explore in this dissertation.

political and economic benefits of French society. Accordingly, whether these intellectuals are indeed part of a Maghrebian diaspora, even an *intellectual* Maghrebin diaspora, is a very thorny issue. From the fieldwork interviews conducted in France, and from the time I spent at the Institut du Monde Arabe, I learned that Maghrebian intellectuals are very divided, and that there is little cohesion among them as an intellectual community. Beida Chikhi, professor of francophone literatures and director of CIEF (Centre International d'Études Francophones) at the Sorbonne, went as far as to state that there is no Maghrebian intellectual community. Rather she pointed out that the interactions among Maghrebian intellectuals happen within a French bureaucratic frame.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these differences among intellectuals themselves and between intellectuals and other Maghrebian immigrants, I will consider them as part of a diaspora, insofar as their works reflect on the cultural, political and economic conditions of the Maghreb. That is not to say that they undertake ethnographic readings or transfigurations of the Maghreb, nor that their works should be viewed merely as ethnographic material. Rather I find it interesting that, although claiming to have transcended the need to assign themselves into a specific ethnic category (Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Jew, French), they rely almost exclusively on the Maghreb to provide them with the material and the imaginary with which they engage in literary or aesthetic productions.<sup>14</sup> I note that it is mainly Sebbar and Memmi who resist such assignments, whereas Ben Jelloun and Djebbar seem more willing to embrace such categories, with the distinction that they view themselves as belonging to both shores of the Mediterranean, and thus as enjoying a more celebratory experience of hybridity. The reason I mention this aspect is not to create neat distinctions/categories that encapsulate self-contained identities. Rather I am intrigued by the contradictory (and sometimes hypocritical) ways in which some of these authors refuse certain identities. This refusal is intimately linked to the production of certain forms of postcolonial knowledge and socio-cultural identities that are responsible for the construction of the 'native.'

Thus, when Leïla Sebbar states, in her correspondence with Nancy Huston (*Lettres parisiennes: Autopsie de l'exil*), that the "immigrants [...] don't form a community. They are divided and weak to the point of being incapable of protecting their children. They live in a state of illiterate deportation..." (quoted in Woodhull, 1993: 110), I wonder whether such a statement comes not out of a

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<sup>13</sup> Personal interview, December 6, 2006, CIEF (Centre International d'Études Francophones), Sorbonne, Paris.

<sup>14</sup> By aesthetic productions I am referring to Djebbar's cinematic engagements in her documentaries *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1977) and *La Zerda ou les chants de l'oubli* (1979). Also, I am referring to these writers' collaborations in albums of photography, whose subjects of study and exploration were Maghrebian people and places.



sympathetic sentiment, but out of a self-conscious distanciation from a sense of identification she negates for herself. In fact, Sebbar's claims to self-identification have fluctuated, over the years, between a celebratory Franco-Algerian hybridity and an unequivocal Frenchness. In a personal interview during my fieldwork, she claimed unambiguously that she is French, since her mother is French, and since she is a citizen of the French Republic.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, she made an effort to distance her experience of Frenchness from that of the Maghrebian migrants living in the *banlieues* (suburban ghettos), whom she finds culpable of using postcolonial nostalgia as a pretext for disruption of order, and the excuse of discrimination for their unemployment (which she expressed in terms of their lack of interest in finding a job).<sup>16</sup> I believe that such a carefully delineated (im)material geography between the Maghrebian intellectual who possesses the comfort to claim a sense of Frenchness for herself, and the immigrant masses who 'live in a state of illiterate deportation,' speaks immensely about the position of the 'native', not only in the French imaginary, but also in the Maghrebian intellectual's imaginary. I return later to this aspect, as I analyse the ways in which texts and images produce the 'native.'

### **Imagining and writing the 'native' in the Maghreb**

But what about the 'native'? What does this term reveal and conceal within the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter? As mentioned earlier, I use the term 'native' as a translation for the French term *indigène*, but also I circumscribe my usage of the term within the larger postcolonial literature on subalternity and the 'native.' Throughout the dissertation I use both terms, and sometimes interchangeably, even though there are distinctions between them. I find the concept of 'native' to be a more general (and generalizable) concept, whereas the term 'subaltern' denotes a more specific context. As Rey Chow pointed in *Writing Diaspora*, it is only with the onset of colonialism that the 'native' has been cast as 'native', and hence we need to conceive of the 'native's' existence as an existence that precedes the arrival of colonialism (1993: 51). From Arjun Appadurai's perspective, the power/knowledge nexus can be detected in the construction of the 'native'. The concept implies "confinement", not only physical, but also psychological and intellectual/spiritual (1988: 37-9). He observes that the notion of 'native' has come to signify people who are imprisoned 'by what they know, feel and believe. They are prisoners of their mode of thought' (1988: 37).

Thus the construction of the 'native' as 'native' was enabled by colonial modernity, to use Walter D. Mignolo's term (2000), and the encounter between the Western man and his 'native' others happened within a dialectic of production

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<sup>15</sup> November 10, 2006, Paris.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

of sameness and suppression of difference: the ‘native’s’ difference puzzled and confounded him since it interrogated the ontological and epistemological models with which he was operating.<sup>17</sup> However, in order to make sense of this difference and tame it, the Western man produced a sameness for the ‘native’ that allowed him to comfortably incorporate his difference into a pre-existing Western model, by claiming that the native’s difference is in fact *his own* difference, but from a different temporal line: that of a pre-historic past, characterized as a state of nature.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the ‘native’ is confined, as Appadurai put it, not only physically, but also temporally, insofar as the ‘native’s’ present is the Western man’s past.

If the ‘native’ is taken to mean more generally a simultaneous sense of backwardness (translated as underdevelopment in modern terms) and innocence, which the Western man has encountered and ‘discovered’ in his peregrinations throughout the world, the term ‘subaltern’ more specifically refers to certain categories of marginalization. I use Spivak’s conceptualization to define the ‘subaltern’ as ‘the tribal subaltern, the sub-urban proletariat, and the unorganized peasant’ (1990: 70). It is not these precise categories that interest me in understanding subalternity, but a sense of utter marginalization, of limited or impaired agency, and the contentious absence or presence of voice.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, it is the double load of temporal/intellectual and physical confinement, and the condition of marginalization, which strike me as particularly pertinent in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian (post)colonial encounter. From the examination of various texts and images I have undertaken within this project, I have discerned several connotations attached to the idea of the ‘native’: *someone who is born in the Maghreb (irrespective of class or gender)*, as can be found in Leïla Sebbar’s *Mes Algéries en France* (2004). A “native”, then, is an Algerian, Moroccan, or Tunisian person and thus someone to be distinguished from a European. Moreover, especially when one thinks of the French word for ‘native’, which is *indigène*, this distinction clearly conjures up the colonial hierarchy between the French and the *indigènes*, meaning the ones born outside of France, subjects (but really objects) of the colonial empire. This usage implies that

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<sup>17</sup> I use “Western man” here self-consciously to underline the masculine and Eurocentric bias of the encounter between the ‘Western’ self and his ‘others.’

<sup>18</sup> For exciting discussions on the dialectic of sameness/difference, which has circumscribed the encounter between the West and its *others*, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (1992); Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (2002); and Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney, “Intimate Indians” in *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (2004). Inayatullah and Blaney establish the connection between the founding of IR as a discipline and the Hobbesian ‘state of nature’ that is taken to be both a mirror image of the lifestyle of the ‘native’ tribes in America, and as a founding principle for disciplinary IR.

<sup>19</sup> I refer here implicitly to Spivak’s famous article “Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988), which has arguably assigned an impossibility of voice/speech to the condition of the subaltern.

*indigènes* are the non-French colonial subjects *cum* objects. Within France, the term used to designate French people is not *indigènes* (as opposed to foreigners), but *Français(e) de souche*.<sup>20</sup> This distinction appears in various cultural productions such as *Indigènes* (the critically acclaimed movie by Rachid Bouchareb, and very inappropriately translated as *Days of Glory*), or the famously controversial movie *The Battle of Algiers* (by Gilles Pontecorvo). It also appears in Assia Djebar's novels (1995; 2003), and in Albert Memmi's writings (1966; 1985).

But there is another connotation attached to 'native' or *indigène*, one which discriminates according to particular social, economic and political positions. This other connotation implies someone who is uneducated, mostly illiterate, on the margins of both her/his immediate society and French society, such as poor immigrants from the suburbs of French cities, immigrant workers. This connotation seems to discriminate according to class and economic factors. And it is this precise connotation that provides the link to subalternity, since this specific connotation of the 'native' suggests a sense of marginality and impaired agency that seems almost unsurpassable. This second connotation appears to have taken shape after decolonization, when massive numbers of poor workers (mainly men) migrated to France in search of better economic opportunities. Distinctions between poor and privileged classes, educated and uneducated people have existed before decolonization, of course. During colonialism the term *indigène* denoted *all* people of North African origins. With decolonization, a distinction (or at least a more acute one) develops between the *évolués* (the individuals of North African origin who possessed higher education, and who enjoyed very different social, economic and political opportunities both 'at home' and in France), and *indigènes*, the poor, uneducated and underprivileged ones.<sup>21</sup> I would argue that this distinction is maintained in the literary narratives and photographic collaborations of Leïla Sebbar and Albert Memmi, that it is not transcended in Assia Djebar's projects, and that it has ambiguous functions in Tahar Ben Jelloun's writings. This particular connotation will emerge from the analyses undertaken in chapters 2 to 5, in which I discuss the politics of imagined authenticity both in photography and literature, and the ironies emerging out of

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<sup>20</sup> French expression meaning someone who is a "real" French. I would argue that this has clear racial implications, as it is used to distinguish between those *naturalized* as French (which includes the children of Maghrebian immigrants, who have been born and raised in France) and those who are *by nature* French (white non-immigrant French persons).

<sup>21</sup> Accounts on the condition of the Maghrebian *immigrés* in France have been undertaken by a number of French and Maghrebian intellectuals, such as Abdelmalek Sayad, *The Suffering of the Immigrant* (2004); Blanchard and Bancel, *De l'indigène à l'immigré* (1998); Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality* (2001); Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Hospitalité française* (1997), among others.

the practice of ‘flexible citizenship’ and hybridity in the construction of diasporic selves and immigrant others.

The manner in which the ‘native’/*indigène* ensemble operates in the Franco-Maghrebian context is not homogeneous or linear, but as mentioned above, it exposes class, racial, and gendered fractures. Ann Laura Stoler’s (1995) and Anne McClintock’s (1995) works offer some of the most insightful analyses on these complex intersections. Stoler, for example, remarks how ‘racial logics’ were deployed, during colonialism, to distinguish between respectable middle-class citizens and the ‘immorality of the poor, as well as between the “undeserving” and the “respectable” poor among themselves’ (1995: 123). Furthermore, she notes that, in fact, the reverse may have happened and did happen, namely that [t]he racial lexicon of empire and the sexualized images of it [...] may have provided for a European language of class as often as the other way around’ (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Anne McClintock points to the creation, during colonialism, of *anachronistic space*, a trope she identifies as having acquired ‘full administrative authority as a technology of surveillance in the late Victorian era’ (1995: 30). What this trope implied was that colonized people (just like ‘women and the working class in the metropolis’) inhabited a space and a temporal frame that was seen as inferior because it was deemed *anterior* to that of the modern empire, and hence susceptible to being irrational, backward, and ‘bereft of agency’ (ibid.). Chapter 3 discusses the transposition in photographic and literary narratives of images of ‘natives’ as ‘endangered authenticities’ because they are perceived to emerge from an *anterior* space and time, when authentic living experiences were still accessible. What I am suggesting here is that the manner in which the ‘native’ is visualized and lyricized by the postcolonial intellectual evokes a colonial imaginary, albeit one that fulfills different functions. The postcolonial intellectual’s collection of sanctified ‘natives’ is not prompted by a vision of their irrationality or backwardness, but by their symbolic power as safe-keepers of authentic traditions. The intention is a very different one, but the frame within which it operates, I argue, is still haunted by colonial categories. As chapters 4 and 5 illustrate, the distinction between *évolués* (educated ‘natives’) and *indigènes* (‘natives’), which was deployed during French colonialism, metamorphosed, in post-colonial encounters, into a distinction between the intellectual in exile (*exilés*) and the economic migrant (*immigrés*). This distinction does not preclude the existence of various nuances and ambiguities, nor do I attempt to sketch monolithic categories that encompass self-sustaining identities. Rather my intention here is to illustrate how these Franco-Maghrebian socio-political identities are performed in a continuum, in which ‘the formative categories of imperial modernity [race, class, and sexual differences] are articulated categories in the sense that they come into being in historical relation

to each other and emerge only in dynamic, shifting and intimate interdependence' (McClintock, 1995: 61).

The already discussed double signification of the term “native” need not (and indeed does not) exhaust the other significations that ‘native’/*indigène* acquires in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. The following paragraphs engage the “other” significations of “native”, which are highly politicized, in particular since they render unstable and precarious certain binaries, such as inside/outside (and insider/outsider), colonizer/colonized, familiar/strange=foreign, and native/non-native. This last part of my discussion maps the first chapter of the dissertation, but it also re-appears, in various guises, throughout the dissertation. I like to call these *other-ed* significations of the term “native”, the loud silences of the *problématique* that surrounds the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. They are those *other* spaces that the term “native” inhabits, the most silent spaces but, in my opinion, the most intriguing. My discussion of the ‘native’ could have very well stopped with the double signification of the term. But to leave out those *other* facets was impossible. These other facets (particularly those in the next paragraph) appear more or less discretely in the works of the authors already mentioned.

Let us think of the case of the *harkis*, for example, the Algerians who sided with the French during the Algerian War. With the independence of Algeria, the *harkis* fled Algeria as the newly instated government had organized massive retaliations against them, seeing them as traitors. They went to France, where (unsurprisingly) the French government wanted nothing to do with them, ignored their requests, and for decades they lived in makeshift camps, in conditions of squalor and utter poverty. Only recently has the French government acknowledged ‘their contribution to the motherland’ and managed to undertake more inclusive policies of integration and recognition. To the French, the *harkis* are the ultimate ‘natives’, a permanent and vivid reminder of their colonial history (of which they seem to be either oblivious or very selectively proud). To the Algerians, they are traitors, and also the ultimate *indigènes*, insofar as they serve as the scapegoat for over a century of humiliation, oppression and marginalization. The *harkis* appear in some of Sebbar’s and Djébar’s writings. But it is not a fully fledged portrait. Rather they appear as those intriguing shadows that lurk in the backstages of history, and whose presence is disturbing to all parties involved in political events.

Another signification of the ‘native/*indigène*’ notion can be encountered in the condition of the Berbers, Touaregs, Bedouins, and Sahraoui people, who are considered to be the ‘true’ indigenous populations of the Maghreb, in the sense of the ‘original’ inhabitants of the Maghreb, who live on the fringes of the

(relatively) newly independent North African states.<sup>22</sup> These people are the targets of systematic discrimination and even repression by these countries, where state-led Arabization has involved the active repression of their life-styles, languages, and political mobilizations.<sup>23</sup> Fascinatingly, it is mainly these people who are subjects/objects of photographic albums (like Tahar Ben Jelloun's albums, as is discussed in chapter 3), as they conjure up ideas of 'authenticity', noble nativism and primordialism, and that 'intractable difference' so dear to Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous.<sup>24</sup>

Here is another twist on the 'native'/indigène ensemble: with colonialism and then the subsequent decolonization, the various socio-political and ethnic fractures in Maghrebian societies came into a sharper focus. What of the Jewish communities from the Maghreb? Or of the *pied-noirs*, the French settlers (especially those born and raised) in Algeria? These latter ones were considered as *indigènes* by metropolitan France, although with a status superior to that of the Maghrebian populations. Writers such as Albert Camus and Hélène Cixous (considered *pieds-noirs*) re-claim their identity as *pieds-noirs*, as Algerians, as *indigènes*. Jacques Derrida claims to have been the other of the other (in his *Monolingualism of the Other*), insofar as he was from the Jewish community of Algeria (the same goes for Albert Memmi, who was from the Jewish community of Tunis, and for Hélène Cixous, who was from the Jewish-French community of Oran, Algeria). Robert Young, both in *White Mythologies* and in *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, goes as far to claim that post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, since Derrida and Cixous were Maghrebian, and the parents of Louis Althusser had been *French settlers* in Algeria. Jean-François Lyotard was in Algeria during the war, and wrote extensively on the war and its consequences, taking a very strong stance against the French colonizers. Consequently, Robert Young's argument is that post-structuralism was born out of the experience, the horrors and the violence of the Algerian War. If Camus, Cixous, and Derrida claim for themselves this *difference* from the French, if they claim a degree of indigeneity (they claim a 'native' status), one can see that the production of the 'native'/indigène ensemble is as rich as it is fraught with various

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<sup>22</sup> References to these other facets of the 'native' in the Franco-Maghrebian context, namely the *harkis* and the Berber peoples, appear throughout my dissertation. However, such references are not necessarily developed as fully fledged discussions, due to space constraints. I intend to develop these dimensions more meaningfully in my future research projects. The purpose of this project is not to analyze in depth each category of the 'native's' connotations. Rather, my intent was to illustrate the manner in which diasporic constructions of selfhood (which I identify as the *exilé(e)* in chapter 4) inevitably entails an intimate and yet uncomfortable proximity to a *different* experience of diaspora, namely the *immigré(e)*.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion on the ongoing Arabization projects in the Maghreb, see chapter 4.

<sup>24</sup> As both Djebbar and Memmi are of Berber descent, this identity appears in their works, but again, as a shadow-identity.

violences, hierarchies, and silences. Thus, when I use ‘native’ interchangeably with ‘subaltern,’ I am referring to a condition of marginality to which the diaporic intellectual, even as she claims a ‘native’ status for herself, does not and cannot belong.

In the discussion above I traced the *other* faces of nativization. As the core of my dissertation is the politics involved by the production of the ‘native,’ I could not imagine writing about the production of the ‘native’ in Franco-Maghrebian texts and images without musing on those shadow-spaces inhabited by this term. These shadow-spaces constitute the silences of the texts discussed above, as much as they constitute borderlands capable of unsettling easily assumed binaries such as inside/outside (and insider/outsider), colonizer/colonized, familiar/strange=foreign, and native/non-native.

My examination of the various formations of diasporic intellectuals, to paraphrase Stuart Hall (2003), in the Franco-Maghrebian context is seen in connection with the various constructions of the ‘native’ *as* subaltern within certain literary and photographic narratives. Such a double construction of selfhood and subalternity entails a double task: a critical labour of memory (Balibar 2004), which attempts to resuscitate moments of colonial violence and the complex consequences of colonialism that emerged in the space of the Maghreb, and a performance of postcolonial encounters that evokes the precarious positions of both the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)*. This double task performed by literary and photographic (hi)stories involves a complicated spectrum of violence, (im)possibilities, moments of discipline and escape. This sort of mediation of memory and forgetting is not without its own violences, and these literary strategies are themselves caught within the politics and practices they attempt to denounce, even as they suggest certain possibilities of transcendence and transgression. I argue that the fantasy of authenticity and the ‘unified moralism’ (Aihwa Ong’s expression) they attach to the figure of the ‘native’/*indigène* reflects a desire to transcend colonial stereotypes by counterposing a ‘purified’ (and equally stereotypical) version of the subaltern.

As Anthony Appiah had aptly expressed it, it is ‘the association of a europhone elite and a noneurophone populace [...] that makes for the appeal of nativism’ (1992: 58). In discussing the lures of ‘nativism’, Appiah warns us against ‘the sentimental notion that the “people” have held onto an indigenous national tradition, [and] that only the educated bourgeoisie are “children of two worlds”’ (ibid.). Thus the author situates the discourse of nativism and the idea of nativist nostalgia within the context of the existence of unadulterated national traditions, whose safe-keepers are the ‘people’ (read as the uneducated masses, untouched by Western influences). However, when I employ the terms ‘nativism’ and ‘nativist’ in chapter 3, I am not referring to a *national* heritage of traditions to which the Franco-Maghrebian intellectual implicitly gestures. Rather

I intend to designate the fantasy of the existence of pristine pre-colonial traditions (and hence preceding decolonization and nation-building), whose custodians are the ‘natives.’ Thus the practice of imagining the ‘native’, whether understood as the ‘sanctified native’ captured in literature and photography (chapters 1 to 3) or perceived as the postcolonial *immigré(e)* (chapters 4 and 5), exposes the fragile and yet productive articulations between ‘local’ and ‘global’, between past and present, between memory and history.

Considering that the main concern of my project revolves around the politics that structure and circumscribe the production of the ‘native’ in the Franco-Maghrebian context, I argue that the ways in which the ‘native’ is constructed *as ‘native’* and that the attempts to retrieve the native’s voice and subjectivity, are framed within a discourse that privileges colonialism/imperialism as its main system of reference. What I am suggesting here (and the implications of which I develop further in the last chapter), is that postcolonial analyses should go beyond a re-reading of the Western canon with the ‘colonial difference’ in mind (a practice that Walter D. Mignolo calls ‘intellectual decolonization’), and explore the possibilities offered by local/indigenous knowledges allowing them to become alternative epistemologies and ontologies (‘border thinking’, as Mignolo prefers to label it).

At this point, it is important to mention that I am greatly indebted to Rey Chow’s insights on issues of subalternity, the native, and diasporic constructions of identity. I concur with her arguments that it is with the coming of colonialism that one witnesses the process of ‘becoming native.’ What this statement implies is that the ‘native’s’ agency is constructed mainly in terms of resistance to the gaze of the colonizer. What most attempts at re-capturing the ‘native’s’ voice and subjectivity fail to put forth is the way in which the ‘native’ is not just the objectified and oppressed party of colonialism’s projects, but that she needs to be viewed and re-presented as ‘the gaze that exceeds the moment of colonisation’ (Chow, 1993: 51). Her sense of identification needs to be captured in terms of the ‘existence before becoming native,’ which precedes the arrival of the colonizer. At this point, the issue on which I would like to focus is the possibility of conceiving of modes of subjectivity that do not necessarily privilege colonialism as the master-narrative that writes/creates the ‘native.’

Thus I argue that within critical attempts at retrieving the ‘native’s’ voice there is an idealization of the native as the *other*, the oppressed, and wronged/marginalized subject, which speaks ironically to the notion that ‘defilement and sanctification belong to the same symbolic order’, which is that of colonial/imperialistic discourse (Chow, 1993: 54). As stated earlier, a possible answer to the question of what are the politics of retrieving the native’s voice/subjectivity *as the native*, is that our fascination and obsession with ‘the native, the oppressed, the savage, and all such figures’ is perhaps a symptom of a



desire to cling onto and re-capture 'an unchanging certainty' that is situated somewhere *outside* of our experience with a fast paced consumerist society (1993: 52). Taking my cue from Lacan's topos of the 'non-duped', we seem to constantly attempt to salvage the other as the 'non-duped', as the site of authenticity and true knowledge. In this context, my argument is that retrieving the 'native's' voice and subjectivity speaks more about our desire to 'seek security and order in an amorphous [post]modern society', than about a 'genuine' attempt to see our others and listen to their voices (ibid.). There seems to be an interesting connection between a search for authenticity inside and the search for authenticity outside (materialized in *projections/projects* of authenticity), which I find largely under-explored. Such a desire for viewing/seeing the subjects of our research as the 'non-duped' speaks also about a desire to seize control (Chow, 1993: 53).

### Methodological considerations

Paraphrasing Clifford Geertz, Cynthia Weber suggests that International Relations (IR) theory can be viewed as an 'ensemble of stories' we tell about the world (2001: 129-30). Also, Phillip Darby (1998) sees IR as an imaginative form of writing. Reading IR theory as set of (contending) narratives suggests my refusal to accept the claim advanced by mainstream positivist social scientists according to which the world awaits our impartial observation. Such an observation could be thereafter translated into theories of international politics, conceived as faithful reproductions of reality's workings and dynamics. Social reality is not 'out there' awaiting our discovery, just as history does not point to a past that is 'back there' awaiting our re-capture. Explaining and understanding social reality implies the use of narratives that determine what is to be used, what to be discarded, which parts fall into focus, and what gets to be marginalized.

So, why do I choose literary texts for this study? I believe that in the act of creative writing (which implies the (re)creation of worlds we have seen, witnessed, dreamed of or feared) there is a more or less conscious transposition of our codes of fantasies, emotions and desires into the texts we create. Such codes of fantasies, desires and emotions speak about views and practices that constitute us and which we constitute in our turn. As such, the more conscious infusion of literary texts with fantasies, emotions, and desires make them fertile ground for the exploration of socio-political myths that we create and that create us.<sup>25</sup> Such explorations are particularly important for the study of how identities are produced and thus how the 'native' is constructed. These processes of production are complex and the literary imagination exploring identities alerts us to these complexities in useful ways not normally available to social scientists. Positivistic social science methodologies tend to concentrate on reducing

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<sup>25</sup> For an insight into the function of myth in IR theory, see Cynthia Weber's *International Relations Theory. A Critical Introduction* (2001).

complexity in favour of conceptual rigor and parsimony. They also tend to objectify fantasies and desires, a crucial area of exploration for my thesis. I am not suggesting here that literary strategies need to substitute or supplant social science methodologies. Rather I am attempting to carve out a legitimate space within IR theory for literary strategies, as alternative methodologies. Or to use Michael Shapiro's terminology, I am interested in literary strategies as methodologies that allow me to pay heed to 'complicated loci of enunciation', those politically charged assumptions and groundings into which any project is embedded (Shapiro, 2004: vii). I note with excitement and keen interest, the emergence, within the last decade, of alternative social science methodologies, which offer imaginative and sophisticated insights into various socio-political events.<sup>26</sup>

To push this point even further, I embrace Darby's suggestion that 'narrative truth may have a greater utility than historical truth' (1998: 23). Let us consider, for example, Fatima Mernissi's *Scheherazade Goes West* (2001). In this text, the author attempts to understand why the Western portrayal of the harem (as captured by the paintings of Ingrès, Matisse, Picasso) lacks the subversion and the tension that permeated the harem in which she grew up (2001: 19); and why the West discarded Scheherazade's 'brainy sensuality and political message' (2001: 68). More to the point, Mernissi points to the paradox that the harem portrayed by the Western imagination has enjoyed a wider circulation and credibility than the actual harem that was experienced and portrayed in the Arab world. Mernissi claims that the harem imagined by the West has not existed except in the imagination of the West. And yet, it is this sort of harem that is suffocatingly present in each of us, and in most aesthetic productions. Thus it was the 'fictional' not the 'factual' harem that colours our fantasies of the exotic. In this light, I am choosing literary texts since such texts speak richly and compellingly about our world views, our politics, and our senses of who we are. Sometimes it is important and useful to juxtapose these literary representations of world views and politics to social science analyses.<sup>27</sup>

I turn towards literary productions therefore in order to assess the terms in which the 'native's' voice and subjectivity is explored and retrieved. I believe that such productions can be considered as sites where our codes of fantasy and desire come through more clearly. Within the creative moment of producing worlds, ideas, characters, subjects, events – as is the case with literary, photographic, and cinematic productions – there is a movement towards expressing our desires, obsessions, preoccupations through the projection of *other* worlds. Such

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<sup>26</sup> I mention here Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India* (2000), whose methodological frame captured my imagination.

<sup>27</sup> For a compelling juxtaposition of literary texts to mainstream IR analyses, see Cynthia Enloe (1996).

projects/projections bespeak our fears and anxieties, and our hopes and fantasies. Also, I believe such projects/projections are imbued with ways in which we perceive the relationship between ‘local’ and ‘global’, ‘universal’ and ‘particular.’ The question of how subjects perceive the relationship between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ is inextricable from the notion of the site from where such perceptions might be retrieved. I find Anna Tsing’s conceptualization of ‘global connections’ very compelling. She argues that universals are constantly enacted and engaged in the ‘sticky materiality’ of our daily encounters (2005: 1). Local knowledges speak about specificity, contingency and historicity, but they are rarely fixed and immutable. Rather they move, they circulate, and they undergo and effect transformations.

My argument revolves thus around a ‘web of translocal relationships’ (Dirlik 1994) that is performed through literary narratives as a dizzying and somewhat treacherous *mélange* of hegemonic discourses and practices, various resistances, and countless complicities. All of these produce a site of what I would call metamorphosed authenticity, which implies that the global, the universal, the hegemonic is never simply superimposed on the local. Rather what Walter D. Mignolo (2000) calls ‘global designs’, which are ‘local histories’ with pretensions of universality and globality, constantly get metamorphosed in their countless encounters with various sites and locales. This framework, I believe, allows us to perceive our subjects as products, but also as producers, as transformers, as *gazers*.

Literary narratives produced by authors from the Maghrebian diaspora (such as Assia Djebar, Albert Memmi, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Leïla Sebbar) exhibit a concern with the retrieval of the voice (and hence the subjectivity) of the ‘native’ in various forms. I argue that it is never the case that the writer’s gaze completely overwrites the voice/authority of the ‘native’ in ways in which the native’s *presence* is lost. Rather, in the construction of our project/projection of authenticity, the relationship between gazer and gazed is more dynamic and mutual (although sorely unequal) than we think.<sup>28</sup> Chapters 2 to 5 speak to each

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<sup>28</sup> A comfortably invisible, yet problematic, term insinuates itself in the statement above, namely “us.” Throughout my project, I attempt to address and clarify who is this “us” that is constantly reiterated within my dissertation. Also, this aspect requires me to assign agency, which would show that codes of fantasy and desire are not performed in the text *ex nihilo*. Rather they emerge in the interface between writer and reader and the broader circumstances of production/consumption. In particular, what I mean by “us/our” refers specifically to readers and knowledge producers/consumers from Western academia and/or associated with/living within Western(ized) societies. Dealing with this particular category of Western(ized) consumers/producers becomes more apparent in chapters 2 to 5, when I examine who benefits from the production of exoticized ‘natives’ in photographic production, and the fragile relationship between *exilés* and *immigrés*. As such, when talking about codes of fantasies and desire, I intend

other and complement each other's vision of the relationship between gazer and gazed. Preceded by a theorization on the relation between image and text (chapter 2), chapter 3 looks into the politics of the triangle between image, text, and 'native' within the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, in which the first two elements are bound by complicity in the production of the third one. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the relation between *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)* in the context of the unequal diasporic experiences of translocation and hybridity encountered by the Maghrebian exiled intellectual and by the immigrant labourer. The triangle image-text-'native' analyzed in chapter 3 re-appears in a different form in chapters 4 and 5, as the *exilé(e)*'s luxury of being able to re-position herself vis-à-vis the West from an advantageous position mirrors both the diasporic experience of the Maghrebian intellectual, and the agonizing socio-political marginalization of the *immigré(e)*.

Why do I think that these issues would be relevant to the study of IR? My contribution aims as much at critical accounts within IR as it does at the field of postcolonial studies in general. More and more inroads have been made into IR from fields such as postcolonial studies, cultural studies and critical theory in general. The general goals of such inroads were to introduce into the study of IR concepts such as colonialism, culture, identity, voice, subjectivity, and margins. Also, such inroads permit the interrogation of the choices performed by mainstream IR as regards its subjects/objects of focus. In addition, they indicate the implications that such limited and stubbornly disciplinary selections have had on the construction and production of the field, but also on practices of foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

With this background in mind, while I subscribe to and endorse such critical explorations and interrogations, I feel that the ways in which such endeavours bring into focus the 'margins' serve to re-inscribe the disciplinary boundaries of IR. By implicitly and explicitly portraying voices written out by the mainstream as 'silenced', 'subjugated', 'others', 'natives', such voices are relegated (yet again) to the realm of silence and oppression. Even when a sense of agency is being conveyed, it is usually a negative perception of agency: the voice/subjectivity portrayed is viewed and put forth as nothing more than the returned gaze of imperialism: their subjectivity is re-created as 'resistance against the image' (Chow, 1993: 51). Perhaps such voices would become more clearly audible, and silences would indicate more forcefully the sense of displacement if we could conceive of ways in which the colonizer feels looked at by the native's

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to assign such codes to a certain category, whom I identify as being the producers/consumers of such codes.

<sup>29</sup> See David Campbell (1998) and Michael Shapiro (2004) for critical accounts of the latter.

gaze, and in which such voices/subjectivities are rendered in ways that transcend the ‘moment of colonization’ (ibid.).

What I learned from reading literary narratives is that fantasies, desires and emotions can tell us as much about politics as political treatises and essays. In my opinion, they tell us more and they do it more compellingly. As Phillip Darby (1998) aptly demonstrated, literary productions are vividly implicated in the construction of our social, cultural and political realities, as much as they can be considered products/constructs of such realities. As stated earlier, I believe that IR is a set of stories we tell about the world (Weber 2001). Therefore, these particular stories, which are richly infused with our codes of fantasies, desires and emotions, have a lot to tell about the ways in which certain sets of desires and emotions are political and politicized. They also are capable of politicizing the particular environments, events, actions and ideas they penetrate. Although critical accounts of IR discuss such concepts, I feel that they tend to over-simplify and objectify them.<sup>30</sup> As such, I think that the ways in which literary productions are political are largely under-explored. Such productions speak in meaningful ways about encounters between what we comfortably designate as ‘East’ and ‘West’, about ‘translocal’ relations (I do not particularly favour the term ‘international’), about relations between universals and particulars, and between immediate and distant locales. As mentioned earlier, I prefer the term ‘translocal’ for the possibilities of transcendence, transgression, and translation that it encompasses, and for the ways in which it allows for an understanding of socio-political realities as ‘encounters’.

### Introducing the Maghrebian intellectual

Although I have mentioned the names of the Maghrebian authors whose literary texts I examine in this project, I would like to introduce them to the reader in greater detail. Trained as a historian, Assia Djebar started her literary career with novels such as *Les Alouettes Naïves* (“The Naïve Larks”), which not only documented the Algerian War for independence (particularly women’s involvement in it), but most importantly, used this socio-political complex of events, people and ideas as a canvass for poetic transfiguration. One of the implications of Assia Djebar’s rich literary repertoire (as mirrored by texts such as *L’Amour la fantasia* [Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade], *La Disparition de la langue française* [The Disappearance of the French Language], *Ces voix qui*

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<sup>30</sup> I must note that there are exceptions to this criticism. I am thinking of scholars such as Cynthia Weber, Cynthia Enloe, Phillip Darby, Vivienne Jabri, Roxanne Doty, Michael Shapiro, Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Richard Ashley, who provide insightful and exciting possibilities of conceiving of links between fantasies and politics. I owe Marshall Beier a great debt of gratitude for including such authors in his courses, and thus for making it possible for me to engage with them in a meaningful way.

*m'assiègent* [These voices that assault me]) is that the intellectual's role is to testify to the horrors and violence of experiences of historical trauma (individual and collective) through literary productions. Assia Djebar is also the first Maghrebien intellectual elected to the French Academy (*Académie Française*), and is considered to be one of the most prominent female writers coming from the Maghreb.

Albert Memmi acquired his fame through the publication of his *Portrait of the Colonized*, which became an almost inevitable must-read for students of (post)colonial studies. The short essay got the lavish praises and endorsement of Jean-Paul Sartre, who prefaced the book's first edition (1957). This essay was preceded by his autobiographical novel, *La Statue de Sel* (*Pillar of Salt*), published in 1953 and prefaced by Albert Camus. In here Memmi portrays the condition of a young Jewish man, living in Tunis before and during World War II, and experiencing French discrimination (from the French colonial administration of the time), local discrimination and marginalization from the Muslim community, and the Nazi labour camp during World War II. The young man's escape from this system of oppression came through his academic achievements in the French educational system, which enabled him to leave Tunisia for France. Memmi published notable sociological essays such as *L'Homme Dominé* ("The Dominated Man") and *La Terre Intérieure* ("The Inner Land"), in which he theorizes on the condition of the marginalized and the oppressed, such as the (ex)colonized, the Jew, the worker, women, and others. In the last few years, however, Memmi has retracted his previous theories on the condition of the oppressed. In his *Portrait du décolonisé arabe* (*Decolonization and the Decolonized*),<sup>31</sup> but also in his latest autobiographical essay, *Le Nomade Immobile* ("The immobile nomad"), Memmi states that his initial theories on the condition of the colonized were wrong, and that the misery and the pitiable condition of post-independence Maghrebien states are not due to colonialism. Rather, it is the local structures of patriarchy, traditionalism and superstition that should be held accountable for these societies' engrained corruption and poverty.

Born of an Algerian father and a French mother, and having left Algeria for France at the age of 18, Leïla Sebbar constantly meditates on the tensions and struggles of her mixed heritage. She is vividly concerned with ambivalent identities that straddle the lines of different worlds, without settling permanently in one. As such, she wrote extensively on the condition of young Maghrebians in France, and of Maghrebien women living in France (as illustrated by her narrative trilogy *Shérazade*). In her texts, she examines the hybrid locations of such young (or older) immigrants, who are constantly and painfully trying to negotiate the terms of their social, cultural, political and economic location between the values

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<sup>31</sup> The English translation of this text was published by University of Minnesota Press in 2006.

and requirements of French society and those of their backgrounds (*Le Silence des rives* [Silence of the Shores]; *Fatima ou les Algériennes au square*). Throughout her works, Sebbar almost seamlessly blends “fictional” with autobiographical elements in a way that makes it difficult for the reader to discern between the two (as reflected by her project *Mes Algéries en France*). Fictional characters are taken as witnesses to her autobiographical experiences, and autobiographical elements are constantly woven into the substance of her fiction.

A renowned Moroccan author and a practicing psychotherapist, Tahar Ben Jelloun is the first Maghrebian author to have been awarded the prestigious Goncourt Prize in 1987 for his novel *La Nuit Sacrée* (*The Sacred Night*). His narratives focus mainly on the condition of young Maghrebian immigrants in France, although he has written also on the complex socio-political context of post-independence Morocco. Due to his professional training, Ben Jelloun’s approach to the construction of his literary characters is deeply influenced by psycho-analysis. In novels such as *L’Homme Rompu* (*Corruption*), *Les Raisins de la galère* (*The Grapes of Despair*), *Cette aveuglante absence de lumière* (*This Blinding Absence of Light*), Ben Jelloun is interested in the psychological effects of marginalization, discrimination and oppression, and in the way in which they manifest themselves in social relations.

In his controversial sociological essay *Hospitalité française* (*French Hospitality*), Ben Jelloun starts by analysing the notion of “hospitality” as defined by Lévinas and re-appropriated by Derrida, and delves deep into the French collective psyche, by attempting to find the causes for current practices of racism and marginalization of North African immigrants in France. By exploring the more or less recent memory and history of France, particularly in its colonialist projects, the author states that one cannot understand the racist murders which had taken place in the last decade in France (and which had prompted the writing of his essay), without acknowledging that such a mentality of superiority and discrimination traces back its roots into the historical national imaginary of France. Ben Jelloun’s essay got mixed reviews in France, where many voices considered that the analysis portrayed too harsh a picture of French society. Ben Jelloun’s message is that current relationships between France and its *others* cannot be conceptualized, without referring them to an historicized account of France’s encounters with difference, both within and without.

I decided to include these particular authors into this project, because their names were deemed to be representative of the Franco-Maghrebian literary writing, in a manner in which other intellectuals coming from the same background were not. I do not mean to imply here that these authors should be viewed as the most important authors coming out of Maghreb. There are many critical voices who claim that there are different writers coming from the Maghreb who have produced more sophisticated and more consistently innovative literary

narratives, such as Mohammed Dib, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Kateb Yacine, Driss Chraïbi, Rachid Boudjedra, and others. Also, I do not mean to suggest here that the writers I have chosen represent somehow the ‘canon’ of Franco-Maghrebian literature. But what intrigued me about these intellectuals is the manner in which they have become *public* intellectuals, and reaped prestigious awards or public recognition in a manner which has made their names well-known, both within France and the Maghreb, and outside. As already mentioned, Ben Jelloun was the first North African to have been awarded the prestigious Gouncourt Prize, and Assia Djebar was the first Maghrebian to have been included in the French Academy.<sup>32</sup> Albert Memmi’s essay on the colonized and the colonizers has become a seminal reading in postcolonial studies, read in conjunction with Fanon’s writings and Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, and thus constituting one of the fundamental anti-colonial writings of this century.

Therefore, my selection of these particular authors was prompted by the manner in which they are deemed representative *as mediators* between France and the Maghreb, but also between the Franco-Maghrebian encounter and the ‘West.’ An obvious common denominator of these authors’ literary narratives and photographic collaborations is their preoccupation with mediating between a violent and complex colonial past, and an ambiguous and equally complex post-colonial present. Through their texts, they perform a ‘critical labour of memory’ and address the legacies of French colonialism, and their consequences for contemporary Maghrebian societies. Also, each of them muses, within their narratives, on the ambivalence and irony of their use of French as the main linguistic medium of expression, either by relating to the reader their precarious and fragile relation to the French language (since it is not their first language, with the exception of Sebbar), and/or by using French in an ambivalent way that tries to subvert its hegemonic status and, at the same time, to expose the dominant hold it has over them and over other individuals in their condition.

Another important common denominator is the manner in which the colonial past and legacy shapes their productions in every possible way. As Christiane Chaulet-Achour from University Cergy-Pontoise mentioned in an interview during my fieldwork in France, these particular authors are products of colonialism (*des rescapés du colonialisme*).<sup>33</sup> As such, their works reflect a particular tension: between the need to take colonialism and its various facets as the material for their creation (arising out of their lived experience of colonialism, but also out of a sense of ethical responsibility as intellectuals); and the impulse of

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<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Assia Djebar has been repeatedly referred to as the best known author from the Maghreb. Also, Leïla Sebbar’s texts have been studied in the North American academy as exemplary illustrations of postcolonial feminine writing (*l’écriture féminine*), which embody and perform a particular kind of postcolonial resistance, that of the feminine ‘orientalized’ subject.

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview, Université Cergy-Pontoise, October 18, 2006.



negotiating the possibilities, violences and ambiguities that arise from their fragile and ambiguous positioning as intellectuals living in the ex-metropole (although I should note that the “ex-“ in question is a very tenuous “ex”). The tension of the latter position emerges out of the confluence and interaction of several dimensions of their diasporic experience. They write in French for a mainly French speaking audience, and enjoy the privileges of their position as intellectuals in the (ex)metropole. At the same time, they put forth texts and images that speak about the violence of colonialism, racism and discrimination, about the in-betweenness of young Maghrebians in France, about the corruption of post-independence Maghrebian states, and about the (im)possible socio-political spaces inhabited by women.

### **The structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into 6 major chapters of which the last one is a concluding one. Chapter 1 assesses Robert Young’s claim according to which post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, born out of the experience of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Such a critical assessment will inevitably involve the examination of some of the writings produced by those theorists associated with post-structuralism, such as Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous and Jean-François Lyotard, whose texts reflect, in an autobiographical manner, their personal experience of colonialism in Algeria. As Robert Young, both in *White Mythologies* and in *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, emphatically asserts, it is due to the experience of the Algerian War and of French colonialism in North Africa, that the ‘poststructuralism associated with these names’ (such as Derrida, Cixous, Lyotard, Sartre, Louis Althusser) can and should claim its inceptions. An examination of the writings of these authors, which concern themselves with the subject of Algeria and of French colonialism more generally, is therefore a must for any project, which, such as mine, explores the varied constructions that the concept of “native” undergoes within the Franco-Maghrebian post-colonial context.

More importantly, in the first chapter I explore the possibilities and tensions of ‘nativizing’ theories. Not only have Derrida and Cixous been regarded as Western thinkers, but post-structuralism has been considered (with the exception of Robert Young) as a theory that is unmistakably Western in its premises and location. Therefore, in the light of Robert Young’s assertion according to which post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, an important question arises. What are the prospects of rethinking post-structuralism as a postcolonial theory, a theory that not only stemmed out of the experience of anti-colonial struggles, but whose initial driving impulse was an anti-colonial one? In addition, I employ this line of inquiry in order to assess the (im)possibilities and dangers implied by this association, in particular as applied

to the projects of deconstruction undertaken within the discipline of International Relations.

Chapters 2 and 3 investigate productions of authenticity through images of ‘natives’ both in photography and literature. Inspired by Derrida’s use of ‘spectrality’ and by Mireille Rosello’s concept of ‘ghostly encounters’, I explore the performance of ‘spectrality’ in the photographic engagements and literary productions of Franco-Maghrebian authors such as Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Malek Alloula, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Albert Memmi. I complement such an exploration with analyses of David Campbell and Jenny Edkins’ recent projects on visuality in IR. Thus I argue that the regimes of textual and visual representation present in the Franco-Maghrebian works discussed in chapter 3 can be inscribed in an international politics of visuality that produces the ‘native’ for the ‘benefit’ of her/his appropriation and control. Practices of sanctifying and/or exoticizing the ‘native’ speak about a desire to take possession of an authentic experience long lost in a globalized and (post)modernized world, and tend to claim authenticity through the purified image of the ‘native.’

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the many faceted practices of exile and migration in the Franco-Maghrebian context. I zoom into this complex and ambivalent issue of migration not only because the example of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter offers an excellent opportunity for such an incursion, but also because it allows me to delve into politics of language, hybridity, and stereotypical representations in the postcolony. In here I argue that practices of postcolonial mobility in the Franco-Maghrebian context have produced differentiated and unequal diasporic identifications: the *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)*. These ambivalent and ambiguous conditions are illuminated through language, practices of hybridity and *métissage* (chapter 4), and through their performance in the fragile and fragmented narratives of IR and literary texts (chapter 5). Therefore, I choose to engage Roxanne Doty’s analysis of anti-immigrantism in Western democracies, and in particular her approach to the case of contemporary France. While very promising in her intention to conceive of practices of statecraft as a particular kind of desire in policing migrants and migration, Doty’s focus remains at the level of governmental policies and regulations. Even though the author’s intent is that of an insightful deconstruction of the schizophrenic and paranoiac desires that constitute practices of statecraft in anti-immigration discourses and practices, her analysis fails to even mention the terms of ‘colonial’ or ‘colonialism.’ Such a blatant dismissal is a fatal flaw, insofar as understanding processes of migration in contemporary France is impossible without it being carefully contextualized in certain (post)colonial realities.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation surveys the connections and tensions between the politics of diasporic identifications, translocal webs created by transnational mobility, and the geohistorical location of the discipline of

international relations, as it posits its origins and its objects of study. What links these three apparently unrelated issues is a preoccupation with the study of diasporic and migrant identifications from the perspective of colonial difference, as conceptualized by Walter D. Mignolo (2000). Such a perspective allows us to grasp the unequal and asymmetrical ways in which claims to citizenship and political subjectivity are experienced.

In this chapter, I critically employ Aihwa Ong's conceptualization of 'flexible citizenship' and of the 'transnational' in order to assess the unequal experiences of the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)* as socio-political categories of the Maghrebien diaspora. More specifically, in the Franco-Maghrebien context, it is through an examination of literary narratives that a more nuanced 'picture' of various diasporic identifications emerges, illustrated by the categories of *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)*. In this specific context, it is the use of literary narratives and strategies employed by Maghrebien authors that has constructed a Franco-Maghrebien diasporic experience. The narratives of authors such as Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Albert Memmi, and so many others, mirror paradoxical diasporic experiences of 'separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place' (Clifford, 1997: 255).

## Chapter 1:

### **“Nativizing discipline(s) and disciplining natives: post-structuralism, a Franco-Maghrebian theory?”**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter assesses Robert Young's claim that post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, born out of the experience of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) (2001: 411-28). This assessment inevitably involves the examination of those writings of Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous and Jean-François Lyotard, which either constitute autobiographical texts or that have autobiographical elements woven into their substance. Cixous' *Reveries of the Wild Woman. Primal Scenes* and “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria” fall into the first category, as the author uses these texts to muse on her “beginnings” and on Algeria, the never-possessed origins. Derrida and Lyotard's texts, *Monolingualism of the Other* and *Political Writings*, respectively, do not constitute autobiographical texts *per se*.<sup>34</sup> Rather they should be seen as texts motivated by a deep autobiographical impulse, particularly in the case of Derrida. However, Lyotard makes it clear that his political writings on Algeria were made possible only by his stay in the Algerian city of Constantine, between 1950 and 1952, where he worked as a teacher.

I thus examine Derrida's engagement with Algeria's colonial history, and with the specificity of his own position within Algerian society, and Hélène Cixous' nostalgic remembrance of her Algerian childhood. In here I argue that between Derrida's deconstruction of logocentrism and Cixous' displacement of phallogentrism, the postcolonial subject tends to be recolonized as the wholly other whose alterity is unfathomable, and whose difference serves to re-fashion a knowable Western discourse. Moreover, Lyotard's experience of the Algerian War acquires the dimension of an intimate differend which sees Lyotard becoming the same ‘inventing subject’, to use Cixous' term, of both the yearning desire for Algeria's liberation and emancipation, and of the condition of its impossibility.

As Robert Young, both in *White Mythologies* and in *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, emphatically asserts, it is due to the experience of the Algerian War and of French colonialism in North Africa, that the ‘poststructuralism associated with these names’ (such as Derrida, Cixous, Lyotard, Sartre, Louis Althusser) can and should claim its inceptions. An examination of the writings of these authors, which concern themselves with the

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<sup>34</sup>I will not examine the whole body of texts from Lyotard's *Political Writings*. Rather, I will focus on those essays (which comprise part V of *Political Writings*, entitled “Algerians”) in which he discusses the Algerian War and the political situation in North Africa (pp. 165-326).

subject of Algeria and of French colonialism more generally, is therefore a must for any project, which, such as mine, explores the varied constructions that the concept of “native” undergoes within the Franco-Maghrebian post-colonial context. Derrida claims that he is ‘the *most* Franco-Maghrebian, and perhaps the *only* Franco-Maghrebian’ (1998: 12), and Hélène Cixous refers to her “Algeriance” (1998: 153), and to herself as being ‘*inseparab*’ (2006: 24). These characterizations point to the non-Western (non-French) status of these thinkers. As such, this chapter aims to investigate what is at stake when claiming a native status for theorists such as Derrida and Cixous, who have been mainly regarded as Western thinkers.

More importantly, I will explore the possibilities and tensions of ‘nativizing’ theories. Not only are Derrida and Cixous generally perceived to be Western thinkers, but post-structuralism has been considered (with the exception of Robert Young) as a theory that is unmistakably Western in its premises and location. Therefore, in the light of Robert Young’s assertion according to which post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, an important question arises: what are the prospects of rethinking post-structuralism *as* a postcolonial theory, a theory that not only stemmed out of the experience of anti-colonial struggles, but whose initial driving impulse was an anti-colonial one?

I believe that Robert Young’s claim has a significant impact not only for post-structuralism and/or postcolonialism *per se*, but also on the ways in which these theories have been marshalled in specific fields of knowledge, such as International Relations and globalization studies. The project of deconstruction has had an immense influence on a number of theorists from both globalization studies and International Relations, who adopted post-structuralist and postcolonial perspectives in order to challenge certain hegemonic views of these particular disciplines, and in order to offer alternative views within such fields. As such, an examination of the (potential) impact of Robert Young’s claim on the practices of critical theory within the already mentioned fields cannot happen without an in-depth incursion into the texts of Derrida, Cixous, and Lyotard, since these names (and their theories) are constantly employed by critical IR theorists as means of contesting Western-centric systems of thoughts and exclusionary practices.

Indeed these critical theorists have exposed IR as a self-referential Western discipline, which takes the West (mainly the US) as the main point of reference for global politics, and then, within the jealously guarded boundaries of this ‘centred structure’, designates its founding texts, its relevant actors, and its main concerns. But insofar as such critical deconstructive projects have limited themselves to the deconstruction of US’ foreign policy, and to that of the main elements with which mainstream IR operates, they have inadvertently reinscribed the limits of the field. In arguing for the necessity of articulating deconstructive

projects from a postcolonial stance in International Relations, I also examine the more profound impacts that ‘globalized theory’ has had on academic fields of knowledge. As I discuss later on in this chapter, ‘globalized theory’, as is employed by Rey Chow (2001), implies the commodification of cultural practices of representation, as circumscribed by the globalization of technological and commercial flows.

In this context, it is appropriate to note that not only the prospects of rethinking deconstruction need to be examined, but also the dangers associated with it. After all, it is largely in the context of Western academia that both post-structuralism and post-colonialism operate. Some of the most incisive critiques of post-structuralism’s (lack of) politics have come from post-colonial thinkers, who, although sympathetic with its project, continue to perceive it not only as a Western theory, which is unreflexively enthusiastic in embracing difference, but also as a theory whose practical consequences at times amount to re-colonizing gestures. Interestingly enough, postcolonialism receives similar criticisms from various intellectuals, many of whom claim affinities with the Marxist project.<sup>35</sup> As such, associating these two theories reveals tensions, contradictions, but also possibilities. If post-structuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Cixous claim for themselves a *difference* from Western culture and history, if they claim for themselves a degree of indigeneity (a “native” status), one can see that the production of the native/*indigène* ensemble is as rich as it is fraught with various violences, hierarchies and silences.<sup>36</sup>

**Rethinking theory, nativizing discipline(s). Disturbing the margins in Robert Young’s *White Mythologies and Postcolonialism*. An Historical Introduction**

This chapter needs to be situated within the larger scope of this dissertation, which attempts to trace the constructions of the ‘native’ (or *indigène*) within the Franco-Maghrebian colonial and postcolonial contexts, in literary, photographic and theoretical productions. In this particular context, the term ‘native’ conjures up images of poor, uneducated and underprivileged Maghrebian

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<sup>35</sup> I develop such critiques later on in this chapter. These searing critiques appear in the works of postcolonial and/or Marxist theorists such as Asha Varadharajan (1995), Edward Said (2001), Winifred Woodhull (1993), Rey Chow (1993), Arif Dirlik (1994), and Ella Shohat (1992). It should be noted that Dirlik and Shohat aim their critiques at post-colonial intellectuals, but their targets are those post-colonial intellectuals who embrace postmodern/post-structuralist theories.

<sup>36</sup> “Indigène” is the French term that was used during colonialism by the French to designate all the non-French people who were subjects of the French Empire. The term had (and continues to have) a pejorative connotation, since it implied someone who was not “civilized”, and who could not make claims to a full citizen status of the French Republic. For an insightful examination of the concept of ‘indigène’ within the French colonial and post-colonial contexts, see Blanchard and Bancel (1998). I translate ‘indigène’ as ‘native.’

people, whose images flood literary and photographic productions. But aside from the predictable and all too common images associated with who and what the 'native' is, this project intends to explore the *other* faces of nativization. As the core of this dissertation is the politics involved by the production of the native, I could not imagine writing about the production of the 'native' in Franco-Maghrebian texts and images without musing on the many shadow-spaces inhabited by this term. In this chapter, I venture into one of these shadow-spaces in the hope of exploring the productivity of a borderland that has the potentiality of unsettling easily assumed binaries, such as inside/outside (and insider/outsider), colonizer/colonized, familiar/strange/foreign, and native/non-native.

It is precisely onto this sort of borderland that Robert Young treads, when he claims that poststructuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, and that thinkers such as Derrida and Cixous should not be considered Western/European thinkers. According to Young, such theorists belong to the 'Third World', just as much as postcolonial theory (criticized by some intellectuals as being a Western enterprise) constitutes the project of 'Third World' intellectuals (2001: 413). When discussing the origins of post-structuralism, Young makes the following claim:

"If so-called 'so-called poststructuralism' is the product of a single historical moment, then that moment is probably not May 1968 but rather the Algerian War of Independence – no doubt itself both a symptom and a product. In this respect, it is significant that Sartre, Althusser, Derrida and Lyotard, among others, were all either born in Algeria or personally involved with the events of the war." (2004: 32)

As he points out, it is within the experience of colonialism, of the Algerian War, and of the 'extreme rationalization and centralization of the French administrative system' that deconstruction becomes possible and that it acquires its full meaning (2001: 417). More importantly, Young perceives deconstruction as a 'form of cultural and intellectual decolonization', which 'expos[es] the double intention separating rational method from its truth', namely the conflation of a myth with a universal truth (2001: 421). As such, deconstruction, as a decolonizing gesture, attempts to de-centre and to expose various forms of centrisms, such as logocentrism, phallogentrism, and structural centrism (2001: 417). In this context, it is important to point to the insufficient attention offered to the link between deconstruction and the postcolonial project(s) by intellectuals coming from different areas of inquiry. Indeed, the relation between deconstruction and postcolonialism has been regarded with scepticism, in spite of the work of postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty

Spivak, Robert Young, Rey Chow, and Linda Hutcheon, who have (some of them enthusiastically) blended the two. One of the most common critiques levelled against deconstruction is that it is overly preoccupied with textuality and language to tell us anything significant about the concrete mechanisms of colonial oppression, and about the contradictions of decolonization.<sup>37</sup>

However, it is not this critique, insightful and accurate though it may be, that strikes at the heart of matters, so to speak. The tacit assumption has always been that deconstruction and postcolonialism are two distinct theories, which at times may seem complementary to each other, but which nonetheless operate with distinct premises. Although deconstruction stubbornly resists a definition, it can be understood as the pulling apart of the threads that make up the narrative of a text, and exposing the naturalized concepts, worldviews, and assumptions that weave them. Deconstruction situates itself ethically, in that the exercise of deconstruction tends towards an ethical horizon. Such a horizon can be approached through Lévinas' understanding of ethics as 'the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness, or what Lévinas, following Plato, calls the Same (*le même; to auton*)' (Critchley 1992: 4). By questioning the autonomy of the ego, deconstruction helps questioning 'the liberty, spontaneity, and cognitive emprise of the ego that seeks to reduce all otherness to itself' (Critchley 1992: 5). To problematize one's position(ing) means to allow otherness and difference to have their own voice, without reducing alterity to sameness. It is precisely this sort of ethical impulse that animates the exercise of deconstruction.

The postcolonial project, in contrast, deals with the consequences, in their material and ideational form (whether cultural, political, economic, or social), of the colonization and decolonization processes. If history, understood as History, is nothing but the master-narrative of Western consciousness, which takes itself as the ultimate reference and paragon, then the postcolonial project aims not only at re-writing history from the vantage point of the West's 'others', but also to retrieve the absent voices, gazes and subjectivities of these 'others.' The point that Robert Young makes in *White Mythologies* and in *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, is that not only are these two projects not distinct from each other, but the primary impulse of deconstruction (if one can use the notion of "primary" when discussing deconstruction) is a postcolonial impulse, or to be more precise, an anti-colonial one. As he puts it,

“[t]he poststructuralism associated with these names [Derrida, Sartre, Cixous, Althusser, Lyotard] could be better characterized therefore as Franco-Maghrebian theory, for its theoretical interventions have been

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<sup>37</sup> In this sense, see the criticisms formulated by Arif Dirlik (1994), Ella Shohat (1992), and Asha Varadharajan (1995).



actively concerned with the task of *undoing the ideological heritage of French colonialism and with rethinking the premises, the assumptions and protocols of its centrist, imperial culture.*<sup>38</sup> (2001: 414)

As such, Robert Young's claim makes a significant contribution to understanding deconstruction and postcolonialism in a twofold manner. Not only does he trace the anti-colonial impulse as the driving force of deconstruction, but more importantly, he implicitly makes the case that deconstruction does not make sense outside of the critique of Western Reason and History, and of the devastating impact of Western colonialism. In fact, Young is keen to mention, on different occasions, the fact that deconstruction, as the methodology of post-structuralism, has arisen as a form of "insurrection against the calm philosophical and political certainties of the metropolis" (2001: 412), at the moment when "the fundamental conceptual systems of Europe are in the process of taking over all of humanity" (2004: 50), which he identifies with the processes of 'western globalization.' This characterization of deconstruction allows him to assert that '[i]f one had to answer, therefore, the general question of what is deconstruction a deconstruction of, the answer would be, *of the concept, the authority, and assumed primacy of, the category of 'the West'* (2004: 51).<sup>39</sup>

In the light of the matters discussed above, I would argue that the most powerful implication for the post-structuralist intellectual is that of an ethical responsibility. One cannot engage in deconstruction without a postcolonial exposé, as Linda Hutcheon has once put it in an article published in *Textual Practice* (1994). If the driving force behind deconstruction is a deconstruction of the category of 'the West', then one cannot and should not engage in the process of deconstruction without paying attention to the background of Western colonialism, and to the current hegemonic status of Western thought and culture.<sup>40</sup> I return to this point later and develop it further, as I examine the implications of the link between post-structuralism and postcolonialism for current practices within the theory of International Relations and globalization studies.

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<sup>38</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>39</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>40</sup> It is important, at this point, to explain my use of the phrase 'Western thought and culture.' I do not mean to imply that there is a homogeneous and unitary entity that can be identified as 'Western thought and culture.' Rather I am aware of the heterogeneous and contradictory patterns of thought and cultures that constitute Western ways of living and thinking. Nonetheless, certain patterns, associated with North America and Western Europe, have imposed themselves as hegemonic, and came to be identified with a set of ideas and practices, such as the universality of Reason, a free market economy, consumerism, secularism, etc.

### Derrida – what's in a hyphen? Or desiring language

#### *Coloniality of language and the language of colonialism*

In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida uses his own monolingualism as a pretext for an incursion into the aporias of his own identity or better said, his identification, into the (im)possibilities that underlie the construction of a hyphen (the Franco-Maghrebian hyphen), into what he calls the 'madness of language', and into the inherent colonizing impulse of language and culture in general.

In a typical Derridean move, fraught with ambivalence and tension, he makes the following statement:

"I have only one language and it is not mine; my "own" language is, for me, a language that cannot be assimilated. My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak, is the language of the other." (1998: 25)

Derrida makes this statement in the context in which he discusses the inherent 'terror' of languages, the hegemonic impulse that drives any language and that demands subservience (1998: 23). Using the context of colonization, but also keen to transcend it, Derrida suggests that since the master does not and cannot possess language (any language), his desire of possession and control takes the form of 'an unnatural process of politico-phantasmatic constructions' that attempts to appropriate language in order to impose it on others through 'rhetoric, the school, or the army' (ibid.). However, Derrida perceives 'colonialism' and 'colonization' to be 'only high points [*reliefs*], one traumatism over another, an increasing buildup of violence, the jealous rage of an essential *coloniality* and *culture*', understood also as 'a coloniality of culture' (1998: 24-5). It is precisely this sort of 'prudent and differentiated universalization' that has attracted Derrida immense criticism. How can one account for the specificity and unicity of the colonial violence, and resist and interrogate its premises, if colonial violence seems to amount to nothing more than a natural (and even necessary) consequence in the ongoing history of language?

In a re-reading of "Structure, sign and play", which takes into account the political context of the independence of Algeria from French colonial rule, Lee Morrissey interprets Derrida's use of 'event' and 'centre' in a manner which links them directly to the political background of decolonization in Algeria. Derrida starts his "Structure, sign and play" with the assertion that in the history of the concept of 'structure' something which can be called an 'event' has happened, whose 'exterior form would be that of a rupture' (1967: 409).<sup>41</sup> This 'event', of

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<sup>41</sup> When citing the 1967 edition, I am using the French edition of "Structure, sign and play". Therefore, I am using my own translation of the French text.

which Derrida speaks, is identified by Morrissey as a reference to ‘the complexity of Algeria’s decolonization’ (1999). As Derrida suggests that the centre is ‘not a fixed locus but a function’ (quoted in Morrissey 1999), this allows for the notion of power to be perceived not in terms of a static and localized power that circulates from centre to periphery, but in terms of a fluidity and adaptability of power that does not need a fixed location from which to make its strength felt and its directives obeyed. This is reminiscent of Foucault’s understanding of the capillary nature of power. Foucault states that power as a ‘repressive notion’ is quite ‘inadequate’ in capturing the richness and insidiousness of mundane practices that are imbricated with the workings of power. Power needs to be conceived as a ‘productive’ network that ‘traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledges, produces discourse’ (Foucault, 1980: 119).

This understanding of ‘centred structure’ (*structure centrée*) prompts Derrida to claim that the

“history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a chain of determinations of the centre. The centre receives, successively and in a regulated manner, different forms and names. *The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West*, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies.”<sup>42</sup> (1967: 410-411)

When interpreting this important passage, Morrissey seems to make a distinction between the history of metaphysics, on the one hand, and the history of the West, on the other. Although he sees them related, what escapes Morrissey in his analysis, I argue, is the possibility that Derrida might employ the history of metaphysics as a *metonymy* for the history of the West. If Derrida’s contention is with a ‘metaphysics of *presence* in all the senses of the word’ – seen as the matrix for the history of metaphysics – then is it not possible that such a metaphysics of presence constitutes a metonymy, another kind of metaphor, for Western hegemony, for Western History? Robert Young’s rethinking of deconstruction and of Derrida’s project certainly allow for such a reading.

But what haunts Derrida in this paragraph, when taking into account the political context of Algerian decolonization, is perhaps an awareness of the impossibility of a complete break or rupture. When he claims that the ‘event’ or the moment of rupture occurs when the ‘structurality of the structure had to begin to be thought’ (1967: 411), Derrida points as much as to the fallibility of the structure as to the possibility of escaping it. For an anti-colonial war such as the Algerian one to happen, encompassing the various strata of Algerian society for

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<sup>42</sup> My emphasis.

over 7 years, there had to be a moment when the structurality of the colonial rule had to be thought and exposed. Nonetheless, to imagine that there is such a thing as a complete rupture would mean to gloss over both the profound violence of colonialism with its long-term impact, and over the inherent coloniality of language and culture (something which he is keen to suggest in his *Monolingualism of the Other*).

It is precisely this sort of logic that pushes Derrida to speak of two tricks through which the coloniality of language works: the first one occurs when the master manages, 'through the rape of a cultural usurpation,' to imagine himself possessing and appropriating his language so that he may successfully impose it on others. The second trick occurs with the 'liberation, emancipation and revolution' from the master's language (1998: 23-24). Such a moment of liberation and emancipation, this imagined 'rupture' 'will provide freedom from the first [trick] while confirming a heritage by internalizing it, by reappropriating it' (1998: 24). It seems that what Derrida is suggesting here is that the cultural violence inflicted is so profound, that there is no total rupture, just as there is no 'absolute appropriation' or re-appropriation. In the same move, Derrida stamps postcolonialism (understood here as the process of decolonization) with the mark of self-delusion, perceiving it as a project that claims independence, liberation and emancipation from the colonial master, even as it internalizes the colonial violence.<sup>43</sup>

These paradoxical views will strike the reader as accurate when surveying the complex situation created by the decolonization of Algeria. The anti-colonial struggle, under the controversial leadership of the FLN (Front de Libération National), had managed to provide a clear focus for all the strata and categories of Algerian society through a double goal: the removal of the French rule from Algeria, and the independence of the country. However, once this independence was achieved, the social and political fractures that had been silenced during the war acquired their full strength: between the leadership and the rest of the population, between the demands of the students and those of the peasants, between those with secular views and those with religious affinities. Moreover, the legacy of colonialism, in the form of French language and culture continues in North Africa, even though in different and somewhat conflicting degrees.<sup>44</sup> As such, Derrida's perception of colonialism, and of the decolonization that ensued

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<sup>43</sup>The paradoxical logic decolonization and of the rhetoric of liberation find their illustration within the fourth chapter of this dissertation, when the complex politics of using the French language in the post-independence Maghreb is analyzed.

<sup>44</sup>For an in-depth analysis of the decolonization of Algeria, see Jean-François Lyotard's "Algeria evacuated", included in his *Political Writings* (1993). Also, the topic of the continuing colonial legacy in North Africa and the encounters between France and the Maghreb is further explored in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

can be considered pessimistic and politically disabling (something which has been repeatedly emphasized by critics of post-structuralism). I think they are, but one also needs to ponder on the potential implications they may have on postcolonial theory. After all, he echoes (in a very powerful way) a common critique brought against postcolonial theory, namely that it ‘exaggerates both Western dominance and Third World resistance’ (Darby and Paolini, 1994: 389). In an article that attempts to bridge the theory and practice of International Relations and postcolonialism, Darby and Paolini bring to the attention of the reader that one of the dangers of postcolonialism is that it tends to take power as a coherent and all-encompassing practice, and, at the same time, that it hyperbolizes the extent to which Third World resistance is actually effective (ibid). I believe postcolonial theory does not adequately engage with these aspects, therefore it is important that they be not dismissed so easily as self-defeatist fantasies that advocate for *status quo*.

Since Derrida argues that there can be no absolute rupture, it is not aleatory that he chooses to identify himself through a hyphen, the Franco-Maghrebian one. He sees himself as being the ‘only Franco-Maghrebian here’ (1998: 14): insofar as he is an Algerian Jew who only speaks French (thus not being able to make any meaningful claims to either Algerian or Jewish cultures), but whose language is not his ‘own’, his sense of identification stems from the violence of a hyphen. A hyphen does not represent an amalgamation or a unity, but the violent imposition (or better said juxtaposition) of two terms, in this context, of two realities (in their heterogeneous construction). The fate of the Algerian Jewry is a peculiar one: after the French conquered Algeria in 1830, the French government granted French citizenship to the Jews in Algeria, in 1870, through the Crémieux decree. This constituted the first rift between the Algerian Jewish community and the Muslim population of Algeria. But the decree was revoked in 1943, by the Vichy government, which implied that a community who had managed to imagine itself as ‘French’ now no longer belonged anywhere. As Derrida suggests in *Monolingualism of the Other*, but also elsewhere, his identification is moulded by a double interdict: that of the French language and culture (which occurred when Pétain’s government revoked the Crémieux decree, and which had as a concrete consequence Derrida’s removal from the French school he was attending at the time); and that of the ‘Algerian’ (Arab/Berber) culture, since during the French colonial rule there was an interdict against Arab and Berber languages (1998: 30-31).

It is thus not by chance that Derrida claims to be ‘the only Franco-Maghrebian here’: it implies that his belonging no-where, his speaking only one language, which is not his ‘own’, can only be captured within the violence of a hyphen. To re-iterate the question I chose as a subtitle for this section, what’s in a hyphen? In this particular hyphen, there is more division and separation, than

connection and unity. The term ‘hyphen’ implies the separation or division of two terms. But interestingly enough, the French term used for it is *trait d’union*. It is indeed ironical how language can expose paradoxes and tensions, particularly when they are not intended. Derrida talks about the ‘Franco-Maghrebian’ hyphen in vividly violent terms, which evoke the uneasy association between the English and the French terms:

“The silence of that hyphen does not pacify or appease anything, not a single torment, not a single torture. It will never silence their memory. It could even worsen the terror, the lesions, and the wounds. A hyphen is never enough to conceal protests, cries of anger or suffering, the noise of weapons, airplanes and bombs.” (1998: 11)

As Derrida remarks, a hyphen can ‘even worsen’ the pain and trauma, in its deceptively unifying intent. Yet, as he himself suggests, there is no such thing as absolute (re)appropriation, and one can only infer that the treacherous hyphen is the most appropriate sign for this situation, as it never fully incorporates one term into the other, but it leaves them slightly parted and divided. Mireille Rosello, in *France and the Maghreb. Performative Encounters*, musing on the impossibilities and tensions embodied by this hyphen (in her case, ‘France-Algeria’), suggests that perhaps the best way to graphically express the relation between these two terms, is to separate them by a question mark, in the form: France?Algeria. This defiance of writing conventions would allow, in her view, for the necessity to pause and interrogate the kind of relationship that both unites and divides the two (2005: 26-7).

*Desiring language and beyond...*

But aside from the obvious textual disruption that the subversion of the hyphen provokes, such a subversive move should not remain at the level of language. Rather it should move into an engaged and meaningful discussion/dialogue/debate about the heritage of colonialism, which would allow for the interrogation not only of hyphens and other linguistic signs, but of a whole array of concepts and practices associated with colonialism. I would argue that it is in this respect that Derrida incurs vehement criticism, and justly so. As he himself acknowledges, he “always surrender[s] [himself] to language” (1998: 47), and in particular, to French language, something of which he was keenly aware: “We were hostages of the French enduringly [*à demeure*]; something of it remains with me, no matter how much I travel” (1998: 17).<sup>45</sup> In fact, Derrida spends a good part of this essay discussing his relationship with the French language, his

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<sup>45</sup> Edward Said, in an interview with Gauri Viswanathan, remarks that Derrida and his followers are not even Eurocentric, but ‘franco-centric’ (2001: 167).

avowed *desire* for the French language. Such a desire was born out of his contact with French literature. In Derrida's experience, the discovery of French literature had meant the encounter with a world that possessed no apparent common traits with his social and natural landscape (1998: 45). I find this assertion fascinating, since I noticed that a number of Franco-Maghrebian writers, such as Hélène Cixous, Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Albert Memmi, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and others, talk about their personal discovery of French literature. As chapter 4 explores further, there seems to be a connection between these writers' connection or disconnection with French literature, and their connection/disconnection with the experience of colonialism.

In Derrida's experience, this discovery was doubly revealing, as it exposed a double separation, and a double hierarchy: not only between literary and non-literary culture, but most importantly, such a distinction seems to map over the hierarchy between French literature and the "culture 'proper' to 'French Algerians.'" Such is the exigency of French literature and French high culture, that the only way to enter its realm and be accepted by it, is 'by losing one's accent' (1998: 45). Also, such is the disciplining sway of this acceptance (or rather of the desire of acceptance) that Derrida confesses that, although he has always questioned the 'motif of "purity" in all its forms', he cannot help but be seduced by the lure of purity when it comes to the usage of the French language:

"No revolt against any discipline, no critique of the academic institution could have silenced what in me will always resemble some last will, the last language of the last word, of the last will: *speak in good French, in pure French*, even at the moment of challenging in a million ways everything that is allied to it, and sometimes everything that inhabits it."<sup>46</sup> (1998: 48-9)

This 'contracted hyperbolism', as Derrida puts it, the need to be 'more French than the French, more "purely" French than was demanded by the purity of purists' (49), can be traced back, as he remarks, to the education he had received in the French schools he had attended. The school and schooling, as a practice, was (and I would argue still is) one of the most powerful tools of colonialism. Hélène Cixous talks at length about the schools she had attended in Algeria, and she manifests her profound repulsion of them, and the quasi-hypnotic effect that such practices had on many generations of young students.

It is this hyperbolism, which Derrida identifies as the impulse for his work of deconstruction: '[e]verything that proceeds under the name of "deconstruction" arises from it, of course' (1998: 49). Thus it is perhaps the need to unveil and

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<sup>46</sup> My emphasis.

understand the imperative of purity that haunts him and his work, which prompted Derrida on the path of deconstruction. The relationship between Derrida's philosophy and autobiography is not an exaggerated one (although a controversial one): Lee Morrissey (1999) and Jane Hiddleston (2005) provide interesting evidence to support the link between Derrida's deconstruction, autobiography and postcoloniality. Hiddleston analyses Derrida's *L'Autre Cap (The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe)* and *Monolingualism of the Other*, and argues that the intermingling of philosophy and autobiography can tell us something about the dangers and possibilities of postcolonial inquiry. Hiddleston makes the argument that Derrida's constant move between a personal(ized) particularism (his experience of (post)colonial Algeria) and a 'prudent and differentiated universalization' (Derrida, 1998: 23), 'conveys the intractable singularity of 'postcoloniality', while in one breath bringing into focus the reductiveness of an exclusive attention to communitarianism (2005: 293).

I find Hiddleston's diagnosis of Derrida's fluctuation between the personal and the universal to be accurate. However, it is not the autobiographical impulse that guides his deconstructive project that is problematic; nor the sudden moves that Derrida undertakes towards the universal in the midst of the most personalized accounts. The autobiographical drive is the discreet yet necessary *sotto voce* that prompts him towards deconstruction. But it is his sudden flights from the personal *directly* to abstract universals (and generalizations), which I find not only troubling for reasons which I will explore further, but also disabling of the very sort of personal(ized) particularizations with which he engages in these texts. When tackling the colonial linguistic and cultural violence that allowed the 'master' to impose his imagined language on his others, Derrida carefully exploits this violence, in order to integrate it within the larger scope of the inherent coloniality of language and culture writ large (1998: 23-25). Therefore, colonial violence (or violences) become the high points or the highlights of the quasi-inexorable unfolding of linguistic and cultural practice. Not only are colonial moments evacuated of their specificity, insofar as Derrida subscribes them to a larger inherent coloniality of culture, but his sudden invocations of the universal do not allow for a sense of collective experience or mobilization. Thus the problem with Derrida's postcoloniality is his movement from the singular to the universal unmediated by any trace of the specific (in its communitarian or collective form).

There is no doubt that colonial experience varies not only from one social stratum to the other, but also from one community to the other, one family to the next, and undoubtedly among individuals. But such singularities need not be conceived in terms of absolute singularities (is it not the purpose of deconstruction to move away from absolutes?). Rather, while paying attention to the singularities of colonial experience, one can also see the common points



between various social strata, communities, families and individuals. How would one even begin to imagine social mobilization in a collective or communitarian way if one constantly avoids the claiming of a specific location for fear of re-appropriating ‘the oppressor’s valorisation of identitarianism and categorisation’ (Hiddleston, 2005: 293)? Hiddleston approvingly quotes Peter Hallward who states that ‘postcoloniality is a movement away from location, not the claiming of a new specific location’ (ibid.). But the question that arises is the following: a movement away from location towards what? Towards ‘a prudent and differentiated universalization’ that disables and diffuses any meaningful political mobilization?

In *Exotic Parodies*, Asha Varadharajan poses an important question. Reflecting on the overly enthusiastic adherence of post-structuralism to the self-effacement (an imagined one I would claim) of the subject, so that the object might speak for herself, Varadharajan thinks through the implications of such a politics (and policing) of identification in the following terms: “If the subject is already discontinuous with itself and its identity only a necessary illusion, is the power exerted in the name of that fiction of identity and mastery equally illusory?” (1995: 20). Or to re-phrase the question, bearing in mind Derrida’s thoughts on the colonial experience: If the master’s possession and appropriation of language is illusory, is the violence exerted under the guise of such an illusion equally illusory? If all language and culture is inherently colonial, then what makes the coloniality of the colonial experience specific and unique? Is it not the case that by eschewing notions of specificity one cannot meaningfully engage with the complexity of the colonial experience?

Robert Young asserts that the target of deconstruction is the category of ‘the West’, and that the motivation behind such a project is an anti-colonial one (2001: 50-51). I find his argument compelling and accurate. There is an unmistakable desire for and move towards subversion in Derrida’s work, in his denunciation of ethnocentrism, Western logocentrism, and racism in *Of Grammatology*, in *Of Hospitality*, *On Cosmopolitan Forgiveness*, *Monolingualism of the Other*, *Writing and Difference*, and others. But when such a desire for subversion couples with a refusal for specificity and with the self-effacement of the subject, subversion metamorphosizes into recontainment, as Varadharajan, has so well remarked (1995: 21). The desire to deconstruct Western logocentrism seems to translate itself into an almost exclusive preoccupation with logocentrism, so that language becomes both the object and the subject of desire. In his earlier work, Derrida exposes the ‘double intention’ that separates ‘rational method from truth’ in Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism (Derrida 1967; 1997 [1976]), and attempts to create and operate with a different method that would undermine precisely the assumed rationality of language and thereby expose both the

madness of language, and the Western-centred notion of universal Reason (cf. Young 2001).

But this new methodology, insofar as it has language as its exclusive object, ends up reproducing the very object of its critique: logocentrism. As Varadharajan notes, when the subject shies away from speaking of anything but his own experience, so that the other might speak for herself, the object in question, ‘the feminine and the ethnic other of the masterful Cartesian cogito, excluded as it were from its self-fashioning, reappears in the self-deprecatory postmodern ego as the difference *within*’ (1995: 21). The ‘objectless and non-referential movement’ in Derrida’s deconstruction (by ‘objectless’ I mean the absence of the ‘feminine and ethnic other’) is done with the purpose and in the interest of reconstructing Western logocentrism. When reading *Monolingualism of the Other*, I could not escape the feeling of an overwhelming power of language which, in Derrida’s work, seems to have a quasi-ontological status.

When pondering on his relationship with the French language, he divulges that his deep desire was to ‘make something happen to this language’, ‘making the language to come to him, forcing then the language to speak itself by itself, in another way, in his language’ (1998: 51). This desire expressed by Derrida constitutes a reversal of the relationship between self and language, one which sees the language obeying the exigencies of the speaker, and not vice versa. But as Derrida remarks a bit later, this dream, this desire, constituted his ‘independence from Algeria’, his ‘nostalgeria’ (1998: 52). This last statement is tinged by such a strong sense of defeat and powerlessness, that the reader cannot escape the feeling that in the end, language has, once again, proven victorious. Is Derrida’s ‘nostalgeria’, in his fusion of ‘nostalgia’ and ‘Algeria’, the expression of a defeat, of having been seduced by the master’s language, the other’s language, the one that is not his ‘own’? Varadharajan remarks that

“[f]or the postcolonial intellectual, whose relation to occidental thought is not one of alienation but of agonizing proximity, the moment of dissidence occurs when her immersion in the destructive element enables her, as Adorno might say, to hate it properly.” (1995: xxviii)

If that is the case, then it appears that Derrida’s ‘agonizing proximity’ to and his self-avowed desire for the other’s language, the master’s language, has turned out to be the master-narrative of deconstruction. Derrida’s paradoxical task to translate into the monolanguage, into ‘the only French culture [he has] at [his] disposal’ a language and a culture to which his access was marked by an interdict (1998: 70), prompted him to attempt to destabilize the monolanguage from *within*. But insofar as this was a self-referential exercise *par excellence* (both in its intent

and in its method), and self-referentiality involves great risks in such a project, it seems that his deconstruction often slips into reconstruction and recontainment.

### **Hélène Cixous' desire of fusion and language of desire**

Cixous' *Reveries of the Wild Woman. Primal Scenes* constitutes an exposé on the desire that binds her to Algeria, and on Algeria as an ever elusive object of desire. As the author confesses in the opening of her essay, '[t]he whole time I was living in Algeria I would dream of one day arriving in Algeria, I would have done anything to get there, I had written, I never made it to Algeria...'. Algeria can never be possessed, attained or understood. It seems that, as Lyotard himself would put it, Algeria constitutes an 'intractability', an intractable absence as presence, which always eludes the one who desires her. Such an intractability arises not only for the one who never interacts with her, but also, and perhaps especially for the one who is born there but who does not quite belong there, as seems to be the case with both Cixous and Derrida.

By 'the one who does not quite belong', I am referring particularly to members of the Jewish community in Algeria, such as Derrida and Cixous, who talk of their Algerian experience in very similar ways. Moreover, as is seen further in chapter 4, this seems to be an important common point among other Jewish intellectuals from the Maghreb region, such as Albert Memmi, who was also a member of the Maghrebian Jewish community (of Tunis). The Jewish communities in the Maghreb seem to have had an ambivalent position within Maghrebian societies, both during and after colonization. During colonization they enjoyed a somewhat privileged status in the Maghrebs (as seen from the Crémieux decree of 1870, whereby Algerian Jews were granted French citizenship by the French government). However, after decolonization, with the deployment of nationalist projects of Arabization of the newly independent countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, the position of the Jewish communities became an uncomfortable and even an impossible one. Caught between the fickle and shallow favouritism of the French, and the active discrimination of the Arab nationalist policies, an overwhelming number of Jewish people from the Maghreb have emigrated after decolonization, mainly to France.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> I have oversimplified the discussion on the situation of the Jewish community in the Maghreb. The paradoxes and ambivalences that characterize the condition of the Jews in the Maghreb vary not only from country to country, but also from the rural to the urban, and among different social classes. For example, in Tunisia, many Jewish people migrated after independence, but most of them left Tunisia after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. I owe this insight to personal communications with Yassine Essid, Professor of History at the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Tunis (Tunis, April 2007).

As such, Cixous ponders on her experience as a Jew, as a poor Jew, more precisely, living in the district of Clos-Salembier of Algiers, considered as the *indigène* district of Algiers, hence the poorest one. Also she meditates on her condition as a person considered to be French according to the Crémieux decree, but who does not really feel French, and on her condition as a woman. Cixous' relationship with Algeria is one of desired fusion. Such a desire for fusion appears to be expressed linguistically, in the form of 'I thought I am *inseparab*' (2006: 24), 'my father an arabizarre' (25), 'my Disalgeria' (39), 'the malgerian force of imagination' (64), and 'my Algeriance' (Cixous, 1998: 153). Cixous' fashioning of new words and new feelings, expressed in the form of fusions, transgresses the limits of language by materializing feelings into words and imbuing them with a specificity that is deeply personal and personalized. Terms like 'Disalgeria', 'malgerian' and 'Algeriance' express not only states of mind and of the heart in regards to an Algerian specificity, but they also evoke a sense of an ever elusive absence as presence, an unattainable entity named Algeria, one which one desires but never captures.

Moreover, the act of fusion, aside from expressing a personal filtering of the experience of Algeria, evokes an ethical stance that Cixous articulated in *The Newly Born Woman*, according to which

"there is no *invention* possible, whether it be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety: separate-people, thought-/people, whose populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know – our women, our monsters, our jackals, our Arabs, our aliases, our frights.' (1986: 84)

Thus such terms born out of fusions constitute new selves, into which selfhood and alterity are located as presences, and whose ethical impulse is the 'nonexclusion of difference' and the 'multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body' (1986: 85). Unlike Derrida, Cixous eschews the hyphenation of her Algerian experience, and opts for fusion. If Derrida expresses his sense of identification, or his personal anamnesis, as he puts it, through the 'Franco'-Maghrebian' compound, Cixous goes further and inscribes the Algerian experience onto her body:

"I've got Algeria in my lungs in my throat I don't find it strange that it should turn me hot and cold and bruise my nervous system with its toxic overflow. I attribute the scars of my marked body to the malgerian force of my imagination..." (2006: 64)

In her narrative of *Reveries of the Wild Woman*, Cixous forgoes conventions of punctuation, in an attempt to replicate the feeling of fluidity that only the stream of memory and (un)consciousness can evoke. But insofar as Cixous' recollection of Algeria suggests feelings of elusiveness, unattainability, of a thoroughly enigmatic absence as presence, one can sense an aura of exoticism, mystery and reification of otherness. Alterity or difference seems to become, in the being in/of Algeria, incarnate alterity, whose otherness one cannot hope to know or fathom. In *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, Rey Chow remarked that critical discourses of the non-West produce an Other 'that is deprived of fantasy, desires, and contradictory emotions' (1991, xiii). In her autobiographical essay, on the contrary, Cixous produces an Algeria who is nothing *but* incarnate desire, fantasy, and contradictory emotions. Cixous' Algeria acquires an almost spectral presence, a phantasmatic expression of otherness that is felt as presence only insofar as it is crystallized as the unknown and the unknowable. In this regard, Cixous' recollection of Algeria echoes Lyotard's vision of Algeria as the *intractable*, which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Towards the end of the narrative, Cixous examines a traumatic event of her childhood in the Algerian city of Oran, where she witnessed the gruesome accident of a little girl being cut in two on a merry-go-round ride. Cixous explicitly draws a parallel between the little girl cut in two and the 'FrenchAlgeria' who leaves the stage as the Algerian war for independence unfolds (2006: 81-82). This 'FrenchAlgeria' who gets cut in two unmistakably expresses the violence of the separation, through decolonization, of the equally violent fusion that had been the colonial project. The moral of the story seems to be that the violent colonial fusion can only be undone through a violent severing of the former colonial power, a process which is as traumatic as it is necessary, even unavoidable. Cixous sees herself as the 'victim's witness, cut off from the victim' (2006: 82). The problem that arises at this point is the portrayal of a 'FrenchAlgeria' as *the* victim, whose only possibility of liberation is to be cut in two. The victimization of 'FrenchAlgeria' adds one more dimension to the image of enigmatic otherness and exotic intractability that Cixous inadvertently attaches to Algeria: that of a feminized victim, who emanates passivity and a lack of agency, even as its mystery and enticing otherness seem to overcome the 'inventing subject' with desire. Unlike Chow's humourless non-West, Cixous' Algeria(nce) is suffused with contradictory emotions. But most of the contradictory emotions seem to belong to Cixous herself.

Therefore, her statement according to which she 'decided to get out of FrenchAlgeria for lack of Algeria' can have multiple and contradictory meanings (2006: 81). One powerful and significant meaning that emanates from her text is related to Cixous' experience of French schooling and the colonial system of education. The feeling evoked by such an experience is one of absolute

abhorrence and revolt. She describes herself as being ‘enrolled [...] in mental aberration’, where she ‘could no longer discern a trace not a single trace of malgeria’ (2006: 71). In her own words, the colonial practice of schooling was

“a plan to efface the Algerian being, carried out in the same way as all comparable plans to efface in all the countries which work to enforce *total substitution*. Substitution, excision, and phantomization, operations carried out with *total success* insofar as they concern the tools, actors, actresses, operators, workers, consumers, beneficiaries, recipients of the plan.”<sup>48</sup> (2006: 70-71)

Such powerful and compelling images of the mental violence of the colonial project (which supported and was supported by the material violence of it), could not but leave a painfully profound impact on Cixous herself, who describes herself as ‘a book of apocalypses written in a language I don’t speak’ and ‘hav[ing] no author’ (2006: 71). This reminds the reader of Derrida’s monolingualism, according to which he speaks only one language, which he cannot claim as his ‘own’. But if such an enrolment in ‘mental aberration’, as Cixous so aptly puts it, leaves her speaking (or not speaking) a language she does not own, the same does not follow in an equal degree for Algeria. As Asha Varadharajan remarks in *Exotic Parodies*, both colonization and decolonization were and will remain incomplete processes (1995: xviii). Since Derrida himself acknowledges that there is no absolute (re)appropriation, it follows then that neither the colonial educational project nor the decolonization process carried the ‘total success’ Cixous envisions. The mental aberration that Cixous evokes in all its violence has had devastating effects on formerly colonized societies, but it has not been total nor absolute.

This totalization of victimization in Cixous’ narrative could account for a different meaning to her statement of leaving FrenchAlgeria for lack of Algeria. Perhaps the Algeria she experienced as lacking was an Algeria that was never there, that was never possible. One cannot escape the fantasy of nativism that seems to radiate from Cixous’ narrative. I make this argument having sensed a certain nativization of Arabs and of ‘Arabitude’ (as Cixous calls it), which prevents her from conveying to the reader a more nuanced and contradictory picture of Algeria. In her “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria”, Cixous mentions ‘the unshakeable certainty that ‘the Arabs’ were the true offspring of this dusty and perfumed soil’, or that ‘the Arabs [were] [...] the earliest ‘arrivals’ in this land’ (1998: 153, 162). It is understandable that Cixous makes such statements to counter the French colonial claims, and in

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<sup>48</sup> My emphasis.

solidarity with the colonized population of Algeria. But her ‘unshakeable certainty’ needs to be vastly qualified in a text that talks about colonial violence. Her totalized and unnuanced victimization of Arabs obscures the ways in which such an oppression did not prevent other groups from being oppressed by Arabs, such as the Berbers, the Touaregs, the black Africans, the Jews (!), and others.

The Berbers, who are historically considered the ‘first inhabitants’ of North Africa (who call themselves *Imazighen*, meaning ‘free men’) have undergone violent struggles against the imperial ambitions and conquering waves of the Romans (arriving in North Africa in 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.); against the Vandals (coming from Spain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.); against the Byzantines (who arrived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.); and against the Arabs (who arrived in North Africa in 647 A.D. from the Arabic Peninsula) (Toumi 2000: 69-70).<sup>49</sup> Moreover, with the decolonization of the formerly colonized countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, the situation of the Berbers and other nomadic tribes deteriorated further, as the nationalist projects of Arabization sought to eradicate cultural and linguistic diversity.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, one needs to be very careful when operating with ‘unshakeable certainties’ and when assigning indisputable labels of victims and oppressed. This sort of enigmatic nativism that precludes the ‘inventing subject’ from perceiving the other as ridden with tensions and ambivalence also relegates the other as the (unknowable) limit of Western discourse’s knowledge. Between Derrida’s deconstruction of logocentrism and Cixous’ displacement of phallogentrism, the postcolonial subject tends to be recolonized as the wholly other whose alterity is unfathomable, and whose difference serves to re-fashion a knowable Western discourse.

### **Lyotard’s Algerian intractability – a lover’s lament**

If Cixous explores her desire for Algeria in an autobiographical narrative, Lyotard uses his experience in Algeria as a teacher as a pretext and as an impulse for in-depth analyses of the political situation in Algeria (and in North Africa in general), both during colonialism and shortly after Algeria’s independence. Lyotard, the political theorist, both commends the organized Algerian resistance (under the leadership of the Front de Libération National), and muses on the legacies of this leadership after decolonization. Indeed, with an extraordinary

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<sup>49</sup> For a further examination of the Maghreb’s cultural and linguistic diversity, see Alawa Toumi’s chapter, “Creolized North Africa. What do they really speak in the Maghreb?” in Le Hir and Strand (eds), 2000.

<sup>50</sup> A post-colonial example of Berber mobilization against Arab nationalism is the ‘Berber Spring’, which took place in the 1980s, as a period of political mobilization by Berber intellectuals and activists in the Algerian region of Kabylie. The events have spilled over into neighbouring Morocco, where the Berber Spring is commemorated annually by Berberophone students. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was deeply inspired by his stay in Kabylie between 1958 and 1960, a stay which has greatly influenced his anthropological works.

insight, Lyotard foresees the tensions and deep divides that are going to fracture postcolonial Algerian society. But Lyotard, the lover of Algeria (a disillusioned lover to be more exact), cannot help but project his fantasies and desires on a society who, in his estimate, deserves a better fate. “The Name of Algeria” is a short essay published by Lyotard in June 1989, and precedes the collection of essays on Algeria that has become the greater part of his *Political Writings*.<sup>51</sup>

In this short essay, Lyotard defines the ‘intractable [*intraitable*]’ as ‘[t]his stake, which motivates the carrying on of resistance by other means, on other terrains, and perhaps without goals that can be clearly defined’ (1993: 166). In examining the politics of the Algerian War, and of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, Lyotard adopts a position of invested detachment, insofar as he situates himself not as a French nor as an Algerian, but as an ‘internationalist’, as a member of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* movement. This movement was a French-based radical socialist group that came into being after World War II, and which critiqued Trotsky’s failure to discern the ‘class nature of “communist” societies, refusing to see in their bureaucratization the formation of a new exploitative ruling class’ (Lyotard, 1993: 165). Thus *Socialisme ou Barbarie* rejects the idea of a ruling party as continued oppression of the working class, and promotes the organized struggles of workers.

Caught between his own political views and commitments, and the novelty and specificity of the quasi-classless (at the time) Algerian struggle, Lyotard sees himself as the subject of an ‘intimate differend’: Lyotard, the internationalist and the lover of Algeria, thought it was ‘just for Algerians to enforce their name upon the world’, but Lyotard, the political theorist and the member of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, felt it was indispensable for him to criticize the class nature of the independent society (1993: 168). In his essay “The State and Politics in the France of 1960”, Lyotard offers a profound and compelling analysis of the political and social conditions of French society during the Algerian War, and articulates a series of contradictions that involve both the colonial project in Algeria, and the Western capitalist base that allows for and that necessitates such a project. In here, Lyotard explores the political, economic and social consequences of colonialism ‘at home’ in French society, and suggests that, with the Algerian War, the French left had undergone a moment of depoliticization.<sup>52</sup> This depoliticization is implied by the French left’s cries of fascism as a way ‘to give life to themselves’ (1993: 269), since fascism was a ‘situation with which they were *already* familiar’ (1993: 268). Lyotard’s

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<sup>51</sup>In French, the collection of essays on the Algerian War was edited by Mohammed Ramdani, and entitled *La Guerre des Algériens. Écrits 1956-1963*. The volume was published in 1989 in Paris.

<sup>52</sup>This process of depoliticization of the exploited class is identified, by Lyotard, as ‘the foundation of de Gaulle’s regime’, and also ‘its permanent atmosphere’ (1993: 255).



diagnosis is merciless: '[t]his is no longer politics; it is the hypermemory of the dying' (1993: 269). As Winifred Woodhull points, in *Transfigurations of the Maghreb*, Lyotard seems to locate a moment of depoliticization of the French society during the Algerian War (or perhaps *with* the Algerian War), so that the intractable/the differend must be located and explored elsewhere (1993: xvi), 'on other terrains'. Thus the name of Algeria is one of an intractable difference (which at times becomes intractable 'inventiveness' or 'creativity' [Lyotard, 1993: 167]), a difference which will from then on make itself known through other means or in other locations, identified by Lyotard in his *Differend* as follows: 'What is at stake in a *literature*, in a *philosophy*, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them' (1988: 13).<sup>53</sup>

Winifred Woodhull expresses her discontent with Lyotard's assessment of intractability. In her view, to consider the Algerian experience as intractable, an intractability that can only express itself in realms other than the political one, glosses over the very grounded and grassroots mobilizations that have taken place in Algeria among students, intellectuals, women, and Berbers (see note 17).<sup>54</sup> Yet again, as with Derrida and Cixous, in Lyotard's vision, the West becomes the point of reference and the primary location of the political: he claims that 'the voice of the intractable difference no longer makes itself heard, in *Western societies*, in social or political channels' (as quoted in Woodhull, 1993: xvii). As such, this intractable difference can only manifest itself in poetic/aesthetic and philosophical realms. Such a categorical statement moves Lyotard to claim, in "The Name of Algeria", that

"it is inaccurate, and intellectually dishonest, to place in activities of free spontaneity – those of youths, immigrants, women, homosexuals, prisoners, or peoples of the third world, which destabilize the system here and there – the hope that we, as Marxists, could only place in the revolutionary activity of the industrial proletariat. This is not to say that these initiatives are negligible. But thought must bend to evidence that the

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<sup>53</sup> My emphasis. Lyotard suggests in here that the political (in its form as 'differend' or 'intractability') has now to be found and explored in literature or philosophy, *perhaps* in politics.

<sup>54</sup> I would argue that, although I sympathize with Woodhull's critique of Lyotard's glossing over of *other* meaningful political struggles, Lyotard evacuates such struggles of their political meaning (and content) in a less direct and definitive manner than Woodhull would like to suggest. After all, Lyotard discusses both May '68 (in his "A l'Insu (Unbeknownst)") and the Algerian War as historical events whereby the intractable made itself manifest. But only initially, or rather only in their intent. Since they ended up betraying their 'fidelity to non-enchained' (1991: 45), neither of them were politically successful, according to Lyotard. What he means by the 'non-enchained' is that 'heterogeneous thing' within the the social body that is both within and outside representation, and that unsettles the 'phantasm of oneness and totality' that always haunts statist society (1991: 43-4).

master narratives of emancipation, starting (or ending) with our own, that of radical Marxism, have lost their intelligibility and their substance.” (1993: 169)<sup>55</sup>

Edward Said remarked that ‘the ideologies of imperialism *and the critiques of imperialism* [...] shared the same historicist premises’ (cited in Young 2004: 2). One cannot escape the sense that this sort of critique can be very well applied to the already quoted passage by Lyotard. It seems that insofar as ‘activities of free spontaneity’ do not revolve around the programme and the tenets endorsed by radical Marxism, they have very little chance of exerting a significant impact. Robert Young, in his “*White Mythologies Revisited*”, critiques the discursive and material practices of the group he ironically calls MAMA (male Anglo-Saxon Marxist academia), who have systematically ignored the organized struggles of feminists, ‘Third World’ and indigenous peoples, even though theoretically it expressed sympathy and support for the ‘Third World’ (2004: 4-5). The main problem identified by Young is that the ‘implacable whiteness, [and] its Eurocentrism’, which characterized MAMA’s engagement with issues of race, gender and anti-colonial struggles has ‘fiercely policed its orthodoxies, maintaining a hegemonic discourse that at the time dominated leftist thinking in Europe’ (2004: 4).

Lyotard’s engagement with the Algerian problem is a highly sophisticated one (in terms of its political analysis), and the stance he adopts is one of clear anti-colonialism, which, when considered in the context of the shameful positions adopted by the French and Algerian left vis-à-vis the Algerian struggle, is indeed not only commendable, but constitutes, in the context of its period, a veritable *rara avis*.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, when considering the statements already quoted, one has difficulty exculpating Lyotard of the accusations laid against the Anglo-Saxon Marxists by Young. To echo Winifred Woodhull’s question: should one assume that struggles related to issues of race, gender, (neo)colonialism do not have much chance of being political (and politicizing), simply because Marxism has lost ‘its intelligibility and substance’ (in the West) (1993: xvi-viii)?<sup>57</sup> Is one supposed to think that if the Western radical discourses and practices have become depoliticized, then the same must follow for the rest of the world?

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<sup>55</sup> Although I cite the 1993 edition, translated by Bill Readings and Kevin Paul, it is the translation that Woodhull uses in her book *Transfigurations of the Maghreb* (1993) that I have quoted, insofar as this particular translation conveys more clearly the meaning of Lyotard’s controversial statement. Readings and Paul’s translation is somewhat confusing and unclear.

<sup>56</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the position of the French left with respect to the Algerian War see Lyotard’s essays on the Algerian War in his *Political Writings*. Also, see Blanchard et alia, *Le Paris Arabe* and Blanchard and Bancel, *De l’indigène à l’immigré*.

<sup>57</sup> For an extended critique of Lyotard’s politics see Woodhull’s “Introduction” to her *Transfigurations of the Maghreb*.

At this point, one must note that Lyotard's intimate differend (mentioned earlier) has acquired a new twist. Lyotard confesses that the letters/essays he has written on the Algerian War are the 'correspondence of a lover' (1993: 170): 'From a distance, the lover confesses his jealousy of everything that deceives or will deceive the loved one. He complains, knowing the loved one will not meet the fate that courage and beauty deserve' (ibid.). In the light of the passage already quoted at length about the loss of intelligibility of radical Western discourses, I see Lyotard's intimate differend in the following manner: Lyotard, the lover of Algeria, desires his beloved's 'liberty', as he puts it, and her liberation from colonial occupation (ibid.); but Lyotard, the radical Marxist, knows that, insofar as radical discourses and practices of emancipation 'have lost their intelligibility and substance', this lover's desire is somewhat futile. The lover's lament is thus the lover's differend, insofar as he is the same 'inventing subject', to use Cixous' term, of both the yearning desire and of the condition of its impossibility.

**The (im)possibilities of theoretical miscegenation: what is at stake in considering post-structuralism as a postcolonial theory?**

In conceptualizing the notion of 'differend', Lyotard remarks that such a notion can be perceived as 'the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim' (1988: 9). He uses the example of the Shoah in order to illustrate the paradox according to which testifying to the Shoah was somewhat of an impossibility since those who had witnessed (seen) the experience of the gas chambers had died.<sup>58</sup> In the same vein, in the postcolonial context, the colonial experience has acquired such totalizing dimensions, that for Martinicans, for example, it is almost impossible to bear witness to their (post)colonial oppression (illustrated by their having French citizenship), since the

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<sup>58</sup> For a fascinating analysis of the ethical and philosophical implications of the impossible witness situations, see Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*. In here, Agamben seems to concur with Lyotard to the extent to which he acknowledges that the situation of the Jews at Auschwitz gives rise to a differend: the act of testimony about Auschwitz is inexorably marked by a lacuna; the true witness of Auschwitz cannot be the survivor, since the true witnesses have not only died (2002: 33), but they have wandered off the realm of the human into the condition that Agamben identifies as the *Muselman*, the 'threshold between life and death, the human and the inhuman' (2002: 47). However, for Agamben, this situation is not that of a conundrum that needs to be preserved so that meta-narratives might be subverted by the mere existence of the differend(s) (which seems to be Lyotard's argument in *The Differend*). Agamben's analysis of Auschwitz represents the positing of an ethical position(ing) of the survivor as a witness to the impossible/unthinkable (even if she/he is not the true witness); it also attempts to transcend the differend, not by a neutralization of its paradoxical terms, but by re-phrasing the differend in the following terms: the mere existence of the impossibility to bear witness, and of the impossibility of speech constitute testimonies in themselves, they constitute 'the event of a subjectivity' (2002: 164).

only idiom (linguistic and legal) in which they can express this suffering is the French one.

In the case of Derrida and Cixous, as postcolonial subjects, one can identify the terms of this sort of differend. As both Derrida and Cixous point out, they are the (postcolonial) subjects of a historical paradox: they both experienced French colonialism (with its discriminatory effects), but the only language in which they can express this experience is French, the only language they speak, but which is not their own.<sup>59</sup> In Lyotard's terms, their narratives constitute instances of an impossibility of bearing witness to the injustice of their condition. Therefore, their projects attempt to subvert the only language they speak from *within*, and 'make something happen' to it, as Derrida confesses (1998: 51). The problem arises from the implications that such self-referential projects pose for imagining and understanding postcoloniality.

As I repeatedly mentioned so far, deconstruction (at least the kind that is associated with Derrida, Cixous and Lyotard) emerged out of an anti-colonial stance. Hopefully I managed to persuade the reader that deconstruction and postcolonialism are intimately linked, not only in the works of postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – who want to 'make something happen' to deconstruction by grafting it onto postcolonial analysis – but, historically, deconstruction as a theory emerged as a project of displacement and subversion of the category of 'the West', in the context of the Algerian War against French colonialism. Therefore, what is at stake in considering deconstruction/post-structuralism as a postcolonial theory?

The most important thing that springs to mind is the stake of an ethical positioning. To view, and more importantly, to practice deconstruction with a postcolonial background in mind allows one to go beyond an exercise that begins with the category of 'the West' (albeit in a subversive and critical mode) and that ends up reconstituting the image of the West without significant attention paid to *other* voices beyond the Western pale. Moreover, it would allow for a transcendence of the West as a constant reference point (be it a positive or a negative one). I argue that deconstruction informed by postcolonial perspectives would allow for a much needed balance between too narrowly defined and understood oppositional politics (as a certain kind of postcolonial theory is in danger of becoming), and analyses that lack the groundedness and the deeply politicized positions (stemming from historical contexts), which deconstruction

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<sup>59</sup> Cixous actually makes mention of a sort of multilingualism going on in her family, on account of her parents coming from different backgrounds (1998: 168). Yet, she identifies herself as as 'a book of apocalypses written in *a language I don't speak*' and 'hav[ing] no author' (2006: 71; my emphasis).

often lacks.<sup>60</sup> I will illustrate my argument by an examination of a concrete instance, which exposed the dangers of postmodern deconstruction without a postcolonial grounding.

*On the politics of deconstructive irony in the absence of the postcolonial*

In an article aptly entitled “The Post always rings twice: the postmodern and the postcolonial”, Linda Hutcheon analyses the varied negative reactions triggered by an exhibit entitled “Into the Heart of Africa” and hosted by the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), in Toronto, between November 1989 and August 1990. The exhibition was long awaited and greatly anticipated since it was ‘the first complete [...] showing of the small African collection of the museum’ (1994: 208). The collection was constituted of various objects of African origin and items belonging to Canadian explorers, missionaries and soldiers (who had participated to the British imperialist project of colonization in Africa). Also, there was a number of paintings and images that vividly illustrated the violent colonial encounters between colonialists and Africans. The intention of the organizers was to subvert and critique both the discourse and the practices that the colonial project had engendered, through the use of irony and through an attempt to deconstruct the museum from *within*. Thus the expressed intent of the exhibit was to offer a ‘critical examination of the Canadian missionary and military experience in turn-of-century Africa’ (John McNeill quoted in Hutcheon, 1994: 209). However, the organizers did not anticipate the degree of outrage that such an exhibit (that boasted a critical deconstructive approach) provoked in members coming from different communities. The strongest reaction came from the group known as the ‘Coalition for the Truth in Africa’, who picketed the museum denouncing the ‘clear and concise attempt to mislead the public and to further tarnish the image of Africa and African people’ (quoted in Hutcheon, 1994: 212). So what went wrong?

In an insightful and deeply grounded analysis, Hutcheon identifies several problems. Firstly, the irony used by the organizers to subvert the colonial ideology was so subtle and inconsistent that the message conveyed by the exhibit was confusing at best. Objects, whether African or colonialist, were presented in the typical isolated encasements so specific to museums (and museumization), accompanied by texts that did very little to displace the violence of the image except to offer an inconsistent use of inverted commas around words like the ‘dark

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<sup>60</sup> I do not disavow the oppositional politics of postcolonialism. On the contrary, I see them as both enabling and useful to the extent to which they ground ethical responsibility and political engagement. But I do think that such oppositional stances need to move beyond the simplistic couples of colonizer/colonized, and oppressor/oppressed. One of the reasons for which I chose to investigate the various productions of the ‘native’ as a category, image and practice is to explore various (post)colonial positions that go beyond and between such binaries.

continent', 'primitive', or 'savage customs'(1994: 217). Such a subtle linguistic/textual subversion triggered more confusion as the viewer did not know how to interpret the comas: do they invalidate or authenticate the terms in question (ibid.)? Moreover, the use of inverted comas to other metaphors, titles and object descriptions, and the lack of inverted comas in instances where it seemed appropriate (such as the characterization of Livingstone as a hero) provoked further confusion and anger (1994: 217- 219). The main argument that was brought against the exhibit, by the Coalition for the Truth in Africa, was that 'the subtleties of irony could not compete with the power of the images of subjugation' (quoted in Hutcheon, 1994: 221). The confusion and anger that was provoked by the exhibit owed a great deal to the lack of any expressed judgement on the part of the organizers with respect to the project of colonialism. The organizers assumed that the mere display of images and objects will clue the visitors in as to the implied irony of the display.

One of the most important issues identified by Hutcheon is that 'the focus was never intended to be entirely on Africa itself, but on the material manifestations of the ideology of Empire in Africa' (1994: 212). Insofar as the intent of the exhibition lay on the deconstruction of the ideology of Empire without an alternative narrative coming from African voices, the self-referential exercise ended up reconstructing the Western narrative of emancipation and civilization, and recontaining African subjectivity within this violent narrative. As Hutcheon remarked, 'Into the Heart of Africa was, in other words, postmodernly deconstructive; it was not postcolonially oppositional' (1994: 222). As pointed out by the article, the main problem with the exhibition was that it was done from the point of view of the colonizers, and more importantly it was the *only* view that was offered (ibid.).

I discussed Hutcheon's analysis of the 'Into the Heart of Africa' exhibit as it seemed to be an intriguing illustration of the dangers posed by the disassociation of postcoloniality from deconstruction. As the case of the controversial ROM exhibition demonstrates, one cannot count only on the ironies and the subtle linguistic turns of deconstruction to perform the work of memory when it comes to the violence of colonialism. For Linda Hutcheon, for the exhibit to have been '*postcolonial*, [...] [it] would have had to present and then make a judgement about the effects of colonization, not simply outline its intentions' (1994: 223).<sup>61</sup> This brings me to Derrida's anti-colonial impulse in undertaking the work of deconstruction: Derrida's project assumes that deconstructing the West from *within* constitutes a sufficient gesture of subverting and displacing the West. However, when such a gesture is not accompanied by a 'judgment about the effects of colonization', a judgement that engages with the specificity of

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<sup>61</sup> My underlining.

colonialism *and* that brings about a meaningful dialogue with those colonized, deconstruction ends up being a sophisticated *mis-en-scène* of the follies of the West, one whose main and quasi-only dramatic character is the West. A postcolonial horizon would help re-direct the deconstructive gesture from such a redundant exercise.

What I mean by the previous criticisms is inspired, in part, by Rey Chow's critique of Derrida's representation of Chinese writing in *Of Grammatology*. In a typically absorbing analysis, Chow deconstructs Derrida's own implicit orientalism in his seminal work. The problem that Chow identifies with Derrida's text is that it attributes 'imagined, fantastical qualities to the East without paying attention to its reality' (Chow, 2001: 70). As such, Derrida uses the stereotype of the Chinese writing as an ideographic language and crystallizes its erroneously represented nature into the West's *other*, who escapes scrutability and proper comprehension (ibid.). For this reason, the East becomes nothing more than the 'name of the limits of the text's knowledge', as Spivak aptly points out in the preface to her English translation (quoted in Chow, ibid.). The paradox is that a method that aims at subverting the category of the West ends up reifying (and impersonating!) the very 'metaphysics of presence' it denounces!<sup>62</sup> Rey Chow assesses that 'Derrida's Chinese writing [acts] as a spectre, a kind of living dead that must, in his philosophizing, be preserved in its spectrality to remain a utopian inspiration' (2001: 72).

In this context, I should clarify my stance on the (im)possibilities of post-structuralism/deconstruction as a postcolonial theory. Although I am convinced by Robert Young's argument that deconstruction emerged out of an anti-colonial impulse, I do not think it lived up to its initial impulse. And that is precisely why I think it is crucial that a re-association between deconstruction and postcoloniality be made. One of the frames within which this re-association needs to happen is that of an ethical responsibility. Derrida (and following in Derrida's footsteps so many other intellectuals, including myself) adopts an ethical positioning that moves from an 'intractable singularity' (his experience of (post)colonial Algeria) to a 'prudent and differentiated universalization' (Derrida, 1998: 23), for fear that focusing on more collective approaches to colonialism might make the project of deconstruction a reductive one (cf. Hiddleston, 2005: 293). When such a move is constantly performed what emerges is an apologia for self-referentiality (masked as the transparency or effacing of the subject) on account of the subject being able only to speak for himself, so that the other might be allowed her own voice.

This systematic refusal to speak for others (while laudable in its intent) translates (also systematically) into a gesture of absolving oneself of the 'responsibility for the brutality of history' (Varadharajan, 1995: xvi). The main

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<sup>62</sup> See Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play."

issue here is that this refusal becomes another doubly re-colonizing gesture: firstly, the Western critic attributes himself/herself the ‘right to grant the other “permission to narrate” her (hi)story’ (Varadharajan, 1995: xvii). Secondly, this much-extolled reflexivity implies that the ‘other’ constitutes a ‘barrier’ of some sort (ibid.), an inscrutable and wholly different *other* that serves the same purpose and plays the same role as Derrida’s exotic representation of Chinese writing: that of the limit of the critic’s knowledge. In this context, as Linda Hutcheon’s analysis demonstrates, what was intended as a reflexive and critical auto-ethnography, becomes an ethnography that paralyzes the other into a stereotypical frame of *difference* and exoticism. Moreover, moving beyond Varadharajan’s insightful critique of post-structuralist reflexivity, it is not reflexivity *per se* that is problematic. I think reflexivity is desirable and highly necessary in the work of deconstruction. It is a particular aspect of reflexivity that needs to be questioned: that of focusing so much on the auto-ethnographic/self-referential dimension of subjectivity that the other is usually treated in an anecdotal or mystifying way. I will clarify and exemplify this as follows.

As the refusal to speak for others (in the hope that the others will speak for themselves) unfolds in the work of deconstruction, the implicit assumption that emerges (between the lines) is that otherness is ‘radical and irreducible’ (Varadharajan, 1995: xvii). Such a vision of otherness produces a sanctification of the ‘native’, which, in Rey Chow’s understanding, stems from a ‘Third Worldist fantasy’ of the Western critical intellectual, whose strategy is a ‘*rhetorical* renunciation of the material power that enables her rhetoric’ (1993: 10-11).<sup>63</sup> This strategic renunciation, Rey Chow identifies as the ‘productivity of the white guilt’, whose fantasy of the absolute and total difference of Eastern from Western societies translates itself (textually and materially) into a representation of otherness that re-materializes the binary structure (West/East; West/Other) deconstruction claims to have subverted.

#### *Deconstructive and postcolonial politics in IR*

This discussion on the claims of post-structuralism to an effacement of the subject, and consequently, to a refusal to speak for others, takes me into a

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<sup>63</sup> My use of the term ‘strategy’ here follows Michel de Certeau’s usage in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In here, de Certeau identifies ‘strategy’ as the assuming of a place by a ‘subject of will and power’ that can be designated as ‘proper’, and that can serve as the basis for the generation of relations ‘with an exterior distinct from it’ (1988: xix). De Certeau uses this concept in juxtaposition to that of ‘tactic’, which is meant to imply a non-proper place that ‘belongs to the other’, and that depends on time (as opposed to the ‘strategy’ which depends on space) (ibid). I chose to associate de Certeau’s understanding of strategy to the fantasies of the Western critic, insofar as I perceive some of the Western critics to be operating with strategies *masked as* tactics. They claim to operate from a marginal non-proper place, when in fact they enjoy the privileges of the proper space, which makes possible and enables their claims to subversive tactics.



*problématique* that has been an important concern of critical approaches to International Relations (IR). Why should IR be concerned with the politics of subjectivity, or with the possibility of post-structuralism as a post-colonial theory? The answer is because International Relations, understood as a disciplinary field of knowledge that concerns itself with world politics, can be regarded as an imaginative form of writing, one whose authors (Cixous' 'inventing subjects') can and should be brought to task with respect to the methods they employ to engage with world politics, to the characters they choose to cast within their texts, and to the types of image they paint of the world. Simply put, IR theory can be viewed as an 'ensemble of stories' we tell about the world (Clifford Geertz cited by Cynthia Weber, 2001: 129-130).

This *reading* of a 'field' with pretensions to disciplinarity and scientific methodologies can deliver quite a blow to its claims to truth, impartiality and universality. To read IR theory/theories as texts, as stories that we tell about the world, throws a deep light of ambiguity and accountable subjectivity on views that were considered to come from nowhere.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, to view IR theories as stories assigns a keen sense of authorship to texts that claim to merely re-produce an outside reality, and to portray it as they see it (see Morgenthau 1967, Waltz 1979, Viotti and Kauppi 1987).

The idea that IR theory can be seen as an imaginative form of writing (see Darby 1998) has made inroads into IR through authors that embrace post-structuralist/postmodernist approaches. These authors (Walker 1991; George 1994, 1995; Campbell 1998; Enloe 1996; Weber 2001, 2002; Ashley 1996; Darby and Paolini 1994; Doty 1996; Chowdhry and Nair 2004) attempt (and succeed in my opinion) to de-mystify the notion that the theories put forth by the mainstream are theories that reflect reality, hence they are universal truths with which all humankind can identify themselves. The act of writing implies that the text one produces is imbued with one's subjectivity, one's thoughts, one's vision of the world. As such, the long cherished ideal of objectivity and neutrality is seen in its deeply illusory light. Post-structuralist authors, who work in the area of IR, make claims to a different kind of subjectivity, one that is fraught with ambiguities and contradictions, one that challenges the idea of a self-reliant, unambiguous self (see Ashley and Walker 1990). Taking their cue from Roland Barthes (1975), they proclaim the 'death of the author.' By this, they imply not the revival of some sort of objectivity. Rather they deny the idea of an omniscient and omnipotent author

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<sup>64</sup> I am suggesting that the texts of the canon are imbued with an author-ship that belies its subjective origins and its 'perspectival gaze' (see Haraway 1991). I believe that any view, any theory needs to be subjectively located, in that it always comes from *somewhere* and it betrays certain normative commitments. As such, by using the expression 'accountable subjectivity', I argue that to view IR texts as stories assigns responsibility for the theories formulated even where such responsibility is eschewed through claims of simply putting on paper what is 'out there.'

whose gaze can penetrate through all strata of reality. They suggest that an author can only write what she experiences herself, that her text is constantly situated within her subjectivity. Moreover, the idea of the ‘death of the author’ implies that it is not their own voice they are trying to privilege. Rather they are trying to speak the voices of the margins, or to allow the margins to speak for themselves.

As such, the encounter between IR and literary criticism (mainly deconstruction) can be situated within a particular nexus, that between postmodernist/post-structuralist and postcolonial approaches. The commitment of the above mentioned IR theorists to a post-structuralist approach to world politics can be understood through their adherence to an ethics of deconstruction. The endeavours of post-structuralist intellectuals within IR spring from an ethical desire to undermine ultimate claims to truth, to allow otherness and difference to express themselves, and to de-mystify concepts and standpoints that make claims to universality. I would argue not that post-structuralist readings of world politics add a dimension of ‘textuality’ to IR, rather that such (re)readings reveal the *intrinsic* textuality of IR (see Der Derian 1989; Weber 2001). However, reading IR theory as stories does not imply that such textuality is found only in the material texts, that is in the texts and books that found the ‘discipline.’ Textuality can also be found in discourses that emanate from policies adopted, laws enacted, prevailing mentalities and concepts, historical events.

David Campbell, in his *Writing Security*, performs such a (re)reading of the US foreign policy and conceives of it as a text about the processes and violences involved in nation-building. Campbell (1998) deconstructs (and reconstructs) a discourse of security as inscribed in stories about the settling and colonization of America, about ‘Indians’ (native Americans), blacks, and women. Such subjects *cum* objects of security personify that otherness that becomes demonized in order to re-assure and re-trace the boundaries of an endangered self, the American nation. The concept and practice of identity become thus securitized (and sanitized?) through an ongoing process of othering all those who do not match the ideal sought and imagined by the self.

However avant-garde, such post-structuralist views, while making significant challenges to mainstream IR’s claims to scientific knowledge about the world and to its narrow state-centric focus, need to come to terms with the problems raised by their own approaches, in particular when considered in association with the more recent post-colonial claims within IR. In particular, this exercise is required because in IR (and perhaps in other fields of knowledge as well), there seems to be (at least an implicit) disconnect between a deconstructive/post-structuralist approach to world politics and a post-colonial one. I would argue that such an implicit (yet concrete) disconnect stems from this refusal of the post-structuralist ‘subject-in-estrangement’ (Ashley, 1996: 249) to speak for the other out of a fear according to which, since the Western discourse

and practices have been involved in so much violence, ‘any intervention on behalf of the other [...] will be contaminated by that history and therefore futile’ (Varadharajan, 1995: xvi).<sup>65</sup> More to the point, post-structuralist theorists of IR assume that a deconstruction of the Western-centric and state-centric discourse/practice is somehow a sufficient exercise to undermine not only the rigid disciplinarity of the field, but it is implied that it constitutes a sufficient ‘ground-clearing gesture’<sup>66</sup> that allows the non-Western other to make their voices heard. Following in the footsteps of Derrida’s deconstructive work, theorists like Richard Ashley, Rob Walker, Jim George, David Campbell, and others deconstruct IR’s long cherished disciplinary landmarks, such as, among others, the state as the main actor in international relations (Ashley 1986; 1996); the concept of state sovereignty (Walker 1991); the “founding” texts of IR (George 1995; Walker 1992); and America’s foreign policy (Weber 2001, 2002; Der Derian 1989; Campbell 1998).

These deconstructive exercises have been immensely beneficial insofar as they have demonstrated that IR’s disciplinary claims to its own area of expertise stem from a hegemonic imposition of Western (really American) perspectives as regards world politics.<sup>67</sup> Indeed they have exposed IR as a self-referential Western discipline, which takes the West (mainly the US) as the main point of reference for global politics, and then, within the jealously guarded boundaries of this ‘centred structure’, designates its founding texts, its relevant actors, and its main concerns. But insofar as such critical deconstructive projects have limited themselves to the deconstruction of US’ foreign policy, and to that of the main elements with which mainstream IR operates, they have inadvertently reinscribed the limits of the field. Just as Derrida used Chinese writing to inscribe the limits of Western knowledge, so such critical deconstructive attempts in IR have used non-Western concepts and practices as the names of the limits of IR, to

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<sup>65</sup> Although I critique post-structuralist approaches to IR for their politics of subjectivity, it is important to mention that there are post-structuralist authors, such as Richard Ashley, who have engaged in critiques of this kind of politics. Ashley brilliantly points to the self-deluded character of a self-effaced subjectivity within critical IR (1996). He remarks that precisely because such a subjectivity-in-estrangement is celebrated as a legitimate(d) proof of marginality, ‘this mode of subjectivity is not at all strange to this field [IR]’ (1996: 249). Since disciplinary IR is already inhabited by so-called ‘subjects-in-estrangement’, the mode of inquiry that critical approaches attach to themselves cannot effect a break with mainstream theories and practice, since their practice of subjectivity is only too eager to embrace the ‘complacency to affirm the self-evidence of its familiar, taken-for-granted existence’ (ibid.). Once again, the metaphysics of presence rears its head even as the subject-in-estrangement posits the *existence* of its ‘self-deprecatory postmodern ego’ (Varadharajan, 1995: 21).

<sup>66</sup> I owe this expression to Anthony Appiah (1991).

<sup>67</sup> For an exploration of IR as an *American* Social Science, see Stanley Hoffman, “An American Social Science: International Relations (1987); and Steve Smith, “The Self Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory” (1995).

paraphrase Spivak's critique of Derrida. The problem with deconstruction is that, even as it stems from an anti-colonial and anti-Western drive, it does not manage to transcend 'the West' as a system of reference. Likewise, post-structuralist approaches in IR, even as they deconstruct the Western-centric focus of IR, they do not seem to exceed that frame of reference.

An important question that can be posed here is the following: even as Robert Young extolled Derrida's project of deconstructing *white mythologies* (2004), one wonders whether Derrida ever managed to transcend the *white mythologies* he was at pains to displace. In this context, an interesting problem arises: how is it that there has been no significant engagement, within critical IR, with the claim that Robert Young has made in *White Mythologies* and in *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*? If post-structuralism is a Franco-Maghrebian theory, one that arose out of the violence of the Algerian War, then why is there no mention of the initial anti-colonial drive that, according to Young, started the project of deconstruction? If, as Young suggests, deconstruction *only* makes sense within the violence of the (French) colonial project, then one can make the argument that current practices of deconstruction operate with a decontextualized and de-historicized understanding of deconstruction, one which is divorced from its initial (anti-colonial) preoccupations. Therefore why is there no serious consideration of a link between the deconstructive practices in IR, and postcolonial politics and realities? References to Robert Young's work have appeared occasionally in IR publications (such as in Vivienne Jabri and Eleanor O'Gorman, eds, *Women, Culture, and International Relations* (1999), and David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* [2004])<sup>68</sup>, but there has not been much of a response, let alone engagement, with Young's thesis. Is there any connection between Derrida's failure to transcend the limits of the Western-centric discourse he wanted to deconstruct, and critical IR's inability to exceed the disciplinary boundaries it claims to unsettle? I believe there is. And my tentative answer would be that both failures can be traced to a lack of a serious engagement with postcoloniality and with its implications.

This conundrum can be traced to the refusal of post-structuralism 'to name its own politics [...], even as it deconstructs the language of established power from *within*, [and] it does not provide post-modernism with a well-defined agenda nor with a clear object of criticism other than "the prison house of language" (Chow, 1993: 59). Echoing Rey Chow's critique of post-structuralism, if 'postmodernism' were replaced from the quote with 'post-structuralist IR', one can make the case of a lack of a clear agenda for post-structuralist IR. If Robert Young's claim is to be taken seriously, then the re-association of post-

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<sup>68</sup> I thank Marshall Beier for pointing me to these references.

structuralism with postcolonialism, within the sphere of IR, would allow for post-structuralist approaches to transcend the Western frame of reference, and to envision alternative frameworks, concepts, locations and actors, which *are* part of international relations, but which are unacknowledged or marginalized by International Relations.

I am not arguing that such alternatives are non-existent within critical IR or that ‘other’ voices are not being brought forward. Rather the danger posed by an almost exclusive preoccupation with deconstructing disciplinary IR from *within* is doubly constituted as follows. On the one hand, the self-centred concern with a refusal to speak so that others might be heard leads to a paradoxical situation where the so-called self-effacement ‘allows “others” to be seen, but would not pay attention to what they say’ (Chow, 1993: 70-71). On the other hand, a constant (and by now recurrent) claim of post-structuralist IR to marginality, even as such a move constitutes a performatory act of disciplinary gate-keeping, it also, ironically, constitutes an equalizing and ‘leveling attribution of subversive “marginality” to all’ (Chow, 1993: 59) in the virtue of the post-modern dictum that all difference must be embraced. That is why contributions of postcolonial IR theorists have been so crucial, because they not only offered critiques of post-structuralism’s refusal to name its own politics, but they brought forward concerns, actors, and locations that were not traditionally associated with IR. Scholars like Cynthia Enloe (1996), Marshall Beier (2004; 2005), Sankaran Krishna (1993, 1999, and 2004), Phillip Darby (1998), Alberto Paolini (Darby and Paolini 1994), Geeta Chowdhury (2004), Sheila Nair (2004), Siba Grovogui (2004 and 2006); Randolph Persaud (2004); L.H.M. Ling (2002 and 2004); Anna Agathangelou (2004, and Agathangelou and Ling 2004); Shampa Biswas (2004); Dibyesh Anand (2004); Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney (2004), and others, have articulated issues related to gender, race, indigeneity, ethnicity, and colonialism within a larger context of global politics, globalization, and political economy.

However, it should be emphasized that as long as post-structuralism and postcolonialism continue to be perceived as distinct (albeit complementary at times) theories, such a disconnect will be disabling in terms of a well-defined agenda of critical IR. If, as Young argued, post-structuralism can be understood and make sense *only* as an anti-colonial and anti-Western project that stemmed from the Algerian War (2001: 411-26), from the violent encounter between France and Algeria (and the Maghreb more generally), then any post-structuralist deconstructive exercises need to happen with a postcolonial horizon in mind. As Linda Hutcheon’s analysis of the ‘In the Heart of Africa’ exhibit showed, critical engagements who limit themselves to a deconstructive practice without a postcolonial perspective tend to re-enlist within their imaginative scope the sort of exclusionary and monological views they claim to disavow or displace.

Post-structuralist approaches in IR have incurred criticism not only from postcolonial perspectives, but also from feminist perspectives. As post-structuralism claims a recognition and an acceptance of difference, one is left to assume that sexual difference is included in this category. But as Asha Varadharajan remarked, 'Derrida's deconstruction of "woman" is effected in the interests of a reconstruction of "man"' (1995: 21). This instrumentality of "woman" for the purpose of reconstructing masculinity throws any meaningful engagement with sexual difference under the umbrella of undifferentiated difference. Therefore, feminist perspectives in IR have brought back gender as an important element to be considered when discussing world politics, and have exposed the inherently gendered nature of IR both as a discipline and as practice. But even feminist concerns, when not articulated within a postcolonial framework, tend to assume that a feminist agenda can be established to deal with women's issues around the world (and usually such an agenda has a deeply Western bias).<sup>69</sup> Whereas for 'the "third world" feminist, the question is never that of asserting power as woman alone, but of showing how the concern for women is inseparable from other types of cultural oppression and negotiation' (Chow, 1993: 67). Thus postcoloniality inflects theory not only with a background perspective of colonialism's consequences, but it provides much needed articulation with issues of gender, race, class, and culture, thereby paying attention to the particular without exaggerating its focus on fragmentarity (something which post-structuralism performs to distraction).

But if so far I have discussed the dangers of disciplining 'natives' (identified as one of the dangers of an exclusive focus on deconstruction), what can be said about nativizing disciplines? In other words, are there no dangers in perceiving post-structuralism *as* a post-colonial theory? I think such dangers need to be articulated more specifically with an understanding of the ongoing debates that have surrounded 'globalization' in the last few decades. Such debates have focused on the economic, political and cultural aspects of globalization, in terms of transnational flows of goods, ideas, people, and practices (though in very unequal degrees). But what about the globalization of theory and of theoretical trends? In her article, "How (the) Inscrutable Chinese Led to Globalized Theory" (cited earlier), Rey Chow uses the term 'globalized theory' as an indication of a certain practice of commodification being performed in academic circles and beyond. She illustrates, through the example of Derrida's use of Chinese writing in *Of Grammatology*, that globalization as 'a process in which the acceleration and intensification of contacts brought by technology and commerce entail[s] an

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<sup>69</sup> For in-depth critiques of Western feminism see Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame" in *In Other Worlds. Essays in Cultural Politics* (1988a); "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988b); and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). Also, see Asha Varadharajan, "Rethinking the Object" in *Exotic Parodies* (1995).

acceleration and intensification of stereotypes [...] that [...] have the potential of changing entire intellectual climates' (2001: 71). In other words, theoretical representations constitute and are constituted by such ongoing global disseminations.

Globalization of technology and commerce also entails globalization of cultural representations, of narratives of emancipation and resistance. The point is that such flows are not necessarily separate and exclusive of each other, but, on the contrary, such flows interact with each other, and, on a certain level, the flows of commodification influence and become the condition of possibility for the dissemination of emancipatory flows. For example, Spivak traces, in her work, the links between 'Third World' discourses, consumerism, and Western academia: she argues that the Native Informant (as she calls the postcolonial Third World intellectual) commodifies native cultures for the convenience and the consumption of Western academia (1999: 358-359). Consumerism of goods and attitudes is thus intimately linked to consumerism of ideas and theory. As the case for perceiving post-structuralism *as* a postcolonial theory strengthens and acquires substance, one can also note the danger of the commodification of alternative views, as they are included within the transnational circuit of ideas. After all, Foucault has warned of the dangers of what he called 'subjugated knowledges' being incorporated into the mainstream of knowledge as soon as they are 'brought into light', and thereby running the risk of 're-codification' and 're-colonization' (1980: 86).

The main problem that stems from the post-structuralism/postcolonialism association can thus be viewed in terms of the concerns and issues of what is known as the 'Third World' being reabsorbed by an 'increasing momentum of instrumentalism' disseminated globally, which attempts to gather under one umbrella postmodernism, feminism, and postcolonialism, and thus erase and level differences among them (Chow, 1993: 69). Also, such an association or, to put it differently, such a rethinking of post-structuralism *as* a post-colonial theory, would make the assumption that postcolonialism is beyond critique, that it truly embodies and represents the interests of Third World peoples, and that postcolonial intellectuals are not guilty of the same commodification charges levelled against Western academia. This would be indeed a very mistaken assumption. Not only has postcolonialism been critiqued on grounds of its reducing Third World peoples to mere resistant images to Western hegemonic practices, but postcolonial intellectuals have been perceived as nothing more than Western-educated, Western-minded scholars who are engaged in re-inscribing the imaginative geography of the West.<sup>70</sup> Anthony Appiah has called the postcolonial intellectuals the 'comprador intelligentsia' (the link to commodification is

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<sup>70</sup> For such critiques, see the authors recommended in note 2.

unmistakable) and characterized them as being nothing more than ‘a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have intended for the world, for each other, and for Africa’ (1991: 348). Therefore, Appiah seems to think that this sort of intellectual is not so much a mediator, but rather an appropriator.

After all, there are voices who claim that postcolonialism is nothing more than a Western theory that serves the interests of Western leftist academia and feeds ‘the productivity of white guilt’, to use Rey Chow’s expression. It is against this sort of accusations that Robert Young formulated his theory of post-structuralism as a Franco-Maghrebian theory, produced by the violence and horrors of the Algerian War. The merit of Young’s claim is that it takes an incursion into historical events and produces a contextualized and historicized presentation of post-structuralism, one that takes back deconstruction to its initial impulses. This re-tracing of post-structuralism’s anti-colonial drive has, in my opinion, important ramifications for current practices in critical theory. A re-thinking of post-structuralism *as* a post-colonial theory would allow for its transcendence of the Western frame of reference to which it is inevitably confined by its self-referential character (deconstructing the category of ‘the West’ from *within*). Peter Hallward suggested that ‘postcoloniality is a movement away from location, not the claiming of a new, specific location’ (cited in Hiddleston, 2005: 293). But that is precisely the problem illustrated both by the analysis of Derrida’s project of deconstruction, and by Linda Hutcheon’s investigation of the ROM exhibit: postcoloniality needs a location, otherwise it slips into either abstract generalizations or into deeply singular experiences, both of which are politically disabling. Postcoloniality does not need to move away from ‘location, but from ‘the West’ as the constant system of reference.

This last injunction can appear as bizarre, considering that postcolonialism’s intended goal is to engage Western colonialism and to offer the *other* side of (hi)story. But therein lies both the possibility and the challenge that faces postcolonialism: in deconstructing the category of ‘the West’ in its colonialist ambitions and violent practices, postcolonialism risks repeating the error of post-structuralism and slipping into a Western-focused exercise. Bearing in mind that deconstruction arose out of the violent events of the Algerian War, and pairing the anticolonial drive of post-structuralism with the historic specificity and the oppositional politics of postcolonialism – one can and should envision possibilities of exceeding the narrow frame within which Third World people are captured. As Rey Chow aptly remarked, there is a profound need for ‘a mode of understanding the native in which the native’s existence – i.e. an existence before



becoming “native” – precedes the arrival of the colonizer’ (Chow, 1993: 51). In other words, the “native” is much more than the gaze returned to the master. This indeed is the most significant challenge that lies ahead of the coalitional pair of deconstruction/postcolonialism. And herein lie the most exciting possibilities, and the most troubling tensions. I hope to show, in the following chapters, that such a challenge is not beyond the realm of the possible, but that it is indeed necessary if we – as intellectuals – want to avoid falling into the trap of reductionism and of an imaginative Western-centred global geography.

## Chapter 2:

### “The ‘evil demon of images’ and the pleasures of the text”<sup>71</sup>

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the fascination with images that haunts our imaginaries and our practices. The ‘we’ implied in the previous sentence refers to Westerners in general, and their fascination with photography and image. I explore theories put forth by Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Stuart Hall, Rey Chow, and James Clifford on the practice of photography, and on the social and political practices that it entails. When capturing people, places, and events in photography, there seems to be an implicit claim to representational legitimacy.<sup>72</sup> Such a legitimacy stems from a fantasy of authenticity and objectivity that haunts the process of capturing images. Both the consumer and the producer of images assume that in the marriage between the photographer’s subjectivity and the camera’s cold and implacable objectivity, an image of life *as is* is being produced.

In this chapter I argue that photography’s politics in terms of its dissociation between consciousness and identity, its claim to immediacy and transparency, and its poiesis expressed as objectification, reveal its ambivalent character as witness and distorter.<sup>73</sup> As Stuart Hall has remarked, photography itself can be understood and read as a text, thus being susceptible to intertextuality (1997: 232). Not only can photography be read as a text, but texts themselves concern themselves with images we as readers or authors have of the world around us. But when image and text are coupled together in a practice that aims to bring to life “other” cultures, and to document living in different places, the politics of joining together text and image become particularly telling of how those “other” places are imagined, and about how knowledge about the ‘other’ is produced and disseminated.

I cannot discuss the ambivalent politics of photographic production without situating my own ambivalence vis-à-vis the image. Indeed, I find myself caught between a cautious appreciation of photography’s documentary value, and fascinated with its aesthetic possibilities, even as I recognize its troubling politics.

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<sup>71</sup> This title is inspired by Jean Baudrillard’s work *The Evil Demon of Images* (1987), and by Roland Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975).

<sup>72</sup> I use this expression as understood by Peter Hamilton in his “France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography” (1997: 147).

<sup>73</sup> In this context, I employ ‘poiesis’ to refer to both the act of making, of creating, of producing (Greek: *poiēsis*) photography, and to its association to ‘poetry’, to bring into focus the aesthetic dimension of photography. In a Socratic dialogue, *Symposium*, Plato via Socrates (in keeping with Derrida’s *Postcard*) discusses how humans are striving for immortality in the act of producing the beautiful. Therefore, photography’s aesthetic dimension (to create the beautiful) is intimately, albeit ambiguously, mirrored by its claim to (re)producing reality.

Such politics manifest themselves with a striking force when images of poverty, violence, destitution, and trauma are produced, in the photographic process, as aestheticized moments, as instances of ‘beautiful suffering’. I thus find myself deeply moved by the beauty of the *image*, even as its *content* disturbs and unsettles me. But the problem with photography is that in the act of looking, the consumer of image performs an (unwitting?) ethical hierarchy: the beauty of the image (its aesthetic surface) takes precedence, and many a time overwhelms, its disturbing content (its socio-political depth).

This theoretical meditation on the politics and poetics of image foregrounds the discussion undertaken in the following chapter, which examines both narratives of nativist encounters, and those of what I call ‘spectral presences’ put forth by Franco-Maghrebian texts and images. As photography has been one of the most powerful and important tools in documenting encounters with other cultures, I find it crucial to examine certain narratives of such encounters as they appear in the writings of James Clifford, Rey Chow, and Trinh T. Minh-ha. These theorists cross disciplinary boundaries in their explorations of nativism, ethnographic encounters, otherness in text and photography, and postcoloniality. Their theoretical discussions frame my examination of photographic and literary productions of certain Franco-Maghrebian authors (Malek, Alloula, Assia Djebar, Leïla Sebbar, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Albert Memmi). The myth of salvaging the ‘native,’ which plagued anthropology for so long and which still remains subtly ingrained (Clifford, 1986: 113), and its profound connection to the search for lost origins comes back to haunt the texts and photographs put forth by the authors mentioned above.<sup>74</sup> Such productions of authenticity speak about deeply

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<sup>74</sup> This statement stands in dire need of qualification, insofar as both the reference and the argument about anthropology’s *object* might seem somewhat dated. However, I defend the argument on the following grounds: in an article entitled “Rearticulating Anthropology” (2005), James Clifford discusses, among other aspects, the ways in which anthropology’s objects, the ‘primitive’ and the ‘exotic’, have undergone alteration. In here, Clifford states that ‘for many in the discipline, the former emphasis on the exotic and the marginal remains a valued, defining feature, albeit in need of postcolonial reconception’ (2005: 41). Moreover, anthropology’s telos, identified by Clifford as “Man” (and newly transformed into ‘humanity’) still haunts our imaginary, in spite of the efforts of radical poststructuralists to do away with the masculinist signifier (2005: 44). Let us consider another re-thinking of anthropology’s *object* as undertaken by Johannes Fabian in his “Ethnographic Objectivity” (2001). In here, Fabian points to how anthropology’s ‘linguistic turn’ and its subsequent preoccupations with textuality and intersubjectivity have overlooked to specify ‘what in communicative interaction becomes an object and thereby the basis of objective knowledge’ (2001: 15). When employing the loaded expression ‘objective knowledge’, Fabian is thinking not of the positivistic notion that social reality should be studied through the observation of ‘natural objects.’ Rather he suggests a ‘theory of objectification’, which implies the understanding of how anthropology, in this case, *makes its object*. Fabian suggests that this is a crucial point if what he calls postmodern nihilism is to be avoided. Fabian thus implies here is that postmodernist *readings* of other cultures unwittingly preempt the question of responsibility and the disclosure of their production of objects of

ensconced stereotypes that haunt both the theory and the practice of IR, and that bespeak our fantasies and desires, and our practices of selfhood in an age of globalized desires.

This preoccupation with the politics of visuality has made in-roads in the practice of International Relations, with scholars such as Jenny Edkins and David Campbell taking on the link between photography/image and the geopolitics of visuality. Both Edkins and Campbell examine the function of photography in the understanding of conflict and trauma in places such as Cambodia and Sudan (Darfur). As such, the authors muse on the workings of symbolic power and on the regimes of representation that are engendered by such visual practices. Taking my cues from Stuart Hall's discussion on symbolic power and regimes of representation, I examine the implications, for IR, of practices of symbolic power through stereotyping and through what Stuart Hall calls "ritualized expulsion" (1997: 259). The examination of symbolic power through stereotyping is taken on by David Campbell (2007) in his discussion on the politics of representing the conflict in Darfur through photography.

By exploring David Campbell and Jenny Edkins' articulations of the role of visuality in IR, I argue that the regimes of textual and visual representation present in the Franco-Maghrebian works discussed in the following chapter, can be inscribed in an international politics of visuality that produces the 'native' for the 'benefit' of her appropriation and control. Practices of sanctifying and/or exoticizing the 'native' speak about a desire to take possession of an authentic experience long lost in a globalized and (post)modernized world, and tend to claim authenticity through the purified image of the 'native.'

### **The promises and lures of the image**

In an age where images and texts are disseminated from one corner of the planet to the other, at an incredible speed, we have become almost immune to the practice of viewing and taking photos. These are practices that seem natural and even compulsory, particularly when we travel, or when we want to document and preserve significant moments in our lives. Also, we are constantly flooded with images, in the form of advertisements, posters, magazine covers, newspaper covers, whether we take a walk, go to work, watch TV, and every time we surf the web. Why is Western culture and daily living so suffused with images and

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study/knowledge 'by ontologizing representation, writing, and literary form' (2001: 22). To put it differently, postmodernist aspirations to know the 'other' and dialogue with the 'other' gloss over the possibility that 'ethnographic knowledge' can be initiated as 'it encounters resistance in the form of incomprehension, denial, rejection, or, why not, simply Otherness' (2001: 25). To claim that the 'other' must be known and must be understood through a process that should aim towards clarity and *comprehension*, prevents the knower from acknowledging the possibility that the unexpected, the incomprehensible, and the unfamiliar can and should be part of the process of *knowing*.

photos?<sup>75</sup> What promise does photography (or images in general) hold whose allures we simply cannot resist?

One promise that still holds, albeit unconsciously, in spite of the aesthetic dimensions that photography has acquired over the decades, is that of a long sought immediacy between reality and representation, unattained by other visual arts such as painting or sculpture (see Sontag 2001; Barthes 1982; Baudrillard 1987; Hall 1997; Vogl 2003). This promise and illusion of immediacy is explained by the fact that the birth of photography coincided with an embrace of a scientific positivist view of the world, whose ideal was detached and unperturbed (by personal biases) observers who took in the world and reproduced its image just as it was (Hamilton, 1997: 82; Sontag, 2001: 119-120). Thus a photograph can, and often is, approached as a ‘narrowly selective transparency’ (Sontag 2001: 6). It is this immediacy and transparency that fascinates and subdues. At the same time, such an immediacy and transparency is accompanied, paradoxically, by a displacement and a dissociation. Roland Barthes aptly captures this paradox by remarking that the ‘photograph is the advent of *myself as other*’, which implies that there has been a ‘cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity’ (1982: 12).<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, in the spirit of positivism alongside which it developed, photography ‘transformed subject into object [...] into a museum object’ (Barthes, 1982: 13). One needs to qualify that there are various degrees of objectification involved by the photographic process. And this is where the socio-political dimensions of photography come into play. Surely there are different degrees of objectification involved by a photograph of starving children in Africa, and one of an author on the back cover of a book. The example might strike one as simplistic and reductive, but it contests the fact that photography simply captures what is “out there.” There is always a personal and collective investment in photography that can be assigned to the sphere of the socio-political, and also to that of the emotional and the affective. Thus when I discuss the politics of associating text and image in the context of the Maghreb, I focus on the kind of alterity and objectification that is produced in the photographic albums examined. These become productions of a nostalgic nativism, in search for lost origins. Texts and images are explored in association, as images created by literary texts find their echo in photography, and photographic images support and nurture our imaginary of distant others of whom we read in literature.

Not surprisingly, an often discussed dimension of photography is that of its relation to temporality, to the past in particular. This temporal dimension of photography has prompted Susan Sontag to remark that ‘photographs actively

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<sup>75</sup> For discussions on visibility and vision as Western concepts, see Martin Jay (1986), Stuart Hall (1997), Michel Foucault (1989), Johannes Fabian (1983 and 2001).

<sup>76</sup> My emphasis.

promote nostalgia. Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art' (2001: 15). As such, many suggest that photography documents history, that there is a relationship between photography and history, which allows the viewer/reader of various images to learn about different aspects of a particular epoch in which the photograph was taken. Barthes goes as far as claiming that 'Photography has the same relation to History, that the biographeme has to biography' (1982: 30). There seems thus to be a link between photography and memory; the work of photography can be perceived as a work of memory. Accordingly, one attaches to photography signifiers such as nostalgia, memory, past, seeing. Such an association needs to be vastly qualified, however, because photography does not merely capture moments in a way in which they (almost) instantly become past moments and memories. Photography also distorts and displaces/dissociates, as mentioned earlier. For example, for Susan Sontag, one of the main functions of photography is that of lying, by creating the illusion (both for the taker and for the viewer) that one can simply possess the past (in the sense of understanding and seeing it), by documenting it in images, since images reveal reality (2001: 9). Sontag notes that this 'imaginary possession of a past that is unreal' allows for a sense of security (albeit a fleeting one) and of 'possession of space in which [one is] insecure' (ibid.).

This illusion of security has to do with a desire for authenticity, for seeing and possessing things as they are and as they once were, untainted by time or socio-political events. Barthes notes that whenever he is in front of a camera he experiences a profound 'sensation of inauthenticity' that makes him uneasy, because such an exposure implies that the image captured has nothing to do with his real self (1982: 13). But what happens when different cultures, collectivities, or ways of living are captured in images? Are such images documentaries of difference, of diversity, or do they point to something else, to a politics of memory and representation that allows us to understand how various ways of seeing are involved as much with the aesthetic as they are with the ethnographic and the political? It is to these particular intersections between photographic representation, politics, and ethnographic knowledge that I turn in the following section.

*The political dimensions of photography. Disseminating knowledge of the 'other'*

Scholars such as James Clifford (1986), Stuart Hall (1997), Jean Baudrillard (1988) have argued that the fascination with seeing and with images is a trait of Western civilization and of Western ways of living. Johannes Fabian argues that Western imagination is profoundly visual in nature, 'constituting cultures as if they were theatres of memory, or spatialized arrays' (Fabian cited in Clifford, 1986: 12). No wonder that ethnography is supported by and intimately

linked to photography. The image is supposed to document and authenticate the text, whereas the text serves as the explanatory support for the image. In his introduction to *Writing Culture*, James Clifford notes that ethnography serves to make ‘the familiar strange, the exotic quotidian’ (1986: 2). But so does photography.<sup>77</sup> Also, following Virginia Woolf’s urge to question the nature and bases of our (Western) civilization, Clifford argues that ethnography serves mainly to create a relationship between self and the world, with the purpose of reinforcing the self’s privileged position in and view of the world (ibid.). Likewise, photography establishes a relation between self and the world, one that is ‘inherently equivocal’, as Sontag has put it (2001: 123).

Moreover, with the end of colonization in the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between ethnography and colonialism was no longer viewed in an innocent manner. It was in France of the 1950s that this relationship was highlighted, in the writings of anthropologists such as Michel Leiris and Georges Balandier, who associated with the movement *Présence Africaine* and with that of *négritude*, among whose illustrious representatives were Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor (Clifford, 1986: 8-9). Also, one needs to remember that there were strong political movements in France, at the time, that concerned North African issues, such as Mouvement National Algérien (the Algerian National Movement) led by Messali Hadj, not to mention the ongoing Franco-Algerian War that brought into focus (nationally and transnationally) the profound nature of colonial violence in all its forms. In this context, visualism had a tremendous impact on the practice of anthropology and on the writing of ethnography. Various cultures were captured visually not only in images, but also in texts through powerful rhetorical images that conjured up the by now well-known portraits of “natives” living in harmony with nature, in a “primitive” societal state, which had prompted the ethnographer to reminisce on the beginnings of human civilization.<sup>78</sup>

The tremendous impact of visuality on academic fields such as anthropology (and not only) can be attributed also to the fact the photography can paradoxically be viewed as a form of simultaneous participation and non-intervention (Sontag, 2001: 10-12). Between the click of the shutter that expresses a certain form of involvement in an event or a situation, and the hiding behind a camera for the purpose of documenting horrors, atrocities, or different ways of living, there lies a suspension of responsibility and a troubling politics of seeing.

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<sup>77</sup> And as I will argue later, so does IR, which is why I examine the relation between text, image, and international relations.

<sup>78</sup> For such nativist and primitivist readings and constructions of other cultures, both Clifford (1986) and Trinh Minh-ha (1989) refer the reader to the ‘canon’ of anthropology, represented by works such as those of Margaret Mead, E. E. Evans Pritchard, and Bronislaw Malinowski.

On the one hand, Barthes claims that photographs are ‘too discreet [...] to constitute an authentic and effective social critique’ (1982: 36); and on the other hand, Sontag goes even further and claims that socially engaged photographic practices have contributed to the deadening of conscience to the same degree that they contributed to its arousal (2001: 21). What she implies is that the sheer amount of images that assault us in the newspapers, magazines, TV, internet and advertisements, has made us immune to images of violence and horror. Consequently, Sontag privileges narratives, since understanding stems from narratives, and they take time to explain how something functions (23). It is the temporal dimension that made photography such an alluring and seducing practice, because it claims to capture moments almost instantaneously. But it is also the same temporal dimension that constitutes ‘the limit of photographic knowledge’, as Sontag has put it (23).

Ironically, it is this same dimension of temporality, which adds that touch of legitimacy on photography. Discussing the paradigm of humanism in photography in post-war France, Peter Hamilton argues that it is the coupling of the photographer’s interpretive perception of the subject with an objective image (the photograph), which endows the photographic practice with ‘representational legitimacy’ (1997: 147). Such a practice contributed, in post-war France, to the construction of ‘Frenchness’ as a national identity upholding certain ethico-political ideals which revolved around the family, the collectivity, and the various public and private spaces constituting the French nation in the post-war humanist imaginary (see Hamilton, 1997: 75-150).

As mentioned earlier, taking and viewing photographs are practices endowed with ethico-political dimensions, which speak about the social and political functions of photography, and of images in general. When discussing the individual’s exposure to the violence of visibility, Barthes distinguishes between the private and public spheres: he remarks that the private sphere is that in which one is no longer an image, or an object, and, by implication, the public sphere is the sphere of the image, of the spectre of the visual, in which one is reduced to mere surface ready to be read and decoded by others (1982: 15). But one can argue that the visual has made such vast strides in the private sphere (through the digitalization of photos and their dissemination through the internet, for example) that the divide between public and private in terms of visibility seems more blurry than ever. As such, Barthes claims his ‘*political* right to be a subject which [he] must protect’ (ibid.).<sup>79</sup> One wonders, at this point, when the *political* right of the people represented, on a daily basis, as victims of ‘humanitarian crises’, through

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<sup>79</sup> My emphasis.



images of silent abjection whose subjects/objects are often women and children, flooding our eyes and minds every day, has ever been heeded.<sup>80</sup>

In here, another question arises: for whom is the picture taken? Who is the consumer of images? With the example of images disseminated about 'humanitarian crises', one can make the argument that the commodification of political events via visuality structures our consumption of images and ideas as global spectacle, which can be instantly consumed and appropriated. Put differently, this statement implies that such pictures of abjection do not necessarily target a particular audience (although one can compellingly make the case that Westerners constitute a preferred target category). In fact, they do not need to. As Anne McClintock masterfully explains in *Imperial Leather*, visuality as objectivism or objectivism as visuality 'constitutes the social world as a spectacle' which 'conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone' (Fabian quoted in McClintock, 1995: 122). During colonialism the photograph of the exoticized (and highly eroticized as seen from Malek Alloula's analysis later in this chapter) 'other' was 'reproduced as exotic spectacle, as panoptical time' (McClintock, 1995: 125). Today the image of the 'abject other' (no less exoticized) is reproduced as a spectacle of (exotic) abjection, which solidifies the myth of Africa's perpetual abjection, as David Campbell argues in his engagement with the geopolitics of visuality in the case of the conflict in Darfur.

The point is that, as Susan Sontag remarked, it is 'the existence of a relevant *political consciousness*' that decides whether those 'concerned' photographs can have a moral and ethical impact (2001: 19). The emotions provoked by such images can only be framed by the existence of a particular ethical and political culture, which allows us to read images through a particular perspective (see Barthes 1982: 26). The public space of visuality blurs the contours of the private one in so far as the political subject (cf. Barthes 1982: 15) has to react to images in one way or the other, and make certain ethico-political decisions about them. However, the possibility of an ethical reading of photography/image is very fragile. What happens when photos become independent of their taker? A scene from Philip Kaufman's cinematic transposition of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* comes to mind. During the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968, Tereza (played in the movie by Juliette Binoche) uses her passion for and skill in photography to record the violent and traumatic events. Kaufman's intention is to make Tereza the ethical witness to

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<sup>80</sup> I place the phrase 'humanitarian crises' in inverted comas as I implicitly argue that the term 'humanitarian' is often used by various NGOs and the media, and not to mention governments, for crises that are actually political in nature. The term 'humanitarian' really implies a refusal to address such crises through political channels, and an involvement limited to distribution of food and medication. For more on this subject, see, among others, Rony Brauman (1998; 2000) and Fiona Terry (2002).

such violence: she faithfully captures, through her camera, images and scenes that are disturbing even as she endangers her life in the process. Furthermore, her pictures will serve as testimony to the outside world of the violent events she witnessed. The climactic moment in the scene of the Soviet invasion is when she points her camera to a Soviet officer who in turn is pointing her gun at her. Tereza is petrified for a moment, but her urge to shoot is stronger than her instinct of self-preservation, and the two protagonists, photographer and soldier, are locked in a game of life and death. The next scene shows Tereza in an enormous amphitheatre in Prague, where she and other protesters are brutally interrogated by the secret police and by communist cadres. Her photos are splashed across the wall and serve the police to identify the participants in the protests. Tereza's ethical act of (photographic) witnessing becomes a treacherous act of disclosure. The ethical impulse is thus turned against itself.

*Imagining authenticity, salvaging the 'native'*

The manner in which we relate to images, whether as objects or as subjects, can also be perceived on a dual level: the first is where we concurrently exorcize and preserve the past, a lost authenticity, memories and memory, and ultimately Death (as Barthes notes). The second is where we engage socially with others. Both aspects are intimately related to and feed off each other, as can be seen later in the case of photographic productions of the Maghreb. The former has to do with a search for lost origins – an insecurity brought about by the various processes of modernity (such as those of secularism, liberalism, capitalism...), which have invariably altered ways of life and systems of values. It is in this context that Sontag, inspired by Walter Benjamin, makes the connection between Benjamin's understanding of the collector's function in a modern world, and the work of the photographer. It is in a context of a profound upheaval of old traditions and well-entrenched systems of values that the practice of collecting has attained its true function: 'excavating the choicer, more emblematic fragments' and thus allowing the past to be preserved, remembered, and 'speak in its own voice' (Sontag, 2001: 75-77).

In his article entitled "On Ethnographic Allegory", James Clifford remarks that anthropology's initial impulses (which have not been completely exorcized)<sup>81</sup> were those of salvaging 'primitive' cultures, since such cultures constituted not only vivid testimonies of the primordial beginnings of human civilization, but also they were seen as the safe keepers of values and traditions (among which simplicity of living, and close communion with nature) now extinguished in the 'advanced' and 'sophisticated' Western societies (1986: 111-112). In the same spirit of excavating, collecting and preserving/salvaging, photography produces

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<sup>81</sup> See note 4.

for the viewers a ‘deceptive mastery of experience’ (Sontag, 2001: 81), which creates for them the illusion that one possesses a past which perhaps never existed, and that the collection of images re-creates and documents history, the past, and living.

But authenticity is not enacted by photography alone. This and the following chapter discusses the triangle photography/image-nativism-text, in order to explore the productions of authenticity that are enabled by such a triangle, and the politics of representation that are entailed by it. Critical discourses in academia are inundated with discussions of the ‘native,’ or of the (‘colonized’, ‘Third World’) other as the innocent victim who is primarily understood as (and reduced to) a resistant gaze to that of the colonizer. But, as Rey Chow remarked, our (the Western intellectual or activist) view of the ‘native’ other as the ‘non-duped’ is in fact an instance of the re-fashioning of our own endangered sense of selfhood as the ‘non-duped’ of modernity (capitalism, imperialism or globalization):

“Our fascination with the native, the oppressed, the savage, and all such figures is therefore a desire to hold on to an unchanging certainty somewhere outside of our “fake” experience. It is a desire for being “non-duped”, which is a not-too- innocent desire to seize control.” (1993: 53).

My interest in the Franco-Maghrebian photographic and literary productions of the (in)authentic ‘native’ stems thus from this triangulation between text, image and the ‘native’, which reveals a search for authenticity and lost origins, and which relegates the figure of the ‘native’ to the realm of aestheticized timelessness and authentic living. But neither timelessness nor aestheticization are innocent.. The beauty of the image can serve to empty the political meaning of photography, as remarked by theorists such as Sontag, Baudrillard and Barthes, by consigning the subject *cum* object to a depoliticized timelessness. Consider, for example, Walter Benjamin’s statement according to which photography has turned ‘abject poverty itself [...] into an object of enjoyment’ to the point where the struggle against poverty has been transformed into an ‘object of consumption’ (1978[1937]: 262, 264). Also, consider how tourists love immortalizing with their cameras scenes of poverty and violence as instances of rustic and authentic ‘slices of life.’<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, bear in mind the criticisms rallied against Sebastião Salgado’s photographic works, perhaps one of

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<sup>82</sup> When using the expression ‘slices of life’ I am thinking of realism and naturalism, especially in their literary expressions, which aspired to scientific methodologies in order to represent reality more faithfully and more veridically (Lagarde et Michard, 1969: 457, 483-84). It is interesting to note that it is in the same epoch, in which realism and naturalism flourished, that photography appeared.

the best examples of engaged photography, which claim that by aestheticizing poverty, abjection and violence, he depoliticizes them and removes the social critique possibilities from the events and people he documented. Here I have to confess my own hypocrisy in this respect: in spite of the problematic aspects of Salgado's work, I love his photographs passionately. I find them moving beyond words, conveying a sense of depth and beauty that is disturbing. But perhaps that is precisely the problem identified by his critics, that there is a point where the over-aestheticization of poverty and despair (in beautiful images) considerably weakens the political and social content of his photos.<sup>83</sup>

This claim to (and fantasy of) authenticity and truthfulness in representation appears more acutely as a double edged sword in respect to photography than it does in respect to text. Photography's implicit claim to a realist portrayal of the world (as some sort of a mirror image) can and is vastly critiqued as an illusion that conveniently conceals the politics of the image. But photography can be and has been critiqued precisely on grounds of "faking" reality, as a means of acquiring power within the context of colonialism and nationalism. Let us consider two somewhat famous examples of this sort: one is Malek Alloula's critique of the French colonial postcards produced in North Africa during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the other one is Robert Doisneau's controversial representations of Parisian life during the postwar period.

Alloula's indignation against the colonial postcards revolves around the lack of authenticity of the photographs in question. The postcards in question featured Maghrebian women (for the most part) in various poses and scenes, varying from scenes representing (imagined) daily life within North African households to vulgar scenes of bare chested women in highly eroticized poses. Alloula claims that the postcards have no legitimacy of representation because, firstly, they are simple emanations of the photographer's Orientalist sexual fantasies that have little, if anything, to do with the reality of Algerian, Moroccan or Tunisian domestic life. Secondly, and this is where the politics of authenticity come more forcefully into play, the women featured by these postcards are not "real" Algerian women, but paid models, for the most part prostitutes, who agreed to pose for the camera. The "real" Algerian woman, referred to by Alloula as 'the *other* Algerian', the great absentee from the photos, who refused to unveil (1986: 17), is also the real subject of the photos, the subject of the photographer's fetishism, while the paid models seem to be nothing more than the channels and empty vessels of the fetishized representations.

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<sup>83</sup> There are, however, many who find his work politically inspiring, such as Eduardo Galeano, in his introduction entitled "Salgado, 17 times" to Salgado's *An Uncertain Grace* (2005); and David Campbell, "Salgado and the Sahel: Documentary Photography and the Imaging of Famine" (2003).

I find Alloula's focus in his critique of the colonial postcards deeply disturbing in its implications, but I will return to it later, as I explore the productions of authenticity in text and image by Franco-Maghrebian authors. Equally disturbing is Alloula's hierarchization, in language, between the two types of Algerian women of whom he discusses in his critique: the "real" Algerian woman is referred to as the *Algérienne*, whereas the paid model, the fake Algerian woman, her "double" and her "stand-in", is named the *algérienne* (1986: 129, note 6). The *algérienne* is the inauthentic Algerian woman, nothing but the instrument of the colonial photographer's sexualized vision.

In Robert Doisneau's case, the controversy regarding his photographs revolved around his using of paid models (again) to stand-in for "real" Parisian couples. Doisneau chose to employ models since 'for reasons of common decency [and discretion, one could add] he could not risk using images of *real* couples kissing' (Hamilton, 1997: 98; my emphasis). His intention was to portray Parisian lovers in different settings of the city, without offending the sensibility and discretion of "real" couples. The larger text behind these images was to convey, as remarked by Peter Hamilton, an idea (and ideal) of Frenchness, of the romantic character of the French and of their unabashed display of romantic attachment on the public scene (1986: 99). Ironically, it is precisely his scrupulous method that casts doubt on this undisputed trait of Frenchness. Nonetheless, in both cases, that of Alloula's critique and that of Doisneau's photos, it is precisely the lack of authenticity that is critiqued and problematized.

By bringing these two examples into focus, I am not trying to pit two ideals against each other: authentic representation of reality (as seems to be implied by Alloula's critique, and by the critique of Doisneau's photos) versus imaginative and subjective interpretation of the world (as implied by the texts of Sontag, Barthes, and Baudrillard). They do not represent two opposed poles of photographic representation. Rather they are two faces of the same coin: the ideal of authenticity is strategically positioned, albeit in an implicit manner at times, so as to accentuate the flawed character of the particular representation, its falling short from a specific ideal. It is in this double-edged character of authenticity that the political character and implications of photographic representation need to be understood. As such, it is with these considerations in mind that I investigate the political layers of the image-text-'native' triangle. The fact that Alloula's textual critique accompanies full-blown reproductions of the postcards in question is extremely telling of the fragile and always politically unstable support between text and image (particularly in the context of colonial/postcolonial representation!): Alloula seems to think that his *textual* critique is enough to diffuse and disperse the violence of the *images* reproduced. As I argue later, it is not enough: the images hit the viewer with their full force of hypnotism and violence.

### **Picturing international relations: of war and visuality**

It is this tremendous force effected by visuality that prompted Rey Chow to examine the connection between visuality and war. She expresses this connection in terms of ‘seeing is destroying’, since only in ‘the age of the world target’ is fully blown destruction enabled by the employment of visual knowledge and technologies (2006: 27). Drawing on Heidegger’s theory of the ‘world picture’, Chow points to the

‘process of (visual) objectification [that] has become so indispensable in the age of modern scientific research that understanding – “conceiving” and “grasping” the world – is now inseparable from the act of seeing - from a certain form of “picturing”’ (2006: 28).<sup>84</sup>

It is this connection between visuality and war (or other catastrophes associated with it, such as famine, exile, and disease) that is explored by several critical scholars of IR, such as David Campbell and Jenny Edkins. Campbell is especially concerned with this troubling connection. In his article “Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict”, Campbell deals with the ‘shift from the *social construction of the visual field* to the *visual performance of the social field*’ (2007: 357; original emphasis). Putting forth the notion that ‘the photograph is a construction that obscures its own production’, Campbell encourages the reader to see photographs not as ‘icons’ or ‘indicies’, but as ‘symbols’ (2007: 379). He suggests that photographs (images in general) are as much part of power relations as they are generators of power relations, which structure our views of the world, and our encounters with others (2007: 361).

Examining the photographic coverage by the media of the Darfur conflict, Campbell points to the ways in which such images are inscribed within a larger context of a political and social representation of the African continent. It is presented as a place ridden with wars, famine and diseases, thus forgoing the social, political and historical specificity of the Darfur conflict. This stereotyping of the Darfur conflict as yet another example of African tribalism deters the international public from being properly informed about the conflict, and prevents any efficient or politically meaningful assistance to the people caught in this crisis. Campbell’s preoccupation lies not with the accuracy of representation (in images) of the sites of conflict and of the people involved in them. Rather, he is more concerned with the ways in which ‘sites (and people in those sites) are enacted through sight’ (2007: 380). More specifically, the crux of the issue is the

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<sup>84</sup> In the context of the connection between visuality, knowledge and war, Rey Chow talks about ‘interlocking relations among war, racism and knowledge production’ (2006: 39). I believe this would be the perfect (or at least a far more accurate) description of the field of International Relations.

grand narrative in which these images are inscribed, and the generalized message they are conveying. Campbell disavows the

‘unfortunate tendency to slide back into reductive treatments of visual images as all-powerful forces and to engage in a kind of iconoclastic critique which imagines that the destruction or exposure of *false images* amounts to a political victory.’ (W. J. T. Mitchell quoted in Campbell, 2007: 359)<sup>85</sup>

This quotation echoes the earlier discussion of Alloula’s critique of the colonial postcards, which assumes that his exposure of the falseness of the colonial images ‘amounts to a political victory’, or as he himself puts it, exorcizes the ‘evil eye’ of the colonial gaze, by ‘return[ing] this *immense postcard* to its sender’ (1986: 5; my emphasis). By exploring the photographic albums to which a number of Franco-Maghrebian authors have contributed, I do not intend to expose such a falseness. I examine the triangulation between image, text and the ‘native’, in the hope to better understand the political implications of this triangulation, or, to use Campbell’s expression, to understand the geopolitics of visibility. However, my approach looks at the ‘interlocking relations’ among literary texts, images, and ‘natives’, since the geopolitics of literary productions and the ways in which visibility is deployed in its support are rarely examined in IR. Unlike Campbell, who implicitly takes for granted (and understandably so!) the presence of images in the media coverage of events, I do have to ask the question: why images?

I chose to explore the regimes of representation and the politics emerging from the association between image and text in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, because the Franco-Maghrebian authors (and by implication, their literary productions) examined in the following chapter are enlisted in these photographic projects for a specific purpose. Aside from the commercial lures of having well-known writers associated with images of the countries from which they originate, the purpose for enlisting their voices is precisely to spell out the truth of the photos, and endow the images with the patina of authenticity and social awareness. The assumption behind this association is that only the socially engaged intellectual can dispell the violence of images, and make them *speak*. As illustrated below by the analysis of Jenny Edkins’ theoretical engagement with the ethics of visibility, it seems to be the subjectivity of the producer and of the consumer of image that structures the presence or absence of the *objectified* person’s subjectivity.

If David Campbell addresses the geopolitics of producing images, Jenny Edkins muses primarily on the politics and on the ethical implications of the

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<sup>85</sup> My emphasis.

reception of images. Her article focuses on the production of images of children affected by political crises, such as genocide and famine. Thus Edkins chooses to look at the portraits produced by Salgado, which, in her opinion, elicit a response from us as viewers. She also reflects on the portraits (mugshots) of children taken in the infamous prison of Tuol Sleng (Cambodia), which leave the viewers with the impossibility to adequately respond. Edkins aptly complements and juxtaposes Derrida's theory of responsibility (from his *The Gift of Death*), and Jean Luc Nancy's formulation of 'being singular plural' (from his *The Inoperative Community* and *Being Singular Plural*). She does so in order to illuminate the ways in which viewing these different and disturbing photographs constructs us (the viewers) as exposed selves, in need to respond (and thus to take responsibility in the events). Edkins' reading of the photographs mentioned above becomes the pretext to reflect on the ways in which a political community might be envisaged, one where we would perceive ourselves not as individuals assembled together in a community, but as 'being singular plural' or as 'being'in-common.' Put differently, she attempts to understand how we arrive to perceive ourselves as individual and separate subjects in the first place.

While I find Edkins' article intriguing with respect to challenging taken for granted notions such as subjectivity, responsibility and ethics, there are several points in the text, which I considered to be problematic. Firstly, throughout the article, she iterates the phrase 'expressionless gaze(s)' when referring to the mugshots of the children taken as prisoners in Tuol Sleng, and she pits such a description against the gazes full of expression of Salgado's children. In an article that addresses almost exclusively the politics of reception, one wonders why Edkins chooses to perceive the gazes of the prisoners expressionless, and why she does not make it a point to inquire into her own reading of the mugshots. Why are the gazes of the children captured in photography by Salgado full of expression, and those from the mugshots of Cambodian children expressionless? Following Nancy's theory of subjectivity, Edkins urges us to consider responsibility towards the subjects of the pictures in terms of the 'who' of the images, more than the 'what' thereof (2005: 377). But when constantly reading references to the 'expressionless' gazes of the Cambodian children, one cannot help but wonder if Edkins herself did not pay more heed to the 'what' of the pictures (prisoners whose photos were taken without their consent) than to the 'who' of the subjects. She seems to read Salgado's children more in terms of 'who' they are, simply because they had consented to the photos, and had voluntarily posed for the camera, thus evincing their subjectivity.

The implication of her reading of the photos seems to be that the presence of one's subjectivity is directly connected to one's consent and, more importantly, to one's volition. Perhaps this is the source of her predicament as regards the aporia of responsibility in front of these photos: they confront us with a



subjectivity that challenges our liberal notions of agency and seeing. This brings me to the deployment of photography in ‘picturing the Maghreb’<sup>86</sup> by Franco-Maghrebian authors, with which I engage in the next chapter. Keeping Edkins’ considerations in mind, does it follow that the women portrayed in the colonial postcards are unconvincing subjects (as Alloula seems to imply in his critique) since they are nothing but ‘doubles’ and ‘stand-ins’ for the ‘real’ Algerian women? Whereas are the people portrayed in the albums to which Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Albert Memmi have contributed, more compelling subjects, because they posed voluntarily for the camera as *themselves* (or so both the photographer and the writer seem to claim)? More importantly, it seems to be the case (implied by Edkins’ analysis) that it is the viewer who determines the subjectivity of the other: the Cambodian children’s gazes are expressionless because they are taken *illegitimately* by a photographer who was complicit with the murderous regime of the Khmer Rouge. On the other hand, Salgado’s children emanate various emotions since their images are captured by a well-known and socially engaged photographer. Consequently, they are *legitimate* representations of these children. Similarly, it seems that in Alloula’s critique it is the viewer (be it the photographer, Alloula himself as a critic, or the reader) who decides the subjectivity of the women in the colonial postcards: their subjectivity is absent because their images are taken *illegitimately* by a French photographer (a colonist). The photos taken in the postcolonial Maghreb are *legitimate* representations, since they are taken by famous photographers, and since they are endorsed by texts provided by well-known Franco-Maghrebian authors: this makes them somewhat *authentic*.

Secondly, I found equally problematic her endorsement of Derrida’s statement, according to which we are *equally* responsible to all others ‘in the same way, in the same instant’ (Derrida quoted in Edkins, 2005: 382). The question that Edkins never asks is the following: *why are we ‘equally’ responsible to all others?* Does this not reiterate the sort of Western liberal ideal that post-structuralism, and, more generally, post-modernism claims to dismantle? And more importantly, why is it that this injunction of *equal* responsibility is never deconstructed and problematized by those who endorse it? It is precisely this sort of fantasy of our being *equally* responsible to all others that depoliticizes difference, in the name of an undifferentiated difference. In her *Writing Diaspora*, Rey Chow remarks how post-structuralism/post-modernism, by perceiving *all others* to be *equally* different, implicitly treats them as interchangeable, thus levelling them into one pile of ‘subversive marginality’ (1993: 59), which really serves to reinforce *our* sense of sophisticated, socially engaged, and reflexive selves rather than *theirs*. The question that arises here is the following: why is it

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<sup>86</sup> The expression belongs to Mary B. Vogl (2003).

that it is *only* us (the reader, the Western academic or critic) who have the privilege to respond (and thus to be responsible) to our imagined others? Is there no sense in which they are responsible to us as well, and to each other?<sup>87</sup>

I chose to engage with Campbell's and Edkins' articles as not only they address the politics of visibility in representing images of war, famine, and genocide within the context of international politics, but also their research is inscribed within a larger effort of critical IR scholars to engage with the practices of (and the consequences thereof) 'symbolic power' (expression belongs to Hall, 1997: 259) in IR. The power to 'mark, assign and classify', to perform 'ritualized expulsions' (ibid.), and to symbolically (and materially) confine others to stereotyped images of who/what they are has tremendous consequences in foreign policy. These powers are instrumental in deciding whether to intervene (or not to) in situations of political conflict, in establishing the parameters of aid and development, and in framing our encounters with others. It is to such encounters, set against the background of 'nativism', that I now turn.

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<sup>87</sup> This question stems from a discussion with Marshall Beier. As such, I owe this question to him.

### Chapter 3

#### **“Where have all the natives gone?”<sup>88</sup> Spectral presences in photography and literature”**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter looks at the production of authenticity through images of ‘natives’<sup>89</sup> both in photography and literature. The “usual suspects” figuring as literary and photographic subjects in the context of the Maghreb (in the last decades) involve certain groups in North Africa who are either very marginalized (the *harkis*, *femmes mauresques* and *odalisques*)<sup>90</sup> or are seen as symbols of authenticity (Berbers, Touaregs, Bedouins), or both (in the case of the latter). These figures appear as “spectral presences”, I argue, in the photographic engagements and literary productions of Franco-Maghrebian authors such as Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Malek Alloula, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Albert Memmi. The

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<sup>88</sup> The question belongs to Rey Chow in *Writing Diaspora* (1993).

<sup>89</sup> I will hereon place the term ‘native’ within quotation marks, since I question the stability of this notion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I argue that we (academics) should develop a ‘mode of understanding the native in which the native’s existence – i.e. an existence *before becoming ‘native’* - precedes the arrival of the colonizer’ (Chow, 1993: 51; my emphasis). As such, one needs to understand the ‘native’ as constituting more than just a resistant returned gaze.

<sup>90</sup> *Harkis* are those Algerians, who, during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), sided with the French colonists. After the independence of Algeria, these people fled en masse to France, due to their persecution and massacre by the Algerian nationalists who had come to power. The cruel irony was that the French government refused to acknowledge them or provide any support for them. For decades these refugees lived in makeshift camps outside French cities in abject conditions. Only recently have they been acknowledged as part of French society and, most importantly, part of French history. As a result of the demands made by the *harkis* and their children, Jacques Chirac, president of the French Republic at the time, decided to pay tribute to “those whose departure France failed to protect and whose integration it fell short of ensuring” (Blanchard et alia, 2003: 241; my translation). Thus a commemorative plaque was placed on September 26, 2001 in memory of the *harkis* and of their contribution to a common Franco-Algerian history. For a fascinating personal history of the *harkis* and of their children’s struggles with their family history, see Dalila Kerchouche, *Mon père ce harki*.

The expression *femmes mauresques* means ‘Moorish women,’ but in the context of colonial North Africa, it specifically refers to the portrayal of North African women in colonial photography, which circulated widely in the form of postcards sent to the metropolis from the colonies. *Femmes mauresques* is imbued with the notion of the exotic gaze of the colonist which assigned these women to an imagined and highly eroticized harem of desire and hidden pleasures. *Odalisque* is a term related to *femmes mauresques*, in so far as, although meaning ‘chamber maid or slave’, the odalisque “was metamorphosed by Orientalist painting (see Jean August Dominique Ingres) into the sublimated image of the one enclosed by the harem” (Alloula, 1986: 130). For more on *harkis*, *femmes mauresques*, and *odalisques*, see Leïla Sebbar, *Mes Algéries en France* and *Journal de mes Algéries en France*.

idea of spectrality is inspired by Jacques Derrida's thoughts on the spectre or the *phantasm*, which appears in *Monolingualism of the Other* and *Spectres of Marx*, and by Mireille Rosello's discussion on "ghostly encounters" in her *Performative Encounters: France and the Maghreb*. In the case of Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other*, spectrality appears as a reference to France as a dream, as a "fantasy, at an ungraspable distance", as it appeared in the personal and collective imaginary of the Jewish community of Algeria during the French colonial rule (1998: 42). In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida remarks that "the very place of spectrality" is the awaiting for and the opening towards the fulfilment of a promise that is never going to be fulfilled, or whose moment of fulfilment is unknown, such as the promise engendered by the democratic ideal and by the communist project (1994: 65). Thus, as he remarks in his "Exordium", a spectral moment is "a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now", future present). [...] Furtive and untimely, the apparition of the spectre does not belong to that time, it does not give time..." (1994: xx).

Mireille Rosello discusses the performance of "ghostly encounters" between France and the Maghreb, through which "[n]ot only do the living come to talk to the dead (to their dead), but they also meet other people, individuals that history forbids them to befriend" (2005: 129). Keeping in mind Derrida's spectrality and Rosello's "ghostly encounters" between France and the Maghreb, I explore certain literary productions, such as Assia Djébar's *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (*Women of Algiers in their Apartment*) and *L'Amour, la fantasia* (*Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*), and photographic albums to which the Franco-Maghrebian authors mentioned earlier have collaborated. This exploration of Franco-Maghrebian texts and images focuses not only on the politics of representation in general, but more specifically, on the politics which stem from the retrieval of the 'native's' voice and image. I also argue that such presences are rendered both in text and photography as spectral presences, touched by timelessness, futility of action, simplicity, and doomed to haunt our imaginary as symbols of an authenticity long lost. Moreover, in the last decades, within and across postcolonial studies, cultural studies and anthropology there have been countless debates on the politics of representation as 'speaking for' versus 'listening to' and bringing voices forward.<sup>91</sup> As seen from the first chapter, the latter is usually understood and practiced by post-structuralist theorists as a refusal to speak for the 'native'. Thus, if the former chapter concerned itself in part with the politics of a refusal to speak for the other, in this chapter, I address

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<sup>91</sup> Such a debate appears in critical IR and in globalization studies as well, although to a much lesser extent than in the disciplines mentioned above.

the practices of “speaking for” in literature and photography.<sup>92</sup> The question that arises here is also: what are the politics involved in listening to the ‘native’s’ voice when images are involved?

This particular question is important to the overall framework of my project, because it allows us to understand the tremendous emphasis placed on vision/visuality when we are engaged in the process of knowing/understanding otherness. As Johannes Fabian aptly phrased it, ‘observation clearly privileges vision as the most reliable source of knowledge’ (2001: 30). Visuality’s implicit claim to distance(ing), transparency, and detachment inevitably structures our understanding of the ‘native’, in my case, and the systems of signs and representations which are marshalled as knowledge of the other. Thus the uneasy triangulation between image, text, and ‘native’ performs more than a mere claim to knowledge of the other: to enlist the voice/text of a socially engaged intellectual to spell the truth of the image implies that not only is the ‘native’ *known*, but that she is successfully *witnessed to*.

### Nativist encounters

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the term ‘native’ has many facets, at least in the context of the colonial experience of the Maghreb. The French term *indigène* can be translated by ‘native’, although *indigène* is imbued with the legacy of French colonialism in North Africa.<sup>93</sup> Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel remark that the term *indigène* needs to be inscribed in the larger context of the complex relations (and the encounters) between the West and its ‘others,’ through which the West has built and reinforced its identity:

“Since the Antiquity, the West has constructed its system of values and its culture by taking the Other as a negative mirror. Beginning with the Biblical myth of the curse of Cham [or Ham], son of Noah, to the barbarian of the Roman Empire, a certain number of founding myths have permeated Western thought, framing its relation to alterity and to identity. Within this long process, the scientific proclamation of the concept of ‘race’, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offers an ideological ‘legitimacy’ to colonial conquests.” (1998: 13)<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Actually, Assia Djebar, advocates against ‘speaking *for*’ or even ‘speaking *on*’; instead she imagines ‘barely speaking next to [*près de*], and if possible very close to [*tout contre*]...’ (quoted in Rosello, 2005: 7). Rosello comments that this prescription implies ‘the art of combining contact and opposition’ (ibid.). But, as I argue later, Djebar’s use (and choice) of French in order to speak very close to or next to Arab women (for whom she writes in solidarity) implies more a tension between her desire to speak very close to/next to and the inevitability of ‘speaking for.’

<sup>93</sup> See note 3 from chapter 1.

<sup>94</sup> My translation.

As such, one of the intentions of this dissertation is to explore the many nuances that the term ‘native’ acquires in the Franco-Maghrebian context, which I call the ‘shadow zones’ of this term. Such shadow zones appear as unfocused blurry portraits of groups, populations, and individuals who do not necessarily become the exclusive concern of literary and photographic productions, but who haunt such productions nonetheless.<sup>95</sup> ‘Native’/*indigène* was primarily intended, during French colonial rule in North Africa, for everyone who was of non-French origin, but who was considered a colonial subject of the French Republic, a child of the French motherland.<sup>96</sup> However, over time, the term became inflected with other connotations that followed fracture-lines of class, gender, social position, and ethnic extraction, which differentiated between groups and classes within North African societies.

I already mentioned the example of the *harkis*, whose loyalties lay with the French Republic, but who nonetheless were never acknowledged as French by the colonial metropole. Most Algerians view them as traitors, and their status both in France and Algeria is an extremely delicate subject in Franco-Algerian relations. Moreover, the children of the *harkis* are themselves confronted with deep identity crises and find it hard to understand their parents’ loyalties. To the French, the *harkis* are the ultimate ‘natives’, a permanent and vivid reminder of their colonial history (of which they seem to be either oblivious or very selectively proud). To the Algerians, they are traitors, and also the ultimate *indigènes*, in so far as they serve as the scapegoat for over a century of humiliation, oppression and marginalization.

Another signification of the ‘native/*indigène*’ notion can be encountered in the condition of the Berbers, Touaregs, Bedouins, and Sahraoui people, who are

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<sup>95</sup> An exception should be mentioned here: the *harkis*, those Algerians who sided with the French during the Algerian War of Independence and who sought refuge to France shortly thereafter, have recently become the focus of both literary and photographic productions. I am thinking of Dalila Kerchouche’s *Mon père ce harki* (2003), *Leïla* (2006), and of the photographic album of Stéphan Gladieu, *Destins de Harkis*, with a text by Dalila Kerchouche (2003). It would be interesting to explore the connection between the recent surge in productions on the destinies of the *harkis*, and the long overdue political recognition of their contribution to the history of France by the Chirac government in 2001 (see note 3 of chapter 1).

<sup>96</sup> However, as Ann Laura Stoler points out, colonial categories such as ‘native’ (*indigène*) racialize in deeply ambivalent ways, insofar as racial categories do not discriminate only according to binaries of whiteness/non-whiteness, but also according to class, social standing and gender (1989). Thus within the French colonial context, *pièdes noirs* (French colonial settlers) born in North Africa, even though of European extraction, were viewed by metropolitan France as backward and thus closer to ‘natives’ than to French. But, as Albert Memmi points out in his *Portrait du colonisé*, there was a clear hierarchy between the *pièdes noirs* and the ‘natives’, which privileged the former. For illuminating discussions on the treacherous symbioses between race, class, and gender in the colonial context, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), and Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* (1995).

considered to be the ‘true’ indigenous populations of the Maghreb, and who view themselves as the ‘original’ inhabitants of the Maghreb, nowadays living on the fringes of the (relatively) newly independent North African states. I take this opportunity to pose the following question: how does the practice of questioning (and undermining) the idea of authenticity impact the claims of indigenous populations to preservation of their life-styles, and to cultural and political autonomy? Postcolonial theorists such as Ella Shohat (1992) argue that undermining authenticity (through anti-essentialist narratives that glorify postcolonial hybridity) leaves no space for the retrieval of pre-colonial languages and cultures (as seen in the claims of indigenous and aboriginal communities), without accusing those who attempt such a retrieval of idealizing an ‘irretrievable past’ (1992: 109-110). This indeed is a thorny issue which has no simple answers. I sympathize with Shohat’s argument, and put forth the notion that the kind of authenticity which I examine and question is not the one envisioned and claimed by the ‘native’ for herself, but the one which is imagined *on her behalf* by the privileged voice from the ‘centre’ as a means of seizing control over her/his own sense of threatened selfhood. Another issue to be considered here is the deeply politicized nature of indigenous communities themselves, which are not homogeneous in their political demands or in their social structures. On the contrary, such communities experience considerable tensions between those advocating for the preservation of traditional life-styles, and those in favour of more modernized ones.

The indigenous tribes of North Africa have been the targets of systematic discrimination and even repression by these countries, where state-led Arabization has involved the active repression of their life-styles, languages, and political mobilizations.<sup>97</sup> Fascinatingly enough, it is mainly these people who are subjects/objects of photographic albums (such as the one to which Tahar Ben Jelloun contributed, which is examined later in this chapter). Their images conjure up ideas of ‘authenticity’, noble nativism and primordialism, and that ‘intractable difference’ so dear to Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous.<sup>98</sup> The first chapter focused on yet another twist on the ‘native’/*indigène* ensemble: the cases of prominent intellectuals coming from the Jewish communities of North Africa, such as Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous, who re-claim their identity as Franco-Maghrebian, as *indigènes* of a different type.<sup>99</sup> In short, ‘native’/*indigène* is an identification fraught with historical tensions,

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<sup>97</sup> See the discussion of the Berber groups as the ‘original’ inhabitants of the Maghreb in chapter 1, inspired by Alawa Toumi’s article (2000).

<sup>98</sup> In so far as both Assia Djebar and Albert Memmi are of Berber descent, this identity appears in their works, but again, as a shadow-identity.

<sup>99</sup> Later on, I focus on Albert Memmi as a member of the Jewish community of Tunis.

possibilities and violences, and such tensions acquire sharper contours when they are articulated within literary and photographic productions.

Reading literary texts from the Maghreb is a practice haunted by many dangers. One of them is pointed out by Réda Bensmaïa, in his *Experimental Nations*. Reading can lead to reducing such literary productions to nothing more than ‘anthropological or cultural case studies’, and thus ignoring their ‘literariness’ (2003: 6). I suppose in my case the danger is somewhat inevitable, in so far as I do not particularly focus on the literariness of the texts in themselves. Rather I am more preoccupied with the production of the ‘native’ in literature and photography, a preoccupation which has a deep anthropological and political bias. However, I examine such literary works within the larger network of historical events, ideas, and power relations that have unavoidably structured their production and dissemination. And perhaps the ethnographic merits of literary texts should not be dismissed so easily. James Clifford (1986) makes a strong case for considering ethnography as literature, for employing literary techniques in order to read ethnographic accounts of others and of otherness in general. After all, as Clifford points out, prominent names in anthropology, such as Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, Claude Lévi-Strauss and others both expressed a keen interest in literary theory, and/or considered themselves as anthropologists and literary artists at the same time (1986: 3). So why not read literary texts as ethnographies as well?<sup>100</sup> The implication is that the literary text is somehow in a different sphere, quasi-autonomous in its nature, and that poets and writers share a realm of rarefied knowledge that is not accessible to many; put differently, I find Bensmaïa’s objections to imply a certain conceptual gap between the political and the poetic. I do not deny that the literariness of such works is indeed crucial to understanding them, but they are texts who are produced within a particular political, social and historical context, which constituted their production.<sup>101</sup> This

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<sup>100</sup> One danger pointed out by Rey Chow for considering ‘minority literatures’ as narrowly confined to the geographic space out of which they emerged is that of resurrecting a neo-colonial attitude towards non-Western texts, which does not perceive such texts as artistic productions in themselves, but as ‘signifiers of other signifiers’, as Bensmaïa had remarked (Chow, 2006: 80). However, it is precisely with the context of colonialism in mind (and because of it) that the politics of writing must be explored. What are the politics of writing (almost exclusively) in French (considered as the language of the colonizer) by people from the Maghreb? For whom do these authors write really? What are the politics of providing the texts for albums of photography that evoke a somewhat nostalgic and romanticized ‘native land’?

<sup>101</sup> Indeed, I am thinking of Fredric Jameson’s argument in his *Political Unconscious*, which suggests that the ‘unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts’ should be the goal of every analysis of artistic productions. Such an unmasking does away with the illusion according to which there is a privileged gap between the political and the poetic: ‘[t]o imagine that, sheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there exists a realm of freedom [...] is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones



production in turn constitutes both new sets of ideas and practices, and continues to perpetuate (knowingly or unknowingly) old ones.

Nonetheless, Bensmaïa himself notes that these writers' (the Franco-Maghrebian ones) 'work[s] [are] also a symptom of what has happened to their country, their people, their culture' (2003: 163). It is around this symptomatic aspect that I examine the tensions between image, photography, and 'natives'. It is around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the development of photography, of the concept of race (as remarked by Blanchard and Bancel), and of scientific methodologies in the study of social environments and in artistic productions (as exemplified by trends such as realism and naturalism) have intersected each other and have influenced each other in intended and unintended ways. Photography became an important tool in capturing images of others and their cultural habits, which constituted undeniable proofs of others' savage natures and primitive societies. The example of early anthropological research is undoubtedly a case in point as regards the dissemination of nativist narratives.<sup>102</sup> Such practices of documenting the primitive character of others in image and text served a double purpose: firstly, it reinforced the sentiment of superiority and pride of the Western researcher who saw the workings of different societies as instances of their backward development and savage character, and thus considered oneself blessed to be part of the 'civilized' world. On the other hand, it was precisely the consideration of other peoples' primitivism that prompted the Westerner to engage in the work of salvaging these societies, pristine in their primitivism, from corruption by modernity. In support of the mission of salvaging the 'extinct native', various arguments were marshaled, varying from these societies' special bond with nature (by then almost extinct in the West), their communal lifestyles that were untainted by secularism and laws of property, and to their true egalitarianism and freedom (Clifford, 1986: 110-13).

In salvaging the native, there was (and still is) a fantasy of the search for lost origins, which still haunts many texts, be they anthropological, literary or otherwise (see Clifford 1986; Chow 1993). To paraphrase Rey Chow's compelling argument, in retrieving the image and the voice of the 'native' again and again, we (authors, academics, researchers, activists, photographers, artists) hope to retrieve an authentic experience of which we feel robbed by the various processes and experiences of modernity and globalization (1993: 52). We project our fantasy of authenticity and of lost origins onto nativized others, who become the embodiments of authentic living, and of original, untainted worldviews. Clifford names this practice 'the ethnographic pastoral', which translates into a

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in which the individual seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation' (1981: 20).

<sup>102</sup> For examinations of the assumptions and mentalities that had structured this sort of research, see James Clifford (1986) and Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), among others.

self-imposed mission on the part of the researcher, writer or photographer, to salvage extinct natives (1986: 110). The problem is that in spite of an increasing awareness in the last decades of this nativistic fantasy, what Clifford calls the ‘allegory of salvaging the native’ is still largely a framework within which we operate. It is after all, an empowering fantasy – one which gives us control over the nativized others, who become nothing more than the repositories of our magnanimous and generous assistance.

Keeping in mind the allegory of salvaging the ‘native’ and the search for authenticity, I now return to Malek Alloula’s famous *The Colonial Harem*. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Alloula looks at the colonial postcards produced in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by French photographers, and critiques the perversity of colonial vision, which metamorphoses people into sexualized and exoticized images for the enjoyment of the ‘civilized’ population of the metropole. Thus Alloula’s double mission in his critique is to subvert the stereotype of the Oriental(ized) feminine body, and to disclose the real nature of the colonial gaze (1986: 5). However, the perspective through which Alloula chooses to perform his critique is deeply troubling in many respects, as noted earlier in the previous chapter. Alloula assumes that the force of his textual critique is more than sufficient to reverse and dissipate the violence of the images he chose to reproduce in his book. The full blown captions of exoticized and sexualized bodies exert a mesmerizing and hypnotic effect on the viewer: one cannot stop looking, and the text becomes somewhat superfluous, an appendix to the image. Both Carol Schloss and Marnia Lazreg consider Alloula’s critique to be redundant when considered in association with his exposure of the photos in question: the women are once again violated, and exposed to an even wider audience (than the intended original one) (Schloss and Lazreg quoted in Vogl, 2003: 164).<sup>103</sup>

What also troubles the reader of *The Colonial Harem*, is the way in which the status and the function of the women portrayed in the photos are being addressed by Alloula. As mentioned earlier, the distinction (so colossal in its political implications, in my view) between *Algériennes* (‘real’ Algerian women) and *algériennes* (the ‘doubles’, the paid models that stood for them) is extremely troubling and telling of several symptoms. The first symptom is that of degraded authenticity. The paid models (most of them prostitutes) are simply the ‘double’ of the ‘real’ Algerian women, the spectral shadows of an ideal of Oriental femininity and sexuality that had incited the erotic fantasies of the colonial photographer. The authentic ‘natives’ are the Algerian women whom we do not see in the photos, as the photographer was denied access to the domestic space of Algerian households. Thus in one stroke, the *algériennes* become the inauthentic

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<sup>103</sup> Other critiques of Alloula’s *Colonial Harem* can be found in Chow (1993), Woodhull (1993), Ferrié and Boëtsch (1995), and Vogl (2003).

‘natives,’ the duped ones who are tainted by the colonial gaze. Since they are nothing more than spectral images of the *Algériennes*, they are found lacking, or to put it in Alloula’s disturbing words, they are ‘the always [...] impoverished version of the original’ (1986: 18).

Now, considering all these aspects, one is at pains to designate the margin/subaltern in this network of violent possession constituted by the gaze of the photographer, the paid models, the vision and voice of the postcolonial critic (Alloula), and the ‘real’ Algerian women who become the fetishized object of this Oriental fantasy. Who is the subaltern here? The prostitutes who live on the fringes of society and whose subjectivities and agency are never explored by Alloula, or the ‘real’ Algerian women who remain the great absentees of the photos? It is interesting that women from both categories, so clearly and eagerly delineated by Alloula, participated in the Algerian War of Independence, and made enormous contributions to the building of the Algerian nation. This aspect is never mentioned by Alloula. Many of the ‘substitutes’ whom Alloula examines in the photos (or others like them) joined the ranks of the Algerian resistance against the French colonial occupation. Their voices and their images appear in the texts of Assia Djebar (*L’Amour, la fantasia*), and of Leïla Sebbar (*Mes Algéries en France*), which I examine later in this chapter and in this dissertation.

Alloula remarks that the postcards ‘embark upon a process [of abstraction from the real] at the end of which the native no longer exists as such. He or she disappears’ (1986: 129, note 10). But the paradox here is that only with the coming of colonialism have people from various corners of the earth become ‘natives’: the ‘native’ as a mode of identification is a product of colonialism (see Chow, 1993: 51). One must infer from Alloula’s confusing statement that what he means by the disappearing ‘native’ is the authentic native, the *Algérienne*. His mission is thus that of salvaging the authentic ‘natives’ at the expense of the inauthentic ones, who are paraded in front of our eyes as passive and ecstatic icons ‘submitting to the cosmetic make-over’ (Alloula, 1986: 62). To paraphrase Spivak, the women in the postcards are triply in shadow (see Spivak 1988b). Their lost origins are never retrieved, they are only hinted at in the equally spectral evocation of the *Algériennes*, whose shadows hover over their ‘doubles’, the ever impoverished imitations (as Alloula perceives them).

Stuart Hall remarks that ‘[f]etishism [...] is a strategy for having-it-both-ways: for both representing and not-representing the tabooed, dangerous or forbidden object of pleasure and desire’ (1997: 268). According to Hall, fetishism involves substitution and displacement (of something for another something that is both forbidden and tantalizing), and disavowal (whereby the strong attraction

towards that forbidden something is both indulged and denied) (1997: 266-67).<sup>104</sup> Alloula, in his critique, manages to compel the reader that the women in the postcards are displacements and substitutions for something else, for the 'real' Algerian women who were the forbidden yet intoxicating 'objects,' denied both to the sight and to the touch of the colonial gaze. But in his approach, he denies the reader (and himself) an account of the social and political context in which these women lived as prostitutes during the French colonial rule, while indulging in the act of objectifying them as nothing more than impoverished imitations of an original one cannot discern in the postcards. Thus, Alloula, while making plainly and painfully visible the exposed bodies of the *algériennes*, and concealing himself under the cloak of the invisible and sympathetic critic, fails to name his own fetishism: the authentic 'native' whose presence is obscured by the body of its inauthentic copy.

### **Spectral presences in Franco-Maghrebian photography and literature**

#### *Nostalgia, sand, and nomads*

The discussion of Alloula's *Colonial Harem* illustrates the ways in which the invisible and sympathetic critics make it their mission to restore the inner truth of the 'native', her authentic and 'real' self. Not only do I find this mission in itself problematic, but Alloula's textual commentary on the colonial postcards complicates the issue. He only wants to restore the truth of the *Algériennes*, at the expense of that of the *algériennes*, who are doomed to remain inauthentic 'natives,' poor imitations of a splendid original. Paraphrasing Rey Chow's argument in *Writing Diaspora*, I argue that the politics of 'native as image' is rarely explored, in the sense that there is always a tendency to pit the politics of depth against the politics of image (surface) (see Chow, 1993: 29). This practice implies an attempt to restore the inner truth of the 'native', by substituting the 'bad' image with a 'correct' image that both annihilates the former and validates the 'native's' authenticity (ibid.). In the cases that I examine below, the restoration of truth and authenticity is done through associating textual commentary with images, in the effort to illuminate both the truth of the images in question, and, to a certain extent (in some cases subtle, in others more explicit) to confirm the authority of the voice that links the text to the image.

This point takes me to Tahar Ben Jelloun's collaboration with the French photographer Philippe Laffond in *Haut Atlas: l'exil de pierres* (1982). The album explores, through images and a brief textual commentary, the lifestyle of several nomadic tribes (mainly Berbers) from the High Atlas mountains, in Morocco.

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<sup>104</sup> For an interesting analysis of the strategy of fetishism within the (post)colonial context, see Homi Bhabha's "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" in *The Location of Culture* (2004).

From the commentary, the reader can infer that both the photographer and the writer had travelled together in the villages explored through images. Tahar Ben Jelloun's text focuses on the natural surroundings of the region, on how nature seems to dictate and determine the rhythms of life of these tribes. There are words that recur constantly in his text, such as 'silence', 'solitude', 'rocks', 'perpetual', 'eternal', and others. At a certain point, the writer states that 'such is life [here]: chosen solitude, perpetual, subjected to nature, to the continuity of the sky' (1982).<sup>105</sup> One does not contest the fact that the harsh climate plays an important role in these peoples' lives, nor that there is silence, and rocks, and wind. Rather the manner in which such elements are associated with these peoples' identities seems to imply that these particular elements define them as such. The Berbers' lives are set against a majestic background (of almost cosmological proportions) of continual sky, unforgiving rocks, and perpetual silence and solitude. There is a sentiment of nostalgia and romantic idealization that comes through the text in a way in which it cannot be overlooked: the people are silent but wise and proud. The setting fulfills all the fantasies of a classical romantic setting: harsh nature, lonely rocks, unattainable heights, silence, and the perpetual solitude.

One cannot stop wondering (at least I could not): what is the purpose of this album? Who are these photos taken for? Certainly not for the peoples from the villages. There is one paragraph where Ben Jelloun addresses the reactions of the villagers upon seeing the photos: the elder seems to be indifferent to it, even contemptuous, whereas the young women and children regard them with astonishment and make jokes about them. Ben Jelloun frames the indifferent reaction of the elder with a few thoughts on the illusion of the real that is photography, and how photography cannot capture the real self of the elder (El Hadj), nor the depth of reality. Thus in Ben Jelloun's remarks there lies the implicit assumption that the depth and the real self of El Hadj cannot be restored by an image; perhaps only by text/word? The writer spurns the surface that is image and yearns for a depth that he seems to penetrate. But the issue that arises is that he does not ponder precisely on the meaning of this surface, on its purpose and function. As Rey Chow points out, 'the defiled, degraded image' is an inerasable part of the status of the 'native' (1993: 30). Otherwise why does Ben Jelloun even associate himself with a project that produces surfaces where he sees depth, except perhaps in the hope to restore the inner truth of the 'native' through the depth of his words? It is around this 'defiled, degraded image' over which his thoughts should hover, not to perpetuate it, but to engage it, and thus to transcend it.

Much like Alloula, Ben Jelloun seems to be the same kind of invisible and sympathetic critic whose authority speaks the 'native.' He never situates himself

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<sup>105</sup> My translation. The quotations provided hereon from this work are my own translations. There are no page numbers in the album; as such I cannot provide a precise reference.

vis-à-vis this project, he never tells us why he is there, why he is the one illuminating the images with his text? 'The photo is a pitiful lie', says Ben Jelloun at a certain point in his commentary. Therefore, only the text can impart some depth to the surface that is the image. It should be noted here that it is not the aesthetic value of the photos that I problematize: the photos are beautiful and enchanting to look upon. But the captions that precede the photos provide a framework for the world that is being *imagined*, which is nostalgically nativistic. To begin with, the captions are short and refer to the people captured in photos in general impersonal terms, such as 'child of the Aït Atta tribe', 'nomads of the Aït Atta tribe', 'young girl of the Aït Oumdi tribe', 'women of the Aït Oumdi tribe.' The captions concerning people are chained together in the same monotonous, monochromatic tone as the captions regarding landscape or communal activities: 'the village of Magdaz, in a valley adjoining that of Tessaout', 'the picking of dates', 'walnut tree from the valley of Tessaout.'

It is as if people, landscape and their communal activities meld together in a homogeneous and ever-flowing rhythm. Names of people are rarely indicated, only in Ben Jelloun's commentary, and only in an anecdotal manner, which conveys nothing of *who* the people are, but rather *what* they are: shepherds, nomads, tribes, women, men, and children. One may make the case that surely *what* people are is always intrinsic to *who* people are. But the troubling aspect of this reading is that *who* these nomadic tribes are seems to be reduced to *what* they are. Moreover, it might also be the case that the lives of these tribe do not make sense outside their landscape and their communal activities. But the manner in which such a relationship is presented is so monochromatic and archetypal, that one wonders why would Ben Jelloun adhere to a mode of representation that he disavows for his own literary narratives, and for the characters he creates therein? Perhaps such an inconsistency has to do with Ben Jelloun's conviction of the image's inability to convey depth.

The captions are thus quite minimal, except in cases where certain details are given on the location of a particular village, on a certain holiday or celebration, or on a particular circumstance in which a certain photo was taken. It is as if the photos are meant to speak for themselves. Speak what, exactly? The images, the commentary and the captions are undoubtedly ethnographic in character. The few details that are given revolve around customs, cooking habits, traditions, landscape – all given in a repetitive manner as if to invoke the ancient lifestyles of these tribes of Berbers, almost untainted by 'civilization' and modernity. But the taint is there, haunting the text and the images in a few significant ways. Ben Jelloun mentions that on seeing Philippe, the French photographer, one of the women exclaimed: 'A din!' (meaning 'spirit, devil'), as he was the first European she had ever seen. Also, on a different occasion, while manifesting excitement and astonishment at the sight of the photos, the members

of the village were soon overcome by a different kind of astonishment: one of the photos captured the image of a man (or boy, it is not specified), who had died by the time the photos were published and taken back to them.

I have no desire to suggest that the trip of the photographer and of the writer had spoiled their pristine and innocent lifestyle. But I do think this project is in dire need of clarification as to the sort of the impact the encounter had on both the photographer/writer, and on the people whose images they captured. What is the relationship between this interesting pair that constituted the encounter, the European photographer/the 'native' ethnographer (as Clifford would put it, or the Native Informant as Spivak would have it), and the 'natives' of the nomadic Berber tribes? What are the power relations that structure this encounter? Answers to these questions never appear in the text, nor in the images, as the overall feeling that emanates from this project (at least in my perspective) is that the project is never *about* these people. Rather they become a pretext for a nostalgic visual and textual meditation on the value of a few remaining pristine pockets of authentic experience, submerged in tradition, possessing a deep bond with nature, and enjoying a truly communitarian living, in a world of globalized fake and individualistic experiences. This message vividly recalls the early anthropological writings on the lives of primitive tribes (such as the Nuer), discussed by Clifford in his "On Ethnographic Allegory." These nostalgically contemplate the merits of the unspoiled simplicity of the indigenous societies they evoke, even as they underline their primitivism and backwardness. Thus it appears that the Berber tribes evoked by Laffond and Ben Jelloun, and the Nuer tribes, whose example Clifford cites (1986: 111), share the unsolicited task of reminding the reader of the few 'states of nature' that still persist in our midst – vestiges of the early times of humanity, and thus to be preserved and salvaged. This fantasy and implicit advocacy for a return to simplicity is explained by Clifford in terms of a *critical allegory*, whose function is to 'break with the hegemonic, corrupt present by asserting the reality of a radical alternative' (1986: 114).

The contrast between the 'hegemonic, corrupt present' (and yet so alluring in its temptations) and the purity of the 'native land' is put into even sharper focus by Albert Memmi's commentary, entitled "The Ghost Country", to the collection of photographs of Jellel Gasteli, *En Tunisie* (1997).<sup>106</sup> Memmi opens his commentary with the stark contrasts between 'Europe and the Splendour-that-is-Paris', although polluted and crowded, and the 'native land' with 'pure air'; and between the 'harsh reality' that is Europe (by this also implying a sense of

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<sup>106</sup> Note the very titles that are associated with these photographic essays: *L'exil de pierres* (exile of rocks), in the case of Ben Jelloun, and "Ghost Country", in the case of Memmi, both suggesting a kind of remoteness and distancing, but whose contemporary spectrality haunts our modernized imaginaries.

complexity and sophistication), and the ‘store of dreams’ that is the ‘native land’ (by this implying uncomplicated reality).<sup>107</sup> But unlike Laffond/Ben Jelloun’s project, this one makes no ethnographic claims. In Memmi’s words, it is a ‘tale, in images, of a return to the native country.’ As such, there is no interest in people’s lifestyles or thoughts, only in images *per se*, as if Gastelli wanted to expose his fantasies of return into black and white images. Memmi makes it very clear that this project is a way for the photographer ‘to express *his* subjectivity.’<sup>108</sup> What is Memmi’s role, in this case? I venture to say that his role is perhaps that of the concise but authoritative narrative voice that accompanies any tale and structures the perspective of the viewer.

Thus, for Memmi, although ‘a tale’, the authority of the visual account of Tunisia stems from the fact that Gastelli did not content himself with copying the reproductions of other photographers. Instead he himself travelled extensively within Tunisia in order ‘to rediscover it in its *entirety*.’<sup>109</sup> As such, although a land of mystery, ‘a country of shadow and light, where the sun is cruel, and the moon perhaps treacherous’, Tunisia concedes to unveil her secrets to the tireless traveller and to his camera. No wonder then that there a very few people in Gastelli’s photos, as the landscape with its desert, dunes of sand, lush oases, ancient ruins, and vast emptiness reigns supreme. The captions are kept extremely minimal, only indicating the name of the places where the pictures were taken. In fact, the captions do not appear with the photos, but at the end of the album, and thus only for the curious reader. The assumption is, again, that the photos speak for themselves or perhaps that the photos are free for the interpretation of the viewer.

The primitivist (and even *misérabiliste*) character of the land is evoked not only by images (desolate gas stations, desert, ruins and dunes), but also by Memmi’s commentary: the peopled event he chooses to evoke is that of a funeral, where the ‘crowd, wretchedly poor’ dampen his spirits and triggers an interesting reaction in him. He states that he is ashamed to admit it, but ‘unconsciously, [he] had been searching for a white face among the uniformly black ones’ (!). Unexpectedly he is greeted by a man whom he recognizes as one of his former pupils. Memmi’s first question is: ‘What are you doing here?’, ‘as if [he] had met him on the moon.’ When the young man boldly replies that this was his ‘native land’, Memmi is obliged to utter an embarrassed ‘of course’, since he notices that

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<sup>107</sup> Again, there are no page numbers provided for the text, therefore I cannot properly cite these expressions. I must note, however, that they appear in the very first three lines of Memmi’s text.

<sup>108</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>109</sup> My emphasis.



the young man was black too.<sup>110</sup> The brief account of this encounter is, to say the least, very unsettling. Moreover, I find this scene profoundly rich in the ways in which it performs racial hierarchies. Memmi's desire to locate a white face in the uniformly black crowd becomes symbolical on different levels. Firstly, such a desire is an implicit desire for 'normality', whereby he equates 'whiteness' with normality and with a zone of comfort, thus rendering 'the fact of blackness', as Fanon has put it, into an exotic and unfamiliar sight. Secondly, Memmi's presentation of the crowd as a 'wretchedly poor' assembly, uniform in its blackness, perpetuates the stereotype about black Africa's abjection.

But most importantly, it is precisely the 'fact of blackness' evoked by Memmi in such a troubling way that caught my attention. Note that it is only after his former pupil had identified himself with his 'native' land that Memmi remarks with embarrassment that he is black too. This delay in recognition is significant insofar as the young man is not a 'wretchedly poor' black person, but an educated man, which renders his blackness a little harder to recognize! When Fanon claims that '[t]he black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man' (1967: 110), and that the black man is 'overdetermined from without. [He is] the slave not of the "idea" others have of [him] but of [his] own appearance' (1967: 116), he is talking about the 'fact of blackness', about how the colour of one's skin overdetermines one's being in the world. However, the episode Memmi recounts is significant because it goes beyond skin color in its performance of racial hierarchies (something to which Spivak critically refers as 'chromatism'): this encounter instantiates the ways in which racial hierarchies are constantly inflected by categories of class and gender. In this case, the racialized vision Memmi puts forth is intimately connected by a reference to class. Anne McClintock persuasively argues that, during colonialism, social hierarchies were crucial in delineating racial hierarchies, since the practice to single out certain social classes or groups within the internal bounds of empire as 'degenerate,' 'wretched' (!), 'nonindigenous' and 'diseased' mapped over practices of racialization outside the bounds of the imperial 'homeland'. Similarly, the rhetoric of race was employed to manufacture distinctions between classes (1995: 54). As such '[p]overty and social distress were figured as biological flaws' that posed a grave threat to the health and stamina of the 'imperial race' (1995: 48).

Furthermore, one of the implications stemming from the employment of sociomedical discourse in cordoning off 'deviancy' was that '[t]he usefulness of the quasi-biological metaphors of "type", "species", "genus" and "race" [...] gave full expression to anxieties about class and gender insurgence without betraying the social and political nature of these distinctions' (McClintock, *ibid.*). Consequently, the significance of this encounter is that Memmi unwittingly

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<sup>110</sup> For insightful analyses on the 'fact of blackness' see Frantz Fanon's (1967) and Stuart Hall's (1997: 223-90) theories on *seeing* the black body.

inscribes his vision of the 'native land' within a larger narrative, which is deeply haunted by racial and social hierarchies. It is the former pupil's social standing as an educated man that allows Memmi to recognize him first as a person he knows, and only later as a *black* person. On the other hand, the crowd's 'wretchedly poor' appearance renders its recognition solely in terms of its blackness. The paradox that arises here is the following: why does Memmi embark on a trip to the heart of the 'native land' (or perhaps the natives' land is more appropriate in this context), if he is fully aware he will be uncomfortable? As he points out in the beginning of his commentary, he wished to stock up on 'pure air' and 'dreams' before he returned to the 'Splendour-that-is-Paris', and to its harsh and polluted reality. The problem was that what he encountered was not 'pure air' and 'dreams', but harsh, daily reality, which shattered his nativistic fantasy. Thus the photos become the perfect instrument of escapism for both him and Gastelli to return to a 'native land' whose tale-like image can reassure them of a rediscovered authenticity.

In addition, Memmi's vision of the Tunisian landscape and its people revives, in one move, a double colonial myth: that of the 'anachronistic space' and that of the 'virgin empty land' (McClintock's terms). The former implies that '[g]eographical distance across *space* is figured as a historical difference across *time*' (McClintock, 1995: 40). Thus Memmi's travel across the Tunisian *space* is in fact, in his account, a travel across *time*, since the wretchedness and backwardness he evokes is not only an illustration of this land's *different* historical temporality, but in fact becomes the pretext and the ultimate motivation for Memmi's travel. What can be more exotic than travel to a different *time* and stock up on 'dreams' and 'pure air' (read as authentic *past*) for the traveller who comes from the sophisticated but polluted Europe? At the same time, Memmi's textual and Gastelli's photographic evocations of the Tunisian landscape resurrect the mythical fantasy of the 'virgin empty native land' that awaits the intrepid (European) traveller to uncover its ancient mysteries. The Tunisian landscape is thus feminized (virgin, mysterious, but also treacherous), and primitivized ('wretchedly poor', empty). The images evoked by Gastelli's photos and by Memmi's commentary echo, in a surprisingly faithful manner, the notes of travel that André Gide had written about his own journey in Tunisia, in 1906, where he evoked the 'utter nothingness' that was Tunisia (Harlow, 1986: xix). Gide confesses the following:

"[...] I dared not to admit myself how little refuge and nourishment art can find on this soil. I needed to pretend it was beautiful before daring to admire it so passionately. It was in the days when I willingly confused art and nature. Now, what I like in this land is, I am well aware, its very hideousness, its intemperate climate: what compels all art *not* to exist ... or to take refuge elsewhere." (Gide quoted in Harlow, *ibid.*)

Very much like Gide's Tunisia, Memmi and Gastelli's Tunisia is nothing but bare uncompromising nature, the perfect blank canvas to write and imagine one's dreams, and one's return to a lost authentic experience. Unlike Ben Jelloun and Laffond, there is no attempt to supplant the politics of image with the politics of depth, simply because there is no politics, only image. One can make the case that these projects are not representative either of Ben Jelloun's, or of Memmi's work. But if that is the case, then why involve oneself in these projects at all? Why is it that both of them involved themselves in photographic projects that evoke tribes and nomads, and bare landscapes? Why are these the images with which they chose to associate their narratives?

The gendered 'native'

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, Derrida uses the notion of 'spectrality' to refer to a moment that no longer belongs to time, a somewhat timeless moment: 'the apparition of the spectre does not belong to that time' (1994: xx). In the "Exordium" to his *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida associates the terms of ghosts and spectrality to a certain ideal of justice (and responsibility), which must take into account 'the principle of respect for others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born' (1994: xix). This notion of spectrality as justice involves the idea of haunting. Derrida's argument is that 'haunting is historical, [...] but it is not *dated*' (4). The word used in French by Derrida is *hantise*, which, aside from meaning the action of haunting, also implies obsessive fear, a 'fixed idea, or a nagging memory' (see Derrida, 1994: 177, note 2). What I am particularly intrigued by in this section is not only the idea of haunting *per se*, but especially the other meanings associated with it, such as obsession, memory, fear.

In fact, Mireille Rosello, in her study of the performative encounters between France and the Maghreb, discusses the practice of 'hauntology', through which "[n]ot only do the living come to talk to the dead (to their dead), but they also meet other people, individuals that history forbids them to befriend" (2005: 129). These forbidden (post)colonial encounters address the politics of obsessive fear and nagging memory, which I would like to explore in the context of the feminine spectral presences of some of Assia Djébar's literary productions (*L'Amour, la fantasia* and *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*), and Leïla Sebbar's collaboration in the *Femmes d'Afrique du Nord. Cartes Postales (1885-1930)*.

In *L'Amour, la fantasia* (*Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*), Assia Djébar deftly weaves together present history and past history, first person narrative and the third person narrative, to tell the story (or rather the stories) of Algeria, from its conquest by the French in 1830 to its postcolonial present. The book is published as a novel, but its content is a mixture of fiction, autobiographical

narrative, historical narratives, and personal interviews. Djébar's novel is an act of haunting, as its narrative addresses both those other who are no longer here/there, and those who are not yet born. But it is also an act of nagging memory and obsessive fear, as the author feels compelled to tell the story(ies) of Algeria, so as to resurrect the 'nomadic memory' [*mémoire nomade*] and 'the cut off voice' [*voix coupée*] of the colonial Algerian woman (1995: 313).<sup>111</sup>

In fact, as Djébar suggests, both in this narrative and in *Femmes d'Alger*, it is the feminine voice which constitutes the reality-woman [*réalité-femme*], not the feminine body, as the body could wound every gaze directed at it [*il blesserait chaque regard*] (1995: 255). But as I argue later, it is the masculine gaze that wounds the feminine body. Consider the following scene from the novel: a group of veiled Algerian women are travelling to a local sacred place, when they are informed that a man approaches. They readjust their veils, which had slipped on their shoulders, and cover themselves carefully. But soon they are curiously relieved by the fact that the man was French, and so they feel they can relax about their attire. The narrator makes the observation that the usual prudishness is needed no longer, since 'the passer-by, because he is French, European, Christian, does he really have a gaze?'<sup>112</sup> (1995: 179). The answer is a negative one: since he is a foreigner, a stranger [*un étranger*], he only thinks he has taken them unawares, he only imagines to have seen them (180). In other words, his power of vision (and hence his power in general) is only in his imagination, Djébar suggests.

Similarly Alloula makes the claim that in the colonial postcards, the foreign photographer, just like the foreigner who happened to pass by, only imagined to have seen the *Algériennes*, when in fact, in Alloula's view, he only captured the *algériennes*. Nonetheless, as imagined and illusory as the colonial power of vision is thought to be here, the material power that was enabled by such a vision made it itself felt painfully and violently on the bodies of women. The colonial postcards constitute a visual and symbolic violence, as much as they constitute a material violence of the exposure of the 'natives' bodies.<sup>113</sup> The move intended by Djébar was to restore the Algerian women's subjectivities, and to reverse colonial violence by making the colonial gaze futile and ineffective. This move of reversal prompts her to state that

"the native, even when he seems subdued, he is not defeated. He does not raise his eyes to gaze at his conqueror. He does not 'recognize' him. He does not name him. What is a victory if it is not named?" (83)

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<sup>111</sup> The novel was originally published in 1985.

<sup>112</sup> My translation. The quotes given hereon from this novel are my translation.

<sup>113</sup> See the discussion on the link between visibility and violence/war in the previous chapter.

The episode, from which this quote is extracted, refers to the refusal of the Algerian women who were taken prisoners by the French, to look at their captors and acknowledge their presence. Thus Djébar attempts to salvage the defeated ‘natives,’ by denying the victory of the colonizers. Instead of generalizing the ‘native’s’ pride and her refusal to be defeated, perhaps a more effective move would have been for Djébar to examine the ‘native’s’ defeated and ‘defiled image’ in that particular historical moment without attempting to sanctify and rescue the ‘native’s’ dignity. This episode constitutes as much the famous postcolonial returned gaze, as it points to a *hauntingly* obsessive fear of not being able to tell the story. It also points to a nagging memory of the historical and societal erasure of the feminine voices. As the story is told in French, the language of the colonizer, Djébar ponders, obsessively, throughout her narratives, over the inevitable violence, veiling and omissions that her choice of language engenders.<sup>114</sup> As she puts it, to write autobiographically in the opponent’s language [*la langue adverse*] amounts to choosing another veil (302).

To the defiled image of the ‘native,’ Djébar constantly attempts to juxtapose a salvaged and luminous image, one that attempts to restore the inner truth of the ‘native,’ her true self. The problem that arises with this practice, aside from the tenuous binary that is created by opposing the politics of image (surface) to the politics of depth (Chow, 1993: 29), is that this salvaging is done in a language (French) that is not only the *langue adverse*. It is also a language little spoken or understood by those whose subjectivity she wishes to restore. For whom does then she speak the story(ies) of the Algerian women? And why does she not speak *to* the Algerian women she calls her ‘departed sisters’ [*sœurs disparues*] (285)?

I am not advocating for the imperious necessity of using only the ‘original’ language when addressing one’s interlocutors, but the fact that the medium in which she chose to write the story of her Algerian sisters is French begs many questions.<sup>115</sup> Another question arises in this context: are Djébar’s ‘departed sisters’ her interlocutors or are they spectral presences that haunt the text of the narrative? Although Derrida’s use of spectrality is that of spectrality as

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<sup>114</sup> The politics of writing in French by a number of Maghrebian writers are explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

<sup>115</sup> Consider, for example, the case of the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, who ceased to write in English and took up writing in his native Gĩkũyũ. His writings are widely published, but now they are *translations into* English. I am not putting this example forward so as to show the ‘proper’ way of writing in the postcolony. In fact, the case of Thiong’o is far more complex than I was able to express in a few lines. I merely wanted to offer an example of various actions taken by other writers who faced a similar conundrum, that of writing in the language of the colonizer from a postcolonial perspective. For an in-depth discussion on the case for using one’s native language so as to decolonize the mind, see Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (2005).

justice (and responsibility), of ghostly revisitations that transcend dated time, I find this timelessness of the spectral presence to be depoliticizing to a certain degree. It is not the case that Djebbar *historically* decontextualizes the Algerian feminine presence; on the contrary, in *L'Amour, la fantasia*, the various feminine characters are presented within their particular time. But I argue that, by constantly attempting to restore the women's depth, she decontextualizes these feminine presences *as women*, meaning that they are doomed to hover over the narrative as sanctified spectres, images of exclusion and oppression.

*Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* [*Women of Algiers in their apartment*], is a meditation, through story and commentary, on Delacroix's famous painting whose title serves as the title for Djebbar's book. Djebbar describes the episode of how Delacroix managed to sketch the scene of the harem in Algiers: Monsieur Poirel, chief-engineer in the harbour of Algiers, and a lover of painting, convinces his Algerian employee, after lengthy discussions, to allow Delacroix to enter his home and sketch a family scene. Djebbar reflects for several pages on the beauty of the masterpiece, and sees it as the first painting to approach a feminine Orient without falling into the earlier clichés of oriental nudity and sensuality (2002: 228). Djebbar's evocation of Delacroix's act of painting the family scene struck me as problematic for several reasons. Firstly, Djebbar does very little to explore the power relations between Monsieur Poirel and his Algerian employee, who was obviously coerced into consenting to have his private life exposed in a painting. Djebbar briefly mentions it (233), but does not explore it. Nor does she do much to question Delacroix's representation of the family scene.

The issue here is not the *veracity* of the representation, but the re-performance of a set of fantasies (a nativistic search for authenticity) whose *symbolic* violence Djebbar does little to unsettle. She seems so entranced by the painting, that she is compelled to state that with Delacroix's painting, 'the vision, utterly new, has been perceived as pure image' (225). This utterly new vision, although new in its aesthetic valences, is not so new with regard to its symbolic content. The women act as fetishized images of Delacroix's own fantasies of authenticity. They are the remnants of a long lost ideal of womanhood: submissive, household bound, and representing, in the painter's own words, 'the woman in the gynaecium looking after the children, spinning wool, and weaving wonderful fabrics. It is the woman as I understand her!' (248, note 1). Such an enactment of a fantasy of authentic womanhood prompts Delacroix to exclaim: 'This is beautiful! This is just as in Homer's time!' (ibid.).

In her reading of European Orientalist painting (Delacroix, Ingres, Matisse, Picasso), Fatema Mernissi points to how '[t]he tragic dimension so present in the Muslim harems – fear of women and male self-doubt – is missing in the Western harem' (2001: 16). As mentioned earlier, Delacroix sees only supine

women offering themselves and their secrets to his aestheticized and fetishizing gaze. He cannot and does not capture the *politics* of the harem, in so far as he is seduced by the image of idealized (Oriental) femininity that haunts his aestheticized imaginary. Both the photographer of colonial postcards in Alloula's *Colonial Harem* and Delacroix in Djebbar's *Femmes d'Alger*, share that 'fetishist compulsion' (Djebbar, 2002: 226), which prompts them to capture the feminized other's image, whether in painting or photography. But why is the painter treated with so much leniency and the photographer so harshly? Is the aestheticized gaze one that can be forgiven? Is the aesthetic the criterion for discerning between symbolic and material violation, on the one hand, and mere artistic transposition, on the other? In my view, there is absolutely no difference between the two: both the photographer and the painter operate within a regime of representation that subjugates the colonial other's image as 'pure image' and nothing more.

Interestingly enough, Djebbar's reading of Delacroix' painting echoes the painter's own vision. She notes that the three women in the painting (or in the harem, this is left ambiguous in her text) 'remain absent to themselves, to their own bodies, to their sensuality, to their happiness' (229). This absent gaze echoes Jenny Edkins' own reading of the photos of Cambodian children, where she constantly refers to their 'expressionless gazes.' Like Edkins, Djebbar seems to hover more on 'what' these women are (prisoners in the harem) than on who they are (women in the harem). Mernissi's reading of the harem is a different one. To her, the harem is a feminine space, yes, but a space of daily subversion, where women employ creative tactics to manifest their sense of self. Mernissi's harem is also fraught with despair, resignation, and sadness, but it is not the only way in which the harem is understood. It is a space of tensions: a politicized space where multilayered stories are told, skin is political, wills are broken, but also some wills are forged, and women-men relationships do not amount to mere oppression.<sup>116</sup>

Gazing at the female characters constructed in *L'Amour, la Fantasia* and in *Femmes d'Alger*, one has the feeling of shifting from images of sanctified 'natives' (heroines becoming symbols of resistance and determination, particularly those in the colonial era), to passive and resigned ones (women absent to themselves, without hope or escape, which seems to be the feminine condition in postcolonial Algeria). In fact, Djebbar's collection of stories (*Femmes d'Alger*) constitutes a reflection on the condition of women in post-independence Algeria, when the nationalist project takes full force. The betrayal of Algerian women's hopes and aspiration for the arrival of independence is unimaginable, and Assia Djebbar's sensitive and subtle narrative evokes such a betrayal, in an emotional and moving manner. The Algerian women's contribution to the national struggle of resistance against the French colonizers had been tremendous: women from all

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<sup>116</sup> See Mernissi's personal account of her childhood in the harem in *Dreams of Trespass. Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (1995).

spheres of society (from prostitutes to the social elite) had become involved and had devoted themselves to the cause of a free Algeria. Algerian women had fought alongside men and many times had been revered as heroines.<sup>117</sup> With the coming of independence, they saw their dreams shattered, and witnessed their condition experience a tremendous regression in terms of their visibility on the public scene of Algeria. This immense betrayal is expressed by one of Djébar's characters in *Femmes d'Alger* as 'I am the Excluded One' (2002: 104).

Djébar poetically articulates this feminine exclusion, suggesting that '[t]he barbed wires do not close off the little streets any longer, instead they adorn the windows, the balconies, all the exit ways towards the outside...' (111). It is this same exclusion that she attempts to bring into focus, this time through Picasso's painting, in the postface of her book, aptly entitled "Regard interdit, son coupé" [Forbidden gaze, sound interrupted]. Djébar's intention is to contrast Delacroix's submissive harem to Picasso's liberated Algerian women. But Picasso's 'liberated' women are nude 'odalisques "oozing" with brutal sex' (Mernissi, 2001: 109). Djébar suggests that it is this brutal nudity (a symbol of liberation in her view) that anticipates the tradition of the bomb carriers [*les porteuses de bombes*] during the Algerian War of Independence (245).<sup>118</sup> One of the problems of the juxtaposition between Delacroix's and Picasso's representations of the Algerian woman (with the implicit binary of prisoners/liberated), is that both operate within a regime of representation that only *apparently* opposes images of harem and hamam (Djébar's *porteuses d'eau* – the water carriers inside the hamam; suggesting resignation and passivity), to those of the bomb carriers (*porteuses de bombes*; suggesting liberation and self-determination). In fact, it performs them as two faces of the same coin: between the image of the supine odalisque (forever interred in the harem), and that of the sanctified 'native' literally sowing destruction around her (in a public space), the only real choice left to the 'native' woman is that of self-immolation.

As Djébar herself acknowledges, in *Women of Islam*, both images of the Muslim woman (one veiled, invisible, silent, and the other 'liberated', Westernized), while apparently starkly different, they really share a similar condition:

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<sup>117</sup> For an account of women's participation in the Algerian War, see Leïla Sebbar's *Mes Algéries en France*.

<sup>118</sup> Many women, using as disguise either veiled attires, or European clothes, have carried bombs, during the Algerian War, and planted them in targeted public places, usually frequented by Europeans. For a discussion on the strategic use of the veil during the Algerian War, see Frantz Fanon's essay "Algeria Unveiled" (1959), included in his *A Dying Colonialism*. Also, Gilles Pontecorvo's famously controversial movie *The Battle of Algiers* deals with the complicated issue of the *porteuses de bombes*.



“... the Fatima of this feudal system who exchanges her robes for a dress from Paris [...] enjoys in fact no more rights than her veiled sister. [...] [T]he elegant lady of Cairo or Teheran has still learnt from the Koran that ‘men are superior to women because of those qualities by which God has raised the former above the latter’.” (1961)<sup>119</sup>

Aside from the disconcerting fact that Algerian women’s ‘liberation’ is performed by Picasso through a brute sexualization, the manner in which Djébar structures *her* encounter (narrative or photographic as in *Women of Islam*) with the gendered ‘native’ is both paradoxical and complex. All of her narratives constitute both reflections on and exhortations towards the liberation of Muslim women. Such narratives are moved by the desire to do justice both to the colonial woman (whether in the hypostasis of the fierce and determined ‘native’, or in that of the supine odalisque), and to the postcolonial one (the betrayed and hopeless post-independence woman).<sup>120</sup> But the manner in which she attempts to do so is to almost petrify her characters in poses of pain, self-immolation, heroic sanctity, and despair (the ultimate victims), which transforms them into spectral presences doomed to haunt our imaginary.

In *Women of Islam*, Djébar opens the photographic essay (containing photos published by Magnum, and representing different Muslim women from around the world) with a commentary on the complex condition of Muslim

<sup>119</sup> The quote appears next to photo no. 12, as the edition does not specify page numbers.

<sup>120</sup> As Rey Chow suggests, attempting to fill the empty and defiled image of the ‘native’ with meaning and subjectivity is problematic in itself (1993: 29), since it points to the desire of control, and to a fantasy of displacing our inauthentic experience onto the ‘native’s’ imagined purity and depth. In this context, the example of Marc Garanger’s photos of Algerian women comes to mind. Serving in a French contingent during the Algerian War, Garanger is asked to take photos of the people of several villages for the purposes of population count and thus control. He is thus the photographer-soldier. The villagers are forced to have their pictures taken. Years later, Garanger publishes a few photographic albums with the pictures he had taken during his Algerian stay. The element that struck me, when looking through the photos and the captions that accompanied them, is Garanger’s refraining from ‘doing justice’ to the people he photographed, by trying to imbue their images with meaning and depth. He made it clear that his mission there was violent in every way, that the experience of war shocked and disgusted him, and that he sympathized with the Algerian cause. *Femmes Algériennes 1960* opens with a brief hand-written statement, in which he states that the women were forced to have their pictures taken, and that this is an attempt to testify to them. At the back of the album, the same text is published in Arabic, a testimony to the Arab reader of the photographer-soldier’s violence. I do not claim that his approach is exemplary. There are troubling aspects attached to it, which I do not have the space to explore here. However, I would like to point to the lack of interest of the photographer (soldier, in this case) to sanctify the ‘natives’ either in image or in narrative, and redeem their truth. Garanger seems to imply that he knows words will never make the images speak truth. See also his photographic rendition of the Algerian War in *La Guerre d’Algérie. Vue par un appelé du contingent*.

women, which attempts, in her own words, ‘to stop them [the photos] telling lies’ (1961: 9).<sup>121</sup> Susan Sontag brilliantly argues that ‘[m]oralists who love photographs always hope that words will save the picture’ (2001: 107). Hence the practice of enlisting the services of intellectuals who are socially engaged, and whose purpose is ‘to spell out the truth to which the photographs testify’ (107-108). The problem is that these moralists (as Sontag calls them) hope to have the photo do what it can never do, namely speak (108). As such, I argue that Djébar’s moralist sense of justice, in her narrative, but also in her commentary on photography (see *Women of Islam*), echoes Derrida’s spectrality as justice: the need to deal with both past and future presences. While Derrida attempts to make the spectres speak to us, Djébar attempts to make the images speak truth to us. However, unlike Derrida’s spectrality, Djébar’s spectral presences have no sense of the future: as the quote mentioned earlier suggests, between the ‘liberated’ woman and the veiled one there is really no difference, and, implicitly, for such a woman there is very little hope. This prompts the following question: how did Djébar herself, the *Algérienne*, escape the condition she assigns to the Muslim woman? In *Women of Islam*, she suggests that learning is the only escape for the Muslim woman (1961).<sup>122</sup> Since she is a learned woman, she is liberated. How does then her liberation position itself vis-à-vis the condition of those who failed to do so?

Djébar attempts to take Delacroix’s ‘forbidden and stolen gaze’ [*regard interdit, volé*] and bring into focus the fact that the forbidden character is a testimony to the prisoner status of Algerian women in the harem. She does not ponder as much on the violence of Delacroix’s gaze *per se*. Since such is her emphasis, her narrative retraces the contours of Delacroix’s gaze, and almost mimics the Orientalist intention. A question that would have been interesting to encounter in her narrative (*Femmes d’Alger*) is ‘Where is that ethnic me? The Other?’, which Trinh T. Minh-ha addresses in regards to the treacherous nature of the term ‘native’, depending on *who* utters it (1989: 52). In other words, how does Djébar’s *Algeriance* (to use Cixous’ word) frame the condition of her sisters, *Algériennes* and *algériennes*?

It is this ‘ethnic me/the other’ notion, which one encounters in Sebbar’s work, under a different guise though. In *Femmes d’Afrique du Nord. Cartes Postales (1885-1930)*, Sebbar offers a commentary to a collection of colonial postcards (a similar collection with that in Alloula’s work). She entitles her intervention “Les femmes du peuple de mon père” [The women of my father’s people], and opens it with the following line: ‘The women on the postcards are not my father’s sisters, they are not his young aunts, nor his mother’ (2006: 7).<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> A similar project is Djébar’s *Chronique d’un été algérien* (1993).

<sup>122</sup> “Learning is liberation”, says Djébar. The quote appears next to photo 26.

<sup>123</sup> My translation. The quotes that follow from this book constitute my own translations.

A curious statement. She then goes on to describe the condition of these women from the margins of society, as orphans who could not make a living and became prostitutes. She thus retraces their trajectory as orphans adopted by the Catholic missions run by the White Sisters, and then lost to the street. However, the need to distance these women from her father's family seems intriguing. In my perspective, this distancing deeply echoes Alloula's own distancing between *Algériennes* and *algériennes*: these women (*algériennes*) are *not* the *Algériennes* that constitute her father's family. Without a doubt, Sebbar situates herself as *Algérienne*, a position which needs to be qualified however.<sup>124</sup>

It is thus in this opening sentence that Sebbar performs a 'we, the natives'/'they, the natives' strategic differentiation. Trinh T. Minh-ha uses this strategic differentiation to explore the symbolic violence of social anthropology, according to which the 'native' status can confer someone (usually a Westerner) the right to make a claim to an origin, a place of extraction, whereas to others the same status confers an "aura" of inferiority and *non-Europeanness* (1989: 52). As such, Sebbar's implicit assumption is that these women, although from the same ethnic stock as her father (Algerian), are 'natives' in a way she is *not*. I should clarify here that Sebbar's tone and analysis intend to be sympathetic, but there is a patronizing undertone which constantly structures her encounter with the colonial gendered 'native.' This patronizing *sotto voce* can be heard, for example, when Sebbar offers the 'good' example of the first female French ethnographers in the Maghreb, who photograph the 'native' women attentively, sisterly, and benevolently (18). Similar to Edkins' reading of the Cambodian photos, it is thus the subject of vision (the one who possesses the privilege of looking), who decides the benign or malign nature of the photograph, and not the act of capturing someone's image. Towards the end of her intervention she suggests she would have liked to show these photos to her father, and that she would have 'imagined on his behalf the destiny' of each of her 'African sisters', her 'estranged sisters, the women of his people' (2006: 18). The point is here that only the privileged voice and subjectivity can afford the luxury to imagine the destiny of her 'native' others, in absence of their voices...

As the same Trinh T. Minh-ha reminds us, 'narrow representation [in literary production, but not only] starts with the necessity of "I am God" or "I am Goddess" to create' (1989: 29). Sebbar's necessity to create is undeniable, and her status of Goddess is reaffirmed by naming the 'native' sisters, classifying them into cute little categories, such as 'the melancholic one' [*la mélancholique*], 'the

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<sup>124</sup>As it is discussed in greater depth in the following chapters, Sebbar's identification fluctuates between her refusal to see herself as Maghrebian (claiming thus a French identity), and her embrace of a mixed identity (Franco-Maghrebian). As I argue later, this fluctuation is strategically positioned, and enables her to speak with authority about the 'native', while denying the 'native' status for herself.

shameless one' [*la dévergondée*], 'the curious one' [*la curieuse*], 'the unbowed one' [*l'altière*], 'the rebel' [*la rebelle*], 'the dreamy one' [*la rêveuse*], 'the runaway' [*la fugueuse*] (2006: 18). Fascinated with her power to create, Sebbar reinforces the violence of the colonial gaze, by never exploring the violence (both symbolical and material) that links that gaze (and her own gaze) to the image. Instead, what we have are cameo appearances of tragic romantic heroines who failed to materialize their dreams of love and escape. An interesting shift operates with Sebbar's narrative: unlike Djebbar, who is concerned with stopping the photos from lying and thus with spelling out the truth behind the photos, Sebbar assumes that such an operation is not needed: her own voice is the primary intent of the narrative, it speaks and creates its own truth and its own universe.

*"Génération métisse" and postcolonial cool*

The photographic essay *Génération métisse*, to which Leïla Sebbar has collaborated, alongside Amadou Gaye and Eric Favereau, was published in 1988. The 1980s constituted an important phase, within French society, in the struggle of migrants and their children for rights and recognition. As the collective of researchers that contributed to the *Paris Arabe* volume have understood it, the 1980s can be characterized as a 'time of paradoxes', when both the struggle for migrants' rights had gathered tremendous force, but also when far-right movements such the National Front [*Front National*] had made an important impact on French public opinion, calling for a France that was only for the French (Blanchard et alia, 2003: 206-11). As such, the public discourse had been one dominated by stereotypical representations of migrants (especially the ones from former French colonies, such as North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, and the Caribbean), as 'savage immigrations' [*immigrations sauvages*] that supposedly undermined the pure French character of the nation, burdened the economy, and were the root problems of a rise in criminality. Blanchard et alia suggest that it is in this period (beginning with 1980s onwards) that the links between current international politics and the history of migration in France come into full focus: the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the Gulf War, France's foreign policy with Arab states, etc.

Nonetheless, the migrants' situations became visible (in the case of the Arab communities) through a number of public protests, but also from various literary, photographic, and aesthetic productions, which attempted to confer complexity, depth and voice to the Arab migrants. *Génération métisse* is one such an initiative, in particular since its title is the adopted slogan of anti-racist movements in France: 'black, blanc, beur' [black, white, beur].<sup>125</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>125</sup> 'Beur' is a term whose etymology is quite contested. Initially, it was used in France to designate, in a pejorative way, Arabs. It was in the '80s that the term was adopted subversively by young Arabs as a way to emphasize their different status in French society, but also to demand for

from the very beginning this photographic essay aims to make visible a different side of France, but also a different side of immigration, the aesthetic (and aestheticized) and artistic one. The photos represent images of various artists, more or less known in France: singers, musicians, dancers, fashionistas, models, painters, sculptors, and entertainment stars. The vibe of the photos is one of endless *métissage* [hybridity] between cultures and aesthetic trends, uprootedness, intellectual and social nomadism – briefly, all the parameters that constitute postcolonial cool.

This message is important, because not only does it serve to subvert the French national imaginary of homogeneity, but also it points to a different understanding of representing migrants, one which does not revolve around a *misérabiliste* discourse and imaginary. The people portrayed by the essay are mostly young, talented, creative, and famous (some only within their communities, others on a national or international level, such as fashion designers and entertainment stars). The photos emanate a lot of youthful energy and dynamism. But there are a number of issues that arise not only with the photos themselves, but also with the text that accompanies them. Leïla Sebbar's text constitutes the commentary that accompanies the photos. Her essay is imaginative and re-traces various trajectories of migrants in music, dance, fashion, art, theatre and television. However, just as in *Femmes d'Afrique du Nord*, Sebbar's imaginative writing focuses implicitly on her capacity to create. She starts her essay with '[o]nce upon a time..',<sup>126</sup> and then moves on to suggest that the (hi)stories she is about to share (create) are a continuation of the Arab tales, which told of good and evil genies (1988: 28). Why would Sebbar choose to comment on the cultural *métissage* in France within a narrative that aims to be a continuation of a good story from *Arabian Nights*?

The problem with this sort of approach is that it depoliticizes the particular aspects of current migrations, by inscribing them into a discourse and imaginary of timeless fantasy, almost levelling the differences between past migrations and current migrations. This can be seen from her remark that '[i]t is enough to look at a map of the world, or even at several maps, from *different epochs*, and *read* them

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recognition. But other opinions suggest that this was a term used by Arabs to refer to themselves, which originated in the projects [*banlieues*], and which represents the inversion of the two syllables composing the word 'Arab' in French, 'a-rabe.' The practice of reversing syllables to create new words in French belongs to a practice of speech originated in the projects, called *verlan*, and which is used by youth from underprivileged backgrounds. The word *beur* has thus come to signify a French citizen of North African origin. However, as shown in chapter 5, this word discriminates according to social status, usually referring to French people of North African origins, living in or coming from the projects.

<sup>126</sup> My translation. The quotes that follow from this particular book are my own translations.

with our eyes as one would decipher a text' (ibid.).<sup>127</sup> Sebbar thus assumes not only that looking at maps of the world (from different epochs) unproblematically unlocks their secrets, but also that if one wants to know the secret of migrations, one should look at maps of the world:

'[o]ne would have been able to distinguish [by reading the maps], [...] the sketch of happy or tragic stories in the history of commerce, of the slave-trade triangle, of colonial conquests, of wars of independence between Europe and the far away [*outrre-mers*] continents, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean on the one hand, and to the Pacific on the other.' (1988: 30)

As such, her romanticizing gaze at the maps of the world obscures the ways in which geography started out as an imperialist endeavour (see, for example, Said, 1994: 215), which constructed 'the Orient as a geographical space to be cultivated, harvested, and guarded' (Said, 1994: 219). In the same move, her gaze takes Europe as the main reference of seeing the world, with the Atlantic on its left, and the Pacific on its right: she thus reproduces the Eurocentric view of the world that divided the map of the world between the West and the rest. Another problem with Sebbar's commentary is that it over-exoticizes those of whom she talks, which is, I suppose, inevitable, once she has created her intervention as a modern continuation of the Arabian tales. If Eric Favereau's introduction to the photographic essay is a carefully politicized discussion on the politics of exclusion of migrants, but also on the internal politics of anti-racist movements, Sebbar's commentary chooses to hover in the domain of the fantasy, where characters are unattached nomads [*nomades sans attaches*] (86), uprooted beings [*déracinées*], and people fully (and unproblematically) embracing hybridity, who claim to feel at home only in the realm of the image [*je suis de là où je fais de l'image*] (104), and whose self-avowed mission is to capture the gaze of the Other [*capter le regard de l'Autre*] (112).

Sebbar's vision of postcolonial cool depoliticizes the migrants' struggles for their right to difference but also to recognition, romanticizing hybridity and over-exoticizing the bodies of the artists on whose images she comments. In this tell-tale world she forges, there are no tensions and conflicts that cannot be surpassed through the aesthetic. As Susan Sontag remarked, the problem with aestheticizing the political, is that it absorbs its political content and transforms it into a 'timeless image' (2001: 107), or an 'object of enjoyment' (Benjamin, 1978: 262). Sebbar never interrogates the value of the images *as* images, as surface, instead she attempts to make them speak her romantic story of postcolonial

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<sup>127</sup> My emphases.

multiculturalism that breaks all barriers. An engagement with the politics of multiculturalism in France would have had to start with a problematization of the image as the medium to propagate clichés and stereotypes about the orientalized other. As Blanchard et alia (2003), and Blanchard and Bancel (1998) aptly illustrate, visibility was instrumental in forging and disseminating racialized images. What exactly makes the photos on which Sebbar speaks with authority, continuous and discontinuous with the racialized images propagated for the last couple of centuries?

Again, as noted earlier with Memmi's vision of the Tunisian landscape, the regime of racialization within which these photos and Sebbar's commentary operate, is not one limited to skin colour. To use Anne McClintock's phrase, there is a 'triangulation' between gender, class, and race within the interaction between image and Sebbar's text, which resurrects unsettling hierarchies. Firstly, there is an implicit valorization of these young people's talent and education as *difference*, thereby indicating to the reader that they do not fit the mould of the poor uneducated (mostly African) migrant. They are *different*. Furthermore, the exclusive focus of the photos on artists and intellectuals signal another difference, a temporal difference: these migrants, in their hybridity (both cultural and physical), are modern or rather modernized, as such they have nothing in common with the anachronism of their background. If in Memmi's case it was schooling that 'elevated' his former pupil from a 'mere' black person (easily lost in uniformity) to a *known* subject, then in Sebbar's case it is art that transforms these young people from problem migrants to celebrated hybrids.

Hybridity is thus, in Sebbar's textual commentary and within the narrative performed by the photos themselves, effectively fetishized. As noted earlier, fetishism involves disavowal, a strategy whereby an attractive and powerful desire is simultaneously indulged and denied (Hall, 1997: 267). What is being displaced within the narrative of *Génération Métisse* is the desire for *sameness* or assimilation. The young artists are recognized as full subjects only insofar they belong to a hip and modern lifestyle that reassures the reader/consumer/viewer of their modernity. But as Robert J. C. Young compellingly argues in his *Colonial Desire*, the notion of hybridity is ever haunted by its past and by its implicit reference to 'racial purity' to the point where

'[t]here is a historical stemma between the cultural concepts of our day and those of the past from which we tend to assume that we have distanced ourselves. [...] Hybridity in particular shows the connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse...' (1995: 27).

In here Young thus traces the complicities between racial hierarchies and cultural production, since it was ‘through racial relations that much cultural interaction was practiced’ (1995: 180). Thus I argue that Sebbar’s and the photos’ attempt to graft diversity into singularity, to paraphrase Robert Young, perform a double move of displacement through sameness and difference. The hybrid generation portrayed by the photos exude exoticism through their difference, but their modern lifestyles and hip preoccupations serve to alleviate the anxiety of their difference, and to locate them within a reassuring standard of the ‘model’ migrant. Such a ‘model’ migrant not only integrates successfully within the host society, but also her presence is seen as a benign/non-threatening addition to its culture. As Sebbar expresses it, the value of their hybridity lies in the fact that they are ‘unattached nomad[s], wandering through the ages’ (86), having forgotten their ‘background’,<sup>128</sup> and having broken all strings to their ‘origins.’

Therefore there seems to be a tacit valorization of hybridity insofar as it is celebrated and performed as a non-belonging, as a *denial* of belonging. Sebbar implicitly solidifies a social and racial hierarchy within the performance of hybridity when she concludes her commentary by suggesting that ‘their nomadism [that of the young artists who represent the hybrid generation] [...] is a happy and fecund nomadism, because it affirms its hybridity’ (118). This conclusion implies that the celebration of hybridity as a act of non-belonging divides one’s hybrid identity into two poles: the traditional (‘native’) pole, and the modern (emancipated) one. Therefore note that non-belonging is constantly (albeit tacitly) connected to the traditional pole, insofar as these young artists have broken links with their cultural backgrounds, and find belonging only in the (highly modernized) realm of art. The realm of cultural and artistic production privileged by Sebbar’s commentary is never a neutral or a color-blind one, but one which favours the non-traditional types.

More to the point, the strategy through which hybridity is fetishized as commodity for the consumption of the lover of exotic cool, renders the subjects *cum* objects of the photos as reassuringly *different* from their ‘traditional’ backgrounds, as it tacitly relegates the absent others (the non-intellectual, non-artistic migrants stuck in the suburban ghettos) to an anachronistic space.<sup>129</sup> To paraphrase McClintock, the idea of hybridity is performed as ‘the voyeuristic consumption of commodity spectacle’ (1995: 59), whereby hybridity is consumed as a ‘national’ spectacle, simultaneously aimed at reconstituting the French nation

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<sup>128</sup> In several instances she mentions, somewhat approvingly, that several of her ‘characters’ do not speak their ‘native’ languages.

<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, this commodification of hybridity echoes Walter Benjamin’s own concern, expressed in his essay “The Author as Producer”, with the ‘[t]he transformation of the political struggle from a compulsion to decide into an object of contemplative enjoyment, from a means of production into a consumer article’ (1978: 264).



as a *multicultural* space, and at unproblematically incorporating the images of the hybrid artists into the ideal of French citizenship that reads ‘different but same.’

Moreover, as rendered by the photos, the feminine value of the women’s bodies is coeval to their exotic value: the ‘other’ woman can be rendered feminine only insofar as she is exotic, mysterious, and wholly *other*. Within the narrative space imagined by *Génération Métisse*, women are portrayed either as garbed in traditional attires proudly exhibiting their difference, or in ‘modern’ clothes sensually exhibiting their bodies. In both instances the racial signifier operates as a fetishized commodity that mediates their cultural difference, and saturates the viewer’s imaginary. Discussing the failure of the anti-racist movements in the 1980s to effect social change with regard to the situation of the migrants, Blanchard and Bancel frame such a failure in terms of the movements’ intimately linked social failure and media success, since

”[t]he antiracist movement was at times poorly served by a media strategy that was devoid of a social content. The movement has undoubtedly failed to take into account the importance of the mental gap created on the issue of immigration, by picturing ‘exotic’ migrants as populations that could not be ‘integrated’ [*non intégrables*], by virtue of their exoticism, in the eyes of a strong minority of French. Focusing on a discourse that was exclusively ethical in order to oppose the racist theses of the National Front, the antiracist movement is a victim of its own incomprehension of the historical nature of the representations that had concerned the ex-colonized migrants, without even mentioning the countries of origin of these migrants of which the greatest majority of French people and social activists are completely ignorant.” (1998: 85)<sup>130</sup>

Sebbar’s commentary is inscribed precisely within this media strategy, characterized by a socially void content, whose primary mission is to joyfully celebrate hybridity, without pondering on the consequences or on the politics of such a celebration. Eric Favereau’s introduction does attempt and succeeds in presenting both a history of the racism faced by *beurs* in the 1980s, and in informing the reader of the tensions and conflicts within their struggles for recognition. But Sebbar’s commentary, which takes most of the essay, places a certain finality on these struggles, as if to say that art conquers all.

If, with Malek Alloula’s analysis of the colonial postcards, we are confronted with two types of ‘natives’ (*Algérienne* and *algérienne*), Sebbar’s commentary reveals a resonant absence, which is not insignificant in its implication. The reverberating absence of those migrants trapped within the

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<sup>130</sup> My translation.

geography of the suburban ghettos, and whose experience of hybridity is not a celebratory one, but an agonizing one, serves as the negative pole of the hybrid generation's experience of integration and assimilation.<sup>131</sup> Within the textual and visual narrative of *Génération Métisse* there is a subtle but forceful hierarchy between *Hybrids* and *hybrids*, which disturbingly maps over binaries of tradition/modernity, traditionalist/hybrid, 'problem migrant'/'model migrant'. The former's subdued hybridity, celebrated as non-belonging, becomes the foil of the latter's untamed hybridity, experienced as agony. Eric Favereau's introductory commentary to *Génération Métisse* seems to be more concerned with those migrants from the margins of French society. However, such a concern is effectively displaced and neutralized by Sebbar's narrative and by the photographic focus.

About the photos themselves, there is a particular aspect which I found troubling. When examining the photographic essays focusing on the Maghreb, I was struck by the difference, in representation, between images of 'natives' captured *within* the Maghreb (such as those commented upon by Ben Jelloun, Albert Memmi, and Sebbar), and those of the *Génération Métisse*. These two representations map over binaries such as rural/urban, simple/complex, provincial/cosmopolitan, homogeneous/hybrid, static/active, nature/culture. The Westernized and hybridized 'natives' seem to personify the future of the postcolony, whereas the 'natives' of the Maghreb embody the past. Such a binary regime of representation does little to unsettle the problematic image of postcolonial difference as the utterly different and exotic Other. The other as Other remains ever elusive and thus only representable as exoticized and nativized body. As the intellectually cool nomads of which Sebbar speaks with satisfaction attempt 'to capture the gaze of the Other' (1988: 112), the question that should haunt their art is whether capturing the Other's gaze is a desirable practice at all, or whether the Other actually cares for her gaze to be captured.

### Concluding remarks

Discussing the politics of writing the 'native' in ethnographic studies, Clifford suggests that '[i]f the ethnographer reads culture over the native's shoulder, the native also reads over the ethnographer's shoulder as he or she writes each cultural description' (1986: 119). Undoubtedly so, but there are power relations between the ethnographer and the 'native', which privilege one reading over the other. Even though literary productions are not simply another type of ethnographies, Clifford's reflection can be applied in the cases I chose to examine. Tahar Ben Jelloun, Albert Memmi, Assia Djebar, and Leïla Sebbar are considered, through their literary productions, to be representative of the North

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<sup>131</sup> This theme is further developed in chapter 5.

African literature written in French. As such, it is in their capacity of mouthpieces for the places they come from, that they were associated with a series of photographic essays that attempted to present people and places from the Maghreb. As cultural mediators, they too are engaged in writing and reading culture over the 'native's' shoulder. The purpose of this chapter was to examine the regimes of representation operated by such readings over the 'native's' shoulder, and to explore the politics behind them.

As illustrated by the analyses of David Campbell and Jenny Edkins' articles on visuality in IR, I argue that the regimes of textual and visual representation present in the Franco-Maghrebian works discussed in this chapter, can be inscribed in an international politics of visuality that produces the 'native' for the 'benefit' of her appropriation and control. Practices of sanctifying and/or exoticizing the 'native' speak about a desire to take possession of an authentic experience long lost in a globalized and (post)modernized world, and tend to claim authenticity through the purified image of the 'native.' A research agenda for perceiving the 'native' as 'indifferent defiled image' (as advocated by Chow, 1993: 53) would thus begin by questioning the premises for such practices of sanctification and commodification, and explore the fertile position of the Native Informant as mediator of postcolonial difference.

Rey Chow suggests that these practices of purifying the 'defiled image' of the 'native' and endowing it with depth and subjectivity are never innocent or noble (1993: 29). I thus argue that Tahar Ben Jelloun's and Assia Djebar's readings over the 'native's' shoulder attempt to sanctify 'the defiled image with pieties and thus enriching [them]selves precisely with what can be called the surplus value that results from *exchanging* the defiled image for something more noble' (Chow, 1993: 30). In this commodification of 'native' subjectivity, various subjectivities are produced: wise and proud nomads forever bound to their land and nature, frozen within the landscape that seems to have produced them, heroines and saints that ooze with determination and energy, passive and oppressed odalisques absent to themselves, and sad, claustrophobic images of postcolonial Muslim women with no escape from oppression in sight (except through learning perhaps).

I do not contest Djebar's innovative technique of writing history through a literary lens, which confers her narrative creativity and sensitivity. In the name of a 'historicized memory' (Pierre Nora's phrase), Djebar (and other Franco-Maghrebian writers) attempt to reflect on their own history, both as individuals and as a collective. As such, one could make the case that Franco-Maghrebian authors are writing a history of silences and about silences ('stories about the *absence* of stories,' cf. Rosello, 2005: 111). Thus their histories become an almost Derridean supplement to other missing stories and voices. But supplementing missing stories has its own politics that are not innocent of the sort of nativistic

fantasies, which some of the authors are perhaps keen to disavow. As Trinh T. Minh-ha has put it, 'a conversation of "us" with "us" about them is a conversation in which "them" is silenced (1989: 67). Thus, to paraphrase the argument put forth by Daniel Mato in one of his articles, why speaking/reading *for* the 'native' and not speaking/reading *with* the 'native' (2000)? Like Walter Benjamin's collector, Assia Djébar's innovative historiography attempts the same process of excavating, collecting and preserving only the choicest pieces, so that the past can speak in its own voice (see Sontag 2001: 76). Although she disavows 'speaking *for*', opting instead for an ambiguous 'speaking next to/very close to', by using the medium of the French language (albeit in a subversive manner) in order to speak to her Algerian sisters, she inevitably traces a tension between her desire to speak next to/very closely to, and the inevitable practice of 'speaking for.'

If Ben Jelloun and Djébar attempt to bring forward the voice of the 'native' (albeit in problematic ways), Albert Memmi's and Leïla Sebbar's readings over the 'native's' shoulder become exercises in proclaiming their own subjectivity as creators. The image of the 'native' is commodified within the lines of their texts, to the extent that it produces exotic and remote landscapes, equally exoticized and sensualized natives, and postcolonial hybrids that ooze with an exoticized cool. Thus the Native Informant, as Spivak describes the postcolonial intellectual (1999), mediates cultural commodities for the benefit of the exotic and nativistic fantasies of the Westerner intoxicated with everything Other (see, for example Appiah 1991: 348). As 'photography completely de-realizes the human world of conflicts and desires, under cover of illustrating it' (Barthes, 1982: 118), the discussed photographic essays claim to illustrate realities of which we, as readers, were perhaps unaware.

But as Barthes suggests, such a photographic illustration empties the subjects or events portrayed of their social or political content. Assia Djébar, in her *Women of Islam* and in *Chronique d'un été algérien*, seems to be aware of such a danger and thus attempts to supplement this failure (or lie, as she puts it) of the image, with the depth of her word, by wishing to produce 'stable meaning' (Sontag, 2001: 106). As Sontag has aptly remarked, this act of supplementing the image by enlisting a socially concerned writer to spell out the truth of the photos stems from a moralistic fantasy, which desires to make the photo perform something that it can never do, namely speak (Sontag, 2001: 105-6). Caught between sanctification and exoticization, commodification and defilement, the 'native as image' enriches with its surplus value the subjectivity of those voices who yearn for authentic experiences and lost origins.

### **Chapter 4:**

#### **“The politics of exile and diasporic identities in the Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial context”**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the many faceted practices of exile and migration in the Franco-Maghrebian context. I zoom into this complex and ambivalent issue of migration not only because the example of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter offers an excellent opportunity for such an incursion, but also because it allows me to delve into politics of language, hybridity, and mobility in the postcolony. In here I argue that practices of postcolonial mobility in the Franco-Maghrebian context have produced differentiated and unequal diasporic identifications: the *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)*, whose ambivalent and ambiguous conditions are illuminated through language, practices of hybridity and *métissage*, and through their performance in the fragile and fragmented narratives of IR and literary texts (as discussed in the next chapter).

The Maghreb is an interesting and fascinating place for studying hybridity, migration, and the politics of exile for several reasons. There have been multiple historical processes of hybridization in the Maghreb with several successive waves of conquest and colonization, of which the most notable are the Roman, Arab, French and Spanish ones.<sup>132</sup> Each of these waves has contributed to the *métissage* of cultures and societies in the Maghreb. This process of *métissage* did not suppose a facile embrace of all difference, but a complex and sometimes violent negotiation of values, identities, practices and ideas, which allowed the Maghreb to acquire a certain historical and cultural unicity as a region. Bearing in mind the complexities of identity practices in the Maghreb, an analysis of the discourses of Maghrebian diasporic intellectuals such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, Assia Djebar, Leïla Sebbar, and Albert Memmi, enables us to understand the postcolonial experiences of exile and migration as unequal and deeply politicized processes.

I start by examining the politics of language in the postcolony. Such an examination attempts to provide insight into the ambivalent navigation of Maghrebian diasporic intellectuals between French language as the language of the former colonizer, and French language as the tool for resistance against and liberation from the totalitarian practices of post-independence Arabization projects in the Maghreb. This section advocates for the understanding of a multiple Maghreb, a space not of a simplistic linguistic binary (French vs. Arabic), but of a plurilingual diversity that negotiates its existence *against* and

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<sup>132</sup> For an incursion into the complex history of the Maghreb, see Abdallah Laroui's seminal study, *The History of the Maghrib. An Interpretive Essay* (1977).

with the totalitarian aspirations of both its colonial legacies and postcolonial realities.

The signifiers ‘Arab’, ‘Arabic’, and ‘Arabization’ acquire here complex and paradoxical connotations. ‘Arabization’ refers to the linguistic policies undertaken by governments in the Maghreb, whereby they attempt to enforce a homogeneous and uncontested Arab identity through the introduction of modern standard Arabic (to which I refer throughout the chapter as ‘classical Arabic’). This set of policies is viewed by Maghrebian intellectuals as a violent imposition of linguistic practices and cultural norms, which are considered foreign to Maghrebian societies. Also, the purpose of this set of policies is the erasure of Maghreb’s multiplicity (understood as a rich diversity of languages, religions, and communities), and its supplanting with a unified vision of ‘Arab-ness’, which does not tolerate dissent. Consequently, ‘Arab-ness’ as performed within the texts of Maghrebian intellectuals inhabits a double articulation: the ideal of Arab identity (understood as tolerant and hospitable to difference) lives in close and agonizing tension with an understanding of ‘Arab-ness’ as Arabization (associated with religious and cultural fundamentalism).

In the second section of the chapter, we come to understand the Maghreb as a deeply hybridized space, one in which hybridity needs to be seen not as the point terminus of previous historical and cultural processes, but as a processual reality lived and navigated in the everyday. Following Stuart Hall’s conceptualization of hybridity in his interview with Kuan-Hsing Chen, I understand the hybridity haunting and performing the Franco-Maghrebian encounter as a historically situated process that is imbued with specificity (2003: 502). As Marie-Paule Ha so appositely articulated the point: the politics of hybridity imply for the *exilé(e)* ‘an exhilarating and liberating condition’ whereby the diasporic intellectual easily falls into conversation with different cultures (1995). For the *immigré(e)*, however, hybridity is experienced as ‘cultural limbo’ through which she must negotiate her socio-political marginalization, her economic exploitation, and the disaffection of the young generations. I thus explore not only the different degrees in which hybridity/*métissage* is negotiated by the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)*, but also the relation that binds them in an uneasy and fragile way.

### **The politics of language in the Franco-Maghrebian postcolony**

In this section, I intend to deepen a discussion initiated in the previous chapter, namely that concerning the politics of writing in French by certain Maghrebian intellectuals. In the context of the colonial history between France and the Maghreb, and particularly between France and Algeria, the use of the French language in the former colonies has been and continues to be a sensitive issue. Needless to say, the linguistic encounter between French and the local

languages of the Maghreb has been a violent one, fraught with ambivalence and tension.

The colonial period was characterized by an aggressive policy of *francophonie* on the part of the French colonial administrations that attempted and, to a certain extent, succeeded to eliminate education in local languages, particularly in Algeria. Here they supplanted local systems of education with schools that taught French language and culture.<sup>133</sup> The access to the establishments of French education was not open to everyone, but limited to the colonials residing in the Maghreb, and to the fortunate local families who could afford to provide a European education for their children. Most of the local schools which offered education in the local dialects had been destroyed or shut down by the colonial French administration. Within this difficult set of circumstances most of the educated local elite was educated in French and used French as the medium for their intellectual endeavours.

Moreover the situation complicates itself even further when one takes into account the characteristics of the local languages that circulated in the Maghreb. As Alek Toumi points out in his insightful study of the linguistic politics in the Maghreb, *Le Maghreb divers*, the languages being spoken, such as Berber and local Arabic dialects, did not possess a written culture, instead they relied heavily on rich oral traditions. As such, between 1945 and 1962 (the year of the Algerian independence), the French language is considered to be the most appropriate instrument for “native” intellectuals to assert themselves (Arnaud, 1986: 40). This view is being embraced not only by Jacqueline Arnaud in her detailed study of the Maghrebian literature of French expression, but also by a number of commentators, literary critics and writers who attempt to explain the ambiguities of using the French language as a medium of communication by Maghrebian intellectuals.<sup>134</sup>

A lot of ink has been spilt on the violence, ambivalence and tension of using the colonial language by the postcolonial intellectual for the purpose of conveying a message, which will probably not be understood or deciphered by her compatriots. In the case of the Maghrebian intellectuals, a question that arises is the following: who are they writing for? Who belongs to the anticipated public of their works? Jacqueline Arnaud remarks that for the authors who asserted themselves before the independence of Algeria (1962), such as Assia Djebar and

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<sup>133</sup> For analyses of the devastating effect of colonial French administrations on the local traditions of education in the Maghreb, see Albert Memmi's *Portrait of the Colonizer* (1985); Jacqueline Arnaud, *La Littérature maghrébine de langue française* (1986); Alek Baylee Toumi, *Le Maghreb divers* (2002); and also Assia Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent... en marge de ma francophonie* (1999).

<sup>134</sup> See note 2 for examples of such intellectuals, to which I could add the names of Tahar Ben Jelloun and Kateb Yacine.

Albert Memmi, there was a sharp antinomy between the audience they wished for and the persons who were actually able to read them (1986: 47). Since the large proportion of the masses in the Maghreb were illiterate, the public they targeted was constituted by the Maghrebian elite, educated in French like themselves, foreigners who disavowed the colonial project, and members of the left in France who felt sympathy for the Maghrebian national movements (Arnaud, 1986: 42). Thus there is an interesting dilemma regarding the preference for using French:

“When these writers, who are capable of writing in Arabic and who otherwise do it gladly, are being asked why they write in French as well, they reply [...] that in French the weight of tradition feels lighter (and by this one must understand both the ability to conduct research as well as the freedom of expression – in all the senses of the word).”<sup>135</sup> (Arnaud, 1986: 55)

This linguistic dilemma needs to be framed within the political context of both colonization and decolonization processes. Before independence, the North African colonies had undergone a thorough process of inculcation into French language and culture.<sup>136</sup> With decolonization, the three countries in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) have experienced an equally thorough and violent process of Arabization. I translate the term ‘Arabization’ from the French *arabisation*, which is used by several Maghrebian intellectuals (such as Albert Memmi, Alek Toumi, and Assia Djebar)<sup>137</sup> to describe the current linguistic politics that unfold within the Maghrebian projects of national (re)construction. It is important here to indicate that such linguistic politics are part of a larger project of nation-building in the Maghreb, which revolves around the idea of an Arab identity, imposed and enforced from above, that is understood as a totalitarian and immutable set of characteristics.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> All the quotations coming from French sources in this chapter are my personal translations, unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>136</sup> The French expression ‘nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ [our ancestors the Gauls] is used nowadays ironically in Francophone postcolonial literature, since it illustrates the absurdity of the French colonial system of education that taught the young colonized from North Africa that their ancestors were the Gauls! Moreover, this example illuminates the perverse paradoxes that allow for the colonized (the ‘*indigènes*’) to assume a common history with their colonizers, but not a common humanity or indeed, as will be seen later in this chapter, a common claim to Frenchness. For an exploration of how the expression ‘our ancestors the Gauls’ has been subverted in postcolonial aesthetic productions, see Mireille Rosello, *Declining the Stereotype. Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures* (1998).

<sup>137</sup> The term has been appropriated by French intellectuals as well, such as Étienne Balibar (1999: 170).

<sup>138</sup> As it is later discussed, these characteristics encompass not only language (modern standard Arabic), but also history and religion. The latter becomes a particularly delicate and



Étienne Balibar, in an essay entitled “Algeria, France: One Nation or Two?”, captures this situation with vivid insight. He discusses the paradoxical encounters between nation and empire, both in postcolonial spaces, and in the case of the postmetropolises. According to Balibar, decolonization does not necessarily entail the extrication of empire from nation. He points to the various strategies whereby multiculturalism and multiplicity are denied and repressed both within the Algerian and the French social spaces, albeit in dissymmetrical ways (1999: 166). As he remarks, ‘in the Franco-Algerian couple we find first of all the persistent trace of this mutual appurtenance of nation and empire, this ineradicable “remainder” of national imperialism with the state organizing itself as a domination’ (ibid.).

Contrary to popular knowledge, the language spoken in the Maghreb is not Arabic, at least not the classical Arabic that is the medium of expression in Middle Eastern countries.<sup>139</sup> The languages spoken in Algeria, for example, before 1830 (the year of the French occupation) were Turkish, since Algeria was under Ottoman occupation, and several Arabic and Berber dialects, but definitely not classical Arabic (Toumi, 2002: 104). After the French occupied Algeria, the Arabic dialect spoken in this region incorporated French expressions, just as it had incorporated other languages of previous colonizations and foreign influences, such as Arabic, Turkish, Italian, Spanish, and French. Alek Toumi calls the dialect spoken in the Maghreb *le farabe*,<sup>140</sup> meaning a combination of French, Arabic and Berber, that has very little to do with literary Arabic.<sup>141</sup> In fact, Toumi clarifies that classical Arabic is just as foreign to the vast majority of illiterate Maghrebians as French (2002: 83).<sup>142</sup>

At this point the politics of language in the postcolony emerge in their ambivalence in the works of Maghrebian authors. Intellectuals such as Albert Memmi, Jacqueline Arnaud, Alek Toumi, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Assia Djebar, among others, claim that the greatest danger in postcolonial Maghreb does not come from the French language, but from the impoverished state of the education

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complex issue, as the imposed introduction of a different interpretation and practice of Islam (identified by Toumi with the wahabist strand) is seen as a foreign imposition upon Maghrebian societies. This notion of foreignness appears not only in Toumi’s essay, but also in Assia Djebar’s, Tahar Ben Jelloun’s, and Albert Memmi’s literary texts and essays.

<sup>139</sup> By ‘classical’ Arabic, Toumi indicates the deployment of modern standard Arabic (or literary Arabic) used in the Middle East, and not of the classical Arabic of the Qur’an.

<sup>140</sup> It can also be encountered under the name of *Faraber* or *sabir*.

<sup>141</sup> Neither the *Faraber* nor the Berber is a written language.

<sup>142</sup> Thus equally ridiculous is the claim imposed by the current project of Arabization in the Maghreb, according to which the ancestors are now from Saudi Arabia, and not from North Africa. As Toumi sarcastically remarks, ‘[a]fter [the French colonizers] made them recite “our ancestors the Gauls”, now they [the new leaders] forbid the Berber language, attempt to replace the “farabe” with a classical archaic language, for the purpose of eliminating French and consecrating the Islamic baathist ideology’ (2002: 105).

system, and from what they call a forced ‘medievalization’ through the imposition of classical Arabic as the medium of communication (see, for example, Arnaud, 1986; Toumi, 2002; Memmi 2004). As Memmi bitterly pointed out in his *Portrait du décolonisé arabo-musulman* [Portrait of the decolonized Arab Muslim], ‘the revolution did not take place’ in the Maghreb (2004: 78): the colonial French occupation was replaced with another colonial project, the forced Arabization of the Maghreb. Thus in the context of the current projects of imposed Arabization, the former colonial language becomes a means for refuge and escape, through which and wherein intellectuals can express themselves freely.

Alek Toumi, in his *Maghreb divers*, explores extensively the problem of language in the Maghreb. He poses the following question, which can be found haunting every piece of writing in French produced by a North African intellectual:

“How to explain that this instrument of colonization and oppression that was the French language has been transformed within the span of a generation into a genuine tool for liberation, indispensable to the work of every Maghrebian intellectual?” (2002: 2-3)

Such are the intricate workings of postcolonial alchemy that the use of French in the Maghrebian context needs to be understood in its deep specificity and presented in its troubling ambivalence. Whether advocating for a return to original or native languages (Thiong’o 2005), or for a subversion from within of former colonial languages (Derrida, Cixous, Said, Robert Young, and others), postcolonial theory does not usually muse of the violent but productive specificities of re-claiming the colonial language as ‘war capture’ or as ‘booty.’ Kateb Yacine, the celebrated Maghrebian author, does so, however, when he asserted that French was a capture of war, and hence part of the Algerian cultural heritage (Toumi, 2002: 148). In the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, is Arabic a regained language or is the project of imposed Arabization an enactment of the fantasy of return to pure origins? I argue that the intellectuals examined in this chapter are accurate in stating that this enactment of a return to origins is part and parcel of a nationalist ideology that attempts to present that which is multiple and diverse as something homogeneous and unitary (see Toumi, 2002: 14; Djébar 1999: 216-223).

Toumi categorises the languages circulating in the Maghreb in a very productive and intriguing manner: the impure ones (*le farabe* and Berber dialects), the cruel stepmother [*la marâtre*] (French), and the mythical mother [*la mère mythique*] (Arabic) (2002: 104, note 39). The project of decolonization in the Maghreb involved a purging of the colonial legacy by attempting to undermine, and in the case of Berber to erase completely, the local dialects, the

impure ones, so that the mythical mother (classical Arabic) can re-found the states in the Maghreb in the image of the golden age of classical Arabic in the Middle East. The interesting and paradoxical process at work here is that the nationalist project in the Maghreb did not attempt to draw on the immensely rich historical and linguistic legacy of the Maghreb. Rather it transplanted a foreign language and culture (Arabic from the Middle East) in the name of a long desired purity and authenticity, with grave consequences for the various ethnic communities in the region, such as the Berbers, the Jews, and Europeans (Italian, Spanish, French, Greeks, Maltese).

Theorizing on the postcolonial as a concept and as a practice, Stuart Hall remarks that the term encompasses a ‘kind of political event of our “new times” in which *both* the crisis of the uncompleted struggle for “decolonization” *and* the crisis of “post-independence” states are deeply inscribed’ (1996: 244). As such, the postcolonial

“re-reads ‘colonisation’ as part of an essentially transnational and transcultural ‘global’ process – and it produces a decentred, diasporic or ‘global’ rewriting of earlier, nation-centred imperial grand narratives.” (1996: 247)

Stuart Hall further explains that by ‘global’ he does not mean universal, but transversal and transnational. In the Maghreb, the postcolonial moment is defined by the struggles and negotiations between the impure ones, the cruel stepmother and the equally cruel mythical mother. Therefore, fathoming the political and cultural consequences of French colonization in the Maghreb implies conceiving of such practices in diasporical ways, that is in ‘non-originary’ ways, through a hybridity that is historically and politically situated (see Hall, 1996: 251; 2003). What this process of fathoming entails is not an easy celebration of hybridity understood in a ‘postmodernist nomadic’ way (Hall, 2003: 502). Rather it presupposes and advocates for a ‘specific historical formation’, which claims ‘positionality’ and embeddedness while at the same time performing a certain transcendence of that particular position. An intellectual from the Maghreb can make claims to French, Arabic and Berber cultures at the same time, given the rich legacy of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. This richness will also complicate her political position as it is discussed later in this chapter. An uneducated Maghrebian may identify herself only with Berber cultures, while another may profess loyalty to both Arabic (understood as *Faraber*) and Berber cultures. Maghrebian governmental officials may publicly vouch attachment to Arabic culture (modern standard Arabic), while in daily communications may

find themselves more comfortable with *Faraber* or French.<sup>143</sup> The purpose of these examples is to illustrate the sort of hybridity that is being enacted within the Maghrebian context, one which hinges on a very specific historical location, namely the Franco-Maghrebian colonial and postcolonial encounters.

And what of the political stakes involved by this Franco-Maghrebian hybridity? Is it simply a case of a former colonial master metamorphosing after independence into an instrument of liberation and emancipation? In fact, the situation is far more complex. Even if politically independent from France, the Maghrebian states continue to be economically and culturally dependent on it.<sup>144</sup> During pre-independence liberation from French colonial rule was seen as the main political objective. However, after independence, constructing a new state/national identity lead to the rejection by the new governing bodies (the FLN, in Algeria) of anything that had to do with the previous rule, including eliminating the practice of teaching in French, and transplanting a model that was equally foreign to the Maghreb, the classical Arabic model taken from Middle Eastern societies such as Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. But the current situation resembles more a case of schizophrenic hybridity: while intellectuals who speak and write in French are persecuted and even executed in Algeria, French continues to be a vehicular language<sup>145</sup> for the educated (including the governmental officials who are imposing the project of Arabization). In Tunisia and Morocco, some subjects in university are taught in French and some in Arabic, since certain specialized terms and concepts cannot be translated into Arabic.

This case of schizophrenic hybridity makes for a delicate and painful dilemma, insightfully summed up by Alek Toumi:

”...must we reject the colonizing language, within a programme of absolute disorder and attempt to return to the golden age of a lost Middle Age, or should we keep it as a professional language and ‘cooperate’ economically with a new colonizer, be it French, English, Russian or American, since the latter only cooperates if there is a profit involved? Must we live freely in a precarious situation, which is really suicidal, or

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<sup>143</sup> The problem identified by Toumi is that *Faraber* and Berber do not have a chance in becoming cultural standards of Maghrebian nations, since neither of them is a written language.

<sup>144</sup> During my travels in Tunisia, for example, I was struck by how much the educational curriculum was influenced by the French one, not only in terms of its structure, but especially in its content: teaching French history, literature and linguistics is as natural as teaching Tunisian history and literature. From my personal discussions with Tunisian academics I can venture to state that the former came more naturally.

<sup>145</sup> By ‘vehicular language’ [*langue véhiculaire*], Toumi means a language of communication in an urban setting.

shall we get along with our days as ‘servants’ feeding off the leftovers of the master and waiting for better days?” (2002: 138)

The problem identified by Toumi is that the policy of decolonization that involved the elimination of the colonizing language, endangered the ‘linguistic foundations’ which could have allowed Algerian society to develop economically, since the flows of migration towards France are strong and constant (2002: 140). In order to make sense of this statement, one needs to bear in mind that the way in which the policy of Arabization is being carried out is very problematic. The vast majority of Arab teachers brought into the Maghreb come from Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. They do not possess formal or professional training as language teachers or as teachers of specific academic subjects. Rather most of them have only religious training as Islamic teachers, so that the project of Arabization has become a ‘new form of colonialism, obscure, fanatical and reactionary, that of Muslim fundamentalism’ (Toumi, *ibid.*).

The issue at stake in the Maghreb is that of a fragile political choice engendered by the perverse dichotomy between the French and Arabic language, which maps over the following political signifiers: French/openness/democratic/free/cosmopolitan vs. Arabic/inward-looking/totalitarian/fanatic. It is important here to clarify that in the context of this binary, the association between Arabic/Arab and fanaticism (understood as Muslim fundamentalism) has been repeatedly made by Maghrebian intellectuals within the context of postcolonial projects of national imperialism (as Balibar has put it) in the Maghreb. This searing criticism is levelled at the systematic efforts of Maghrebian governments to erase their societies’ multiple identities, and impose a single form of identification, which is perceived by intellectuals as atavistic, violent and intolerant.

Balibar claims that postcolonial nations, such as the Maghrebian ones, have attempted to build an image of themselves as ‘anti-imperial nations.’ This construction of nationhood, however, did not prevent them from becoming ‘imperialist at their own level, even on a smaller scale’ (1999: 167). Such a paradox prompts Balibar to state that [t]here is in fact an Algerian imperialism’ (*ibid.*). Moreover, the perverse dichotomy between French and Arabic enforces a double splitting (to use Bhabha’s term), within the discourse of Maghrebian intellectuals, both at the level of Frenchness, and at the level of ‘Arab-ness.’ With regards to the former, there seems to be a double articulation of Frenchness (from the Maghrebian perspective) as an ideal of culture and of political interaction (what Balibar calls ‘ideal Frenchness’ associated with republicanism and secularism), and Frenchness as a cultural and political imposition of the former colonizer. With regards to the idea of ‘Arab-ness’ there seems to be a splitting between ‘Arab-ness’ as an ideal reflection of what is best in Arab and Muslim

cultures (knowledge, tolerance, virtue, hospitality), and the ‘Arab-ness’ understood as Arabization (*arabisation*). The latter is mirrored in the figure of the Muslim fundamentalist (perceived as backward and ignorant), and in the current projects of ‘national imperialism’ in the Maghreb.<sup>146</sup>

Thus, in post-independence Maghreb, the choice between French and Arabic seems to designate a certain political choice between multiplicity/democracy and homogeneousness/totalitarianism. However, writing in French is not an innocent practice, particularly when the vast majority of people in the Maghreb cannot really afford the luxury of choice. Since the practice of French becomes imbued with certain characteristics, such as openness to the world [*ouverture sur le monde*] and an aspiration towards the universal (Salah Garmandi quoted in Arnaud, 1986: 61; Memmi, 2004: 51), a question haunts the Maghrebian texts written in French: if French is the medium that can transport one towards the universal and the way to attain openness to the world, then upon which sort of world do its doors fling open, and which worlds does it inevitably foreclose?

Assia Djebar, in a collection of essays that attempts to illuminate her relationship with French language, remarks that this language is what separates her from her community [*les miens*] (1999: 22). Following Kateb Yacine, she claims French as capture of war, and makes a conscious choice of using it as an instrument towards bringing forward non-francophone voices, which are ‘guttural, wild [*ensauvagées*] and disobedient [*insoumises*’] (1999: 29). Bringing non-francophone voices into francophone writing allows Djebar to make French a language of her own (*ibid.*). The author unequivocally claims French as a language of *choice* since she has made ‘the inaugural gesture to cross the threshold on [her] own, freely, and no longer due to a situation of colonization’ (1999: 44). In fact, in Djebar’s case, the French language that had been the language of conquerors and colonizers was transformed into the ‘language of the father’, since her father was a teacher of French in Cherchell, the small coastal town near Algiers where she was born (1999: 46).<sup>147</sup> Djebar discusses two facets

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<sup>146</sup> Contra Toumi, Balibar notes, however, that present-day Islam is not a mere regression to a ‘pre-modern religiosity’, but a ‘form of politicizing the religious within the global crisis of the modernization process’ (1999: 169). Within this complex process of contestation, there are uneasy and paradoxical alliances being struck, such as the one between the attempt to integrate into the flows of ‘technological globalization,’ and ‘the claim to Islam as a universalist ideology’ and as an alternative to Eurocentric ‘figurations of universality’ (1999: 169-170).

<sup>147</sup> Leïla Sebbar makes a similar claim about her use of French, although in her case French is the language of the mother, since she was born of an Algerian father and a French mother in colonial Algeria. Arabic is to her the language of the father, the language she never spoke, and which inevitably separated her from her father’s family and culture. Sebbar’s texts are haunted by her inability (unwillingness?) to speak Arabic (see *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père*, published in 2003), and such an inability renders her vision of the Algeria of her childhood

of her practice of writing in French: one would be the act of making audible non-francophone voices in the former colonizing language, and the other facet concerns the ways in which French empowers her as *woman*. Both aspects reflect a certain relationship between French language and femininity: French language, understood as a liberating and emancipating tool, provided a number of Maghrebien women with access to knowledge and speech (1999: 69). Djébar suggests that in the 1950s French language allowed a certain category of women to overcome the patriarchal double interdict of gaze [*regard*] and knowledge [*savoir*] (1999: 93).

In consequence, Djébar recovers the French language as a ‘capture of war’ for Algerian women. Here it is important to indicate that the racial hierarchies constructed in the Maghreb by colonialism cannot make sense without taking into account the ways in which class and gender inflect them. French, the language of the oppressor and of the colonizer, becomes the medium of self-recovery for Maghrebien women. However, it is a particular category of Maghrebien women who have had access to French language. It is from this ambivalent relationship between the liberating potentialities of French and the complex realities of Maghrebien women that Djébar draws her motivation to re-present those voices who are not able or willing to speak in French. She thus identifies her intellectual mission as that of ‘bringing to light those hidden and forgotten aspects of [her] community *precisely* in the French language’ (1999: 48).<sup>148</sup> Why *precisely* in French? Because, as she acknowledges, she undertakes the laborious task of ‘exhuming and unearthing “the other of language”’, a very Derridean desire (ibid.). Bringing to light that which is ‘engulfed by language’ acquires translational attributes, in so far as these voices that assault her (which is the English translation of her collection of essays *Ces voix qui m’assiègent*) speak Berber and *Faraber*. And since she defines herself as a simple *migrante* (migrant) and situates herself within ‘the multitude of [migrant] women’ (1999: 50), it becomes her mission to translate into the language of migration (and transgression) the languages of her origin, the *other* facets of herself, of her history, and of Algeria.

The text that admirably illustrates and performs this fragile relation between French and *Faraber*/Berber/Arabic, between France and the Maghreb is her latest novel *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003) [The disappearance of French language]. The novel revolves around Berkane, an Algerian *émigré* who has been living in France for the last 20 years, and who decides to return to his native land following the break-up of his relationship with a French woman named Marise. The return to Algeria spurs him to re-claim his Algerian childhood

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as ‘object of desire’, prompting her on a quest to ‘abolish that which separates [France and Algeria]’ (Sebbar, 2005: 11).

<sup>148</sup> My emphasis.

and to transpose his memories into a book he had long intended to write. Berkane's childhood narrative illustrates the ambiguities of his relationship to Arabic/Berber and *Faraber* (a reunion which allows his youth to resurface), and to French (language of the humanist culture in which he had immersed himself, and, to him that of political tolerance).

The rediscovery of his childhood neighbourhood, the Casbah of Algiers, takes place against the backdrop of an intriguing parallel that Djébar traces between the current state of political degeneration of Algerian society in the 1990s (the decade of civil war between governmental forces and the Islamic fundamentalists), and the degraded state of the architectural landscape in Algiers:

"Dilapidated buildings, filled with families that seem to have arrived here yesterday and not, you see, for years... Men and boys riveted at the gates, or in a blind alley. Nonetheless I notice more and more women in the street, often teenagers, holding on to their school bags and walking fast by; I see that they are no longer wearing those white veils, which emphasized the feminine silhouette with their elegance, and no longer can I perceive the glowing gaze of all too visible invisible women. Nowadays women pass by in a hurry buried in their grey and long tunics, their hair disappearing under black veils worn in the Iranian style." (2003: 67)

To use Stuart Hall's conceptualization, on the grey background of contemporary Algiers, one sees the symbolical and literal connection between the 'uncompleted struggle for "decolonization"' and the 'crisis of "post-independence" state.' This city had been, not long ago, the stage for the battle of Algiers, the pivotal moment of anti-colonial resistance, which had drawn the attention and admiration of the world.<sup>149</sup> In fact, the reason why Berkane wants to recover his childhood Casbah of Algiers is to understand and reconcile his memory of resistance against French colonialism with the bleak contemporary Algerian political and social realities. In the Algerian postcolony, the anaesthetizing of historical memory takes the place of remembrance and learning, whereby deeply influential moments such as the battle of Algiers become nothing more than the name of a street, thereby impersonally evoking victims of colonial repression.

The personal struggle that Berkane faces is that of understanding the relationship between his past (he had been imprisoned and tortured by French officers for participating in the Algerian resistance) and his present, an *émigré* who had lived in France for the past 20 years. His character embodies the postcolonial contradiction faced by so many Maghrebians: having participated in

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<sup>149</sup> Gilles Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1965) offers a fascinating cinematic representation of this crucial moment in the anti-colonial struggle.



the anti-colonial struggle, and having suffered torture and incarceration for the freedom of his nation, he ended up leaving for France, the former colonial metropole, in search of freedom and political tolerance. What I would call the interruption between the process of ‘decolonization’ and the realities of ‘post-independence’ is symbolically illustrated in the text by a scene in which Berkane remembers a particular dialogue during his detention days as a prisoner of the French colonial army.

In January 1962, six months before the independence of the country, a newly arrived inmate in the detention camp stirs up vivid discussions among the other inmates, as he attempts to debate with them the future of Algeria after independence. The question he launches, which leaves everyone in a state of perplexity, is the following: will Algeria be a secular [*laïc*] country (2003: 122)? The inmate most probably spoke *Faraber* when he posed the question, but he used the French word for ‘secular’, which is *laïc*. Since most inmates were uneducated and hence the knowledge in French was limited, they all thought he was referring to *l’Aïd*, which is the Muslim holiday that celebrates the end of Ramadan. As such they are shocked and unable to understand why he would want them to celebrate the Aïd in prison! The inmate impatiently replies that he did not say the word *l’Aïd*, but the French word *laïc*. The humour of the scene serves to illustrate the sense of the political absurdity of the situation: since there was no word in *Faraber*/Arabic for ‘secular’, the inmate had to resort to the French term. Later on in the narrative Berkane muses on this scene and parallels it to the political absurdity in which Algeria is currently engulfed (indeed the Maghreb in general). As he witnesses the ongoing political elections in the country, he remarks how the choice is between, on the one side, a corrupt government, promoting a platform of national homogeneousness and cultural-linguistic purity with devastating consequences, and the Islamic fundamentalists whose platform, on the other side, advocates for a religious sort of purity and homogeneity. Thus ‘[t]his false sense of *laïc* [secular] transformed into *Aïd* seems tragic today’ (2003: 130) as he witnesses the increasing popularity of the Muslim fundamentalists in a society disenchanted with the corruption of the Front for National Liberation (FLN) governance.

The use of language(s) in the novel is particularly significant: Berkane writes in French, which is the language of memory, as he himself acknowledges (2003: 186), and of the lover he left in France, to whom he spoke in his dialect only in the most passionate moments of intimacy. After his return to Algeria he meets Nadjia, an Algerian woman, an *émigrée* like him, caught between her Algerian past and her present of migration, who awakens in him the memory and the nostalgia of his maternal language. It is with Nadjia that his past, fraught with tragic memories of the struggle for independence, resurges in him and demands to be put into the written word. Memory wants to become narrative. The

Arabic/*Faraber*/Berber past asserts its right and its necessity to become a French narrative in the present. Djébar's literary transposition of a linguistic and historical (indeed political) tragedy into the subtleties of narration speaks admirably about the manner in which the literary text is able to perform an alchemy changing the past into the present, and historical memory into stylized narrative.

Nadjia, with whom Berkane has a brief but intense relationship, is haunted by her childhood in colonial Oran, and in particular by the assassination of her grandfather, a wealthy merchant, by the FLN. Nadjia constantly boasts to Berkane that she speaks literary Arabic, and not some dialect, and Berkane is fascinated by the sound of her language, since she 'found words of yesterday, from another century, from our common and forgotten ancestors, and offered them to [him], these words, one after the other...' (2003: 112). As he returns to his native land after 20 years of exile in France, he rediscovers his *Faraber* or *sabir*, and he also rediscovers literary Arabic, which he has never spoken, but which fascinates him with its rich tradition. At the same time, he recovers French as the language of memory. Berkane echoes Djébar's task of re-writing colonial memory, which is also the task and self-avowed mission of other Maghrebian intellectuals such as the historian Benjamin Stora, the novelists Tahar Ben Jelloun and Leïla Sebbar, and others: 'I write in the French language, I who have forgotten my own self, for too long, in France' (2003:135).

Djébar's novel is thus also a symbolical reordering of the North African person's ambivalent relationship with Europe, the land of both colonial violence and anti-colonial memory, and that of political and economic empowerment (with all its violence, tensions, but also opportunities). In his *Portrait du décolonisé*, Albert Memmi remarks that 'to regain a sense of order [*retrouver un ordre*] with Europe is to put things back in order within ourselves [*remettre de l'ordre*]' (2004: 157). Naturally this sort of prescription does not come without a sense of entitlement - the privilege of the postcolonial diasporic intellectual who can claim belonging to two different worlds, a claim which cannot be made by the masses of North African migrants who leave for Europe carrying with them the myth of a later return to their homes. The precarious position inhabited by Maghrebian intellectuals, and their fragile and productive evocations of immigrant identities and struggles in their (non)literary texts is explored in this and the following chapter.

### The formation of diasporic intellectuals<sup>150</sup>

#### *Flirting with hybridity*

Stuart Hall remarks that to understand the difference between the colonial and the postcolonial productively is to view it as a transition, as a processual (re)structuring of identities that involved the passage from ‘difference to *différance*’, from anti-colonial struggle to post-colonial societies (1996: 247). Hall suggests that the cultural effects of the colonial experience are irreversible. Therefore it would be more helpful to think of the binaries (such as colonising/colonized) as ‘forms of transculturation, of cultural translation’ (ibid.). Hall clarifies that such binaries have never existed in absolute forms to begin with. Rather he argues that the binaries that had informed and fed the anti-colonial struggles (‘difference’) have undergone a metamorphosis in postcolonial societies (*différance*). As seen from the discussion in the previous section, postcolonial societies are debating and negotiating a number of approaches ranging from embracing hybridity and cultural translation to the attempt to return to a mythical point of origins.

As the study of discourses put forth by Maghrebian diasporic intellectuals illustrates, these apparently conflicting approaches can be found within the corpus of works produced by the same author. In a sociological essay that has attracted immense discussion and controversy in France, Tahar Ben Jelloun discusses the idea and practice of French hospitality towards migrants, especially towards those who come from North Africa. The author situates himself quite clearly in the discussion and remarks that he belongs to ‘two shores’ [*je suis des deux rives*], meaning that he belongs to two different sides of the Mediterranean: France and Morocco. Consequently he confesses that

“[w]riting this book has felt as a sense of urgency, a sort of burning on the inside, because I am Arab, living between France and Morocco, concerned by the injury, involved in what happens, and deeply moved by the immigrant landscape, in so far as racism is not only an exasperating animosity, but also a reality that kills.” (1997: 60)

Ben Jelloun had been moved to write this essay by the shooting of 9 year old Taoufik Ouanès by René Algueperse, an employee of the local transportation company in La Courneuve, a suburban ghetto outside of Paris. The killer had shot the boy from his home window because he was bothered by the noise of the child’s soccer ball. Moreover, Ben Jelloun makes an inventory of the racist murders and attacks against North Africans in France between May 1982 and

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<sup>150</sup> This subtitle is inspired by the title of an interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen, “The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual” (2003).

October 1983. The average age of the listed victims was 23, since most of them were very young. Such a grim state of affairs had prompted Ben Jelloun to assess the connections between racism and immigration in France. He argues that the spectre of racism had haunted the French nation long before the intensification of North African migration after WWII. Thus when evaluating the situation of the North African migrants in France [*les Maghrébins*], Ben Jelloun inevitably needs to situate himself as an Arab living between France and Morocco.

The author meditates on a personal experience in which he was asked by officials from Renault, the French car manufacturer, to hold information sessions with the company's managers concerning the cultural and social background of their immigrant workers, most of whom came from North Africa. Ben Jelloun notes the fragility of the position he inhabited during these sessions. Although an Arab himself, he was never regarded as an immigrant [*immigré*], but as an 'assimilated French person, who wrote and spoke French very well', to the point of stirring comments such as 'you cannot even tell you're an Arab' (1997: 95-96).<sup>151</sup> Within the French context an immigrant [*immigré*] does not simply mean an immigrant regardless of the background; the French term *immigré* refers specifically to North African and Sub-Saharan African persons who come to France as labourers. Thus the term carries not only a connotation of race, but also one of class.<sup>152</sup> Ben Jelloun notes that mainstream French discourses regarding immigration suggest that these *immigrés* are torn between two cultures. But to be torn between two cultures one must possess the two cultures (1997: 148). What the *immigrés* possess are 'snippets, an oversimplification they get from their social environments, and which increases the surrounding hostility' (ibid.).

From this dual argument concerning the sense of (non)belonging of North African migrants as *immigrés*, and of himself as Arab living between two shores, one can infer that in-betweenness is really a luxury, a rare commodity afforded only by those elites educated in a Western frame. Language in the postcolonial Franco-Maghrebian context is an extremely potent criterion for the demarcation between *immigrés* and diasporic intellectuals. Since Ben Jelloun implies that his mastery of French allowed him to be identified as an *assimilated French*, the politics of speaking French in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter becomes even more acute as it separates the *assimilated* from the *inassimilable*. This remark is not intended as a simplistic argument constructed around the

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<sup>151</sup> My emphases.

<sup>152</sup> The term appears also in the texts of other French and Maghrebian intellectuals, such as Albert Memmi and Leïla Sebbar. Hafid Gafaiti, for example, clarifies that the concept *immigré* has come to designate almost exclusively, within France, persons of North African backgrounds (2003: 204). Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel devote one of their books to the exploration of the symbolical and material continuities and interruptions within the transition from *indigène* (native) to *immigré* (see Blanchard and Bancel 1998).

opposition between the post-colonial diasporic intellectual and the uneducated masses. Rather this discussion chooses to illuminate the politics of hybridity in the postcolony. For the postcolonial intellectual, hybridity entails a shifting back and forth between worlds in the manner of his choice. For the *immigré(e)* the practice of hybridity acquires agonizing dimensions: not only is the choice painfully limited, but the immigrants (and most particularly their children) never really possess any world. They most certainly do not possess the culture of the host society since they are marginalized and ghettoized, whereas the ‘originary’ societies do not acknowledge them as legitimate candidates to belonging (especially in the case of children born in France coming from immigrant families) since they chose to live their lives somewhere else.

Following Blanchard and Bancel (1998), Memmi (2004), and Gafaiti (2003), I thus understand the term *immigré(e)* to designate not only a racial difference, but also a class difference in the constitution of North African migrants as a racialized social category. But perhaps it would be more apposite to adopt a Derridean frame and understand their racialization and marginalization as *différence*. As Stuart Hall indicates, postcoloniality is, to a certain extent, the transition from difference to *différence*, from a polarized vision of social and political life to forms of transculturation and cultural translation (1996: 247). My preoccupation lies not only with processes of cultural translation, but also with the manner in which such processes translate into social and political categories. Thus *différence*, in this particular case, points to the location of the North African migrant as a racialized category, within a society whose imaginary is haunted by its recent colonial past, and by its concurrent aspiration to an unitary and undisturbed national identity.

I am creating a distinction between different experiences of migration and displacement: that of the *immigré(e)*, understood as a racialized and marginalized category within contemporary France, and that of the *exilé(e)*, perceived as an experience of mobility and displacement that is privileged, and socially and politically enabling. The latter is mainly experienced by diasporic postcolonial intellectuals, whose sense of multiple belonging, as seen from Ben Jelloun’s declaration, translates both into a comfortable socio-political position, and into a quasi-celebratory experience of hybridity. I have chosen the term *exilé* for several reasons. Firstly, this term is constantly employed by Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals to refer to their own experience of displacement (Assia Djébar, Albert Memmi). These individuals never refer to themselves as migrants, perhaps because in French, such a term (*immigré*) carries specific race and class connotations as discussed earlier.<sup>153</sup> Also, in his essay “Reflections on Exile”,

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<sup>153</sup> Assia Djébar, as already mentioned earlier, refers to herself as *migrante*, which is very different from *immigré*: firstly, the former designates a processual condition, whereas the latter

Edward Said draws the contours of the exile, and associates the experience of exile almost exclusively with that of the intellectual.

Said distinguishes among exiles, refugees, expatriates, and émigrés. By refugees he understands ‘large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries within it [...] a touch of solitude and spirituality’ (2000: 181). It is rather clear that what separates the refugee from the exile, in Said’s perspective, is not only the collective/individual divide (embodied by the contrast between ‘large herds’ and individual solitude touched by a certain grace). What separates the refugee from the exile is also social and political standing, namely class. Said unequivocally indicates that ‘[i]t is not surprising that many *exiles* seem to be novelists, chess players, political activists, and *intellectuals*’ (ibid.).<sup>154</sup> Thus I associate the practice of exile (embodied in my analysis by the Franco-Maghrebian *exilé*), with a certain privilege and a certain sense of entitlement.

I have used the terms “immigré(e)” and “exilé(e)” with a feminine marker as well as with a masculine one. However, the gendered experience of immigration and exile marks the feminine space in different and unequal ways. The experience of immigration from the Maghreb to France (or to Western Europe more generally) has been largely a male experience, insofar as, within the patriarchal structures of Maghrebian societies, it is the man who is supposed to provide for his family. This clarification does not deny the increasing feminized dimension of migration that has taken place over the last decade. Women, however, coming from underprivileged backgrounds migrate to Europe mainly to accompany their husbands. On the other hand, women who come from more privileged families or who have had access to education, have had a better access to social mobility as migrants.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, as the earlier discussion on Assia Djebar’s intellectual mission indicated, access to the French language and to French education has empowered certain Maghrebian women, and has enabled them to transcend social and cultural restrictions imposed on them by local patriarchies.

Paraphrasing Kate Manzo’s understanding of the categories of *colonialist* and *colonized*, I do not conceive of *immigré(e)* and *exilé(e)* as ‘true descriptions of autonomous people, but [as] social categories manufactured in relations of power’ (1999: 173). Thus I do not see their difference as absolute difference, but

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points to a category. Secondly, the former implies mobility, transgression, whereas the latter indicates fixity.

<sup>154</sup> My emphases.

<sup>155</sup> For insightful readings of gendered migration flows between the Maghreb and Europe, see Ruba Salih, “Towards an Understanding of Gender and Transnationalism: Moroccan Migrant Women’s Movements Across the Mediterranean” (2000); and Ruba Salih, *Gender in Transnationalism: Home, Longing and Belonging Among Moroccan Migrant Women* (2003).

as *différence*, that is as relations of power within a socio-political continuum, inflected by racial, class, and gender hierarchies.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, as pointed repeatedly throughout this chapter, the *différence* which establishes the relation between the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)*, has been, within the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, historically constituted by their asymmetrical access (or lack thereof) to French language and education. These relations of power are brought into a sharper focus by examining various ways in which hybridity and (im)mobility are experienced.

As Marie-Paule Ha aptly remarks, in a review essay of Said's *Culture and Imperialism*:

“Hybridity can undoubtedly be an exhilarating and liberating condition when, having mastered both worlds, one feels at home on both sides and is conversant with both cultures, as in the case of intellectuals like Said himself. Yet in-betweenness can also be terrifyingly disorienting and confusing if one is culturally, economically, and politically disenfranchised like the countless Mister Johnsons of this world for whom the in-betweenness is lived more as a cultural limbo, the traditional breeding ground for fundamentalism.” (1995)<sup>157</sup>

Thus what separates the *immigré(e)* from the *exilé(e)* is a combination between class and a particular racialization that is attached to the figure of the *immigré(e)*. Living on the fringes of society, the latter's difference is read as a racial difference, as an active proof of the impossibility to assimilate and incorporate what is fundamentally other. Also, the *immigré(e)*'s poverty, political disenfranchisement and sense of disorientation is read against a larger background of poverty and misery as *specific* to the 'Third World', and thus associated with backwardness and degradation. The diasporic intellectual, on the other hand, as illustrated by Tahar Ben Jelloun's experience at Renault, is seen as assimilated and assimilable, insofar as his command of French is impeccable and thus a proof of his non-threatening difference. When Ben Jelloun is 'complimented' by being denied an Arab status, the image of the Arab looms large as a racialized figure, whose inability to speak 'proper French' and to integrate into French society, spells both his marginal position and his utter difference.

Mireille Rosello, in *Declining the Stereotype*, has an interesting and nuanced reading of hybridity. Although acknowledging and maintaining her acceptance of hybridity/creolization as a 'valuable if often painful condition' that can enable the adoption of critical stances, she argues that the very idea of

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<sup>156</sup> I thank Susie O'Brien for pushing me to make this clarification.

<sup>157</sup> No page number can be given as a reference since the article was accessed electronically.

hybridity implies a 'nostalgia for authenticity and homogeneity' (1998: 174, note 10). While some people can claim belonging to several cultures, such as North African and French, they are perceived as trying to reconcile two incompatible cultures, a view which glosses over the possibility that cultures are not unitary self-contained entities, but dynamic and 'internally divergent' (1998: 174-75). Moreover, as Neil Kortenaar suggests, 'hybridization, like authenticity, is unintelligible without a notion of cultural purity' (1995: 30). This suggestion implies that there 'are no anti-essentialist accounts of identity' (Walter Benn Michaels quoted in Kortenaar, *ibid.*) since both creolization and authenticity 'are rhetorical in intention: they manipulate shared symbols in order to win consent for political action' (Kortenaar, *ibid.*).

Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel *With Downcast Eyes* (*Les yeux baissés*) tells the story of a young Berber girl from a remote village in Morocco who leaves for France with her family. One of her most difficult challenges is to learn to speak French well, since she feels this is her ticket to belonging in France.<sup>158</sup> She remarks that she knew 'that the day where [she] would not mix up tenses anymore, [she] would have really left her village behind' (1991: 106). The narrative thus suggests that the heroine is placed in front of a choice: that between French language and her Berber culture. The Berber girl chooses French language so as to put an end to the agonizing experience of oscillating between two cultures and feeling a stranger in both of them. As she has to return to the village to help the villagers find a treasure whose secret location only she is supposed to know, the young woman wonders: 'How can I tell her [her grandmother] that now I have become someone else [*une autre*], a stranger who has come here to take photos, to see what has changed, and realize that this land, these stones, this hut and these fig-trees are not even the same as those that haunt me in my childhood memories?' (1991: 264). This passage illustrates the way in which the young Berber woman had become alienated to her background, and, unlike Ben Jelloun, she cannot claim belonging to both shores of the Mediterranean. At the same time, her creolization/hybridity, while a 'valuable if often painful condition', to

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<sup>158</sup> Derrida in *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998), Tahar Ben Jelloun in his autobiographical account *L'Écrivain public* ('The Public Writer') (1983), and Albert Memmi, in his autobiographical novel *La Statue de Sel* (*Pillar of Salt*) (1966), confess the same agonizing struggle with French language, materialized in a determination to speak 'pure' French, stripped of their 'native' accents. Possessing language in its purity (even though a battle lost from the very start, as Derrida suggests) incarnates the desire of the migrant (*immigré*) or of the *exilé(e)* for belonging and recognition. However, as Fanon had so insightfully remarked, 'every colonized people' is confronted at one point or another with the language of the colonizing nation. Such an encounter inevitably (re)inscribes a hierarchy between the two: the superior/civilized/white world vs. the inferior/savage/black world. The more one appropriates the language of the colonizing nation, the 'whiter' one becomes, and the more one renounces one's 'blackness' (1967: 18). To use Fanon's words, this is perhaps the 'native's' attempt to disalienate herself.



use Rosello's words, is nothing more than the attempt to reconcile two cultures seen as simply incompatible. This attempt had prompted the Berber girl to choose French language over her Berber culture, since it was language that rendered her position legitimate within French society.

Interestingly, the passage can also be read contrapuntally to Ben Jelloun's own trip to the mountainous region of Morocco accompanying Philippe Laffond, the photographer. The passage echoes in an almost uncanny manner what Ben Jelloun could not or/and would not say about his own presence 9 years before in the mountains of Morocco, evoked in *Haut Atlas: l'exil de pierres* (1982), discussed in the previous chapter. This fragile and yet veridical correspondence between the Berber girl's feeling of strangeness in her native village and Ben Jelloun unspoken strangeness in *Haut Atlas* indicates the manner in which, as pointed by Kortenaar, hybridity becomes a rhetorical device meant to manipulate symbols in order to justify a certain political action. The Berber girl's painful hybridity makes her feel like a traitor and a stranger to her village. Ben Jelloun's privileged hybridity of belonging to two different shores enables him to become, in *Haut Atlas*, the voice whose authority speaks the 'native' and whose intent is to recover the 'native's' long lost purity.

In his famous *Portrait of the colonized*, Albert Memmi muses on the painful and somewhat tragic position inhabited by the colonised intellectual who lives the trauma of 'colonial bilingualism' (1985: 125). This 'linguistic drama' is due to the fact that 'the two universes, symbolized and carried by the two languages [French and Arabic], are in conflict' (ibid.).<sup>159</sup> As such, the hybridity acquired by the colonized intellectual is a tragic one, of two worlds that are perceived as irreconcilable. This sort of hybridity experienced as drama needs to be placed within the violent context of the colonial encounter discussed by Memmi, when identities, as noticed by Stuart Hall, were acutely polarized. The colonized intellectuals find themselves in the paradoxical position of having to use the language of the colonizer in order to make their cause known (1985: 128) since there is no other audience available, as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Alek Toumi critiques Memmi for this statement, in so far as the latter fails to specify what he means by 'Arabic': *Faraber*, Berber, or other local dialects (2002: 16-19)? Toumi considers that by placing the convenient label of 'Arabic' for the range of languages and dialects spoken in the Maghreb, Memmi subverts an understanding of the region as a multiple reality. As such, Toumi argues that there was never the case of 'colonial bilingualism', but one of colonial plurilingualism masked by certain intellectuals as an expedient binary between French and 'Arabic.' Moreover, Memmi dismisses any local production as being worthy of the denomination of 'cultural' or 'artistic', when he laments the poverty of the Maghrebian oral traditions (1985: 124), which is a surprising statement when Berber cultures boast rich and complex oral traditions.

<sup>160</sup> This is a fragile argument if one considers that there are other ways to reach the *intended* audience, namely the audio-visual and the performative, such as cinema, music and

But such a fragile position is not alleviated by postcolonial realities, as Memmi argues in his *Portrait du décolonisé* [Portrait of the decolonized] (2004). On the contrary, in Memmi's perspective this hybridity of the formerly colonized intellectual becomes even more treacherous in the postcolony:

“Feeling confusedly guilty of treason, the decolonized writer will indulge in all sorts of grimaces and contortions in order to justify himself; he will pretend for example that he will have subverted, violated and destroyed the language of the colonizer, and other such nonsense as if all writers did not do as much! Whereas the simple truth is that, for now and for a long time to come perhaps, this is the only instrument he masters and that without it he will be reduced to silence.” (2004: 57)

Memmi's unequivocal verdict placed him in the position where he had to choose between two cultures perceived as irreconcilable, much like the Berber girl in Ben Jelloun's novel, and he chose the French language since this is the only tool [*outil*] that allows him, in his view, to express himself.<sup>161</sup> Consequently, the Maghrebian postcolonial adherence to French as medium of expression possesses an almost fatalistic nuance in Memmi's account: it is either French or silence. For Rosello, however, choosing French as the language of writing by the postcolonial Maghrebian intellectual serves a different purpose. Commenting on Assia Djébar's much criticized attachment to French, Rosello suggests that this may be a symbol of the postcolonial intellectuals' refusal to return to nativistic imaginaries (1998: 159), and implicitly to position themselves as hybrids. However, both Memmi and Rosello's positions seem to endorse Kortenaar's observation that both hybridity and authenticity are rhetorical means, which are manipulated in order to justify certain political positions. Both Memmi and Rosello's critical stances make implicit references to a certain incompatibility between cultures, and justify Memmi and Djébar's political pessimism as regards

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theatre. Jacqueline Arnaud offers the example of Kateb Yacine with his notorious play *Mohamed prends ta valise* [Mohamed take your suitcase] (1971), which enjoyed an immense success among students, workers and farmers in Algeria, since it was written and performed in *Faraber*. Similarly notable examples are the Senegalese director Sembène Ousmane and the Algerian director Merzak Allouache, who strive through their works to reach large audiences. Assia Djébar herself has directed two documentaries, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* [The Nouba of the women from Chenoua mountain] (1977) and *La Zerda ou les chants de l'oubli* [Zerda or the chants of forgetting] (1979). It should be noted however that Djébar's highly stylized and intellectualized cinematic productions are not really intended for large audiences.

<sup>161</sup>See Memmi's acknowledgement of his conscious choice in *Le nomade immobile* (2003), his autobiographical essay. In here, Memmi claims that French language is to him the door towards the universal. The same argument appears in Jacqueline Arnaud's study of North African writers who write in French (1986).

the situation of the Maghreb. The point of this analysis on the politics of choice between French or silence is to illuminate hybridity not as ‘a new and improved universal condition’ (Rosello, 1998: 174, note 10) that escapes essentialist and nativist intentions, but as a rhetorical device, as mentioned by Kortenaar, which serves to justify certain uncomfortable positions.<sup>162</sup>

I find myself more compelled by Stuart Hall’s cautious attachment to a situated hybridity, one that arises from a ‘very specific historical formation’ (2003: 502), and not from a facile acceptance of any form of difference. In fact, Djebbar’s position constantly fluctuates between a nostalgic desire for authenticity and a hybridity that allows her to distance herself from her native land. Thus the implicit intention behind Djebbar’s act of writing is that such an act might enable her to become a ‘familiar stranger’, as Stuart Hall has characterized himself (2003: 490), a cultural negotiator. In an essay entitled “L’Écriture de l’expatriation” [The writing of exile], Djebbar notes that

“[w]riting *on* or *in* exile becomes an ambiguous, uncomfortable and unnatural experience, because it happens *after the tragedy*; the latter, closely encountered and befriended, leaves within us its black canker... The exile is firstly a survivor of an earthquake, living in the transitory...” (1999: 208)

Not only is the writing of exile a writing *on* exile and *on* historical trauma, but in Djebbar’s case writing *in* exile is for her the opportunity to reclaim a different Algeria: not the Algeria of national homogeneity and unitary history and culture, but a multiple and historically hybrid Algeria. In “L’absent et l’étranger” [The absent and the stranger] (1999), Djebbar recovers figures such as Augustine, Apuleius, Eugène Fromentin, and Albert Camus so as to incorporate this multiplicity of voices and experiences within the historical narrative of a land, which, with each wave of conquest and colonization, was forced into a project of totality. The current project of totality is that of forced Arabization, which throws the postcolonial intellectual into a strange and paradoxical relation with the West. Toumi remarks that there is a dialectical relation between ‘the cruel paternal image of the West’ [*un occident parâtre*] that had been rejected and combated in anti-colonial struggles, and the image of a West as the space where the postcolonial intellectual runs for refuge and cure (2002: 113).

The difference between Djebbar’s self-ascribed postcolonial mission and Toumi’s apt description of the diasporic intellectual’s condition bespeaks the tensions and the politics of this condition. Assia Djebbar imparts to the reader a

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<sup>162</sup> For celebratory accounts of hybridity see, for example, Edward Said (1993: 332) and Homi Bhabha (2004). For excellent critiques of such celebratory positions see Pheng Cheah (1998) and Marie-Paule Ha (1995).

voluntary choice of the French language as the medium through which to summon those non-francophone voices that she left behind ‘at home.’ Her mission is implicitly an emancipatory project, or at least a project whose purpose is to make audible that which had been inaudible. Toumi’s assessment of the postcolonial intellectual’s fragile and paradoxical position is not related to emancipation, but to a historical necessity to which the intellectual must yield if she desires to express herself freely. Therefore, between the desire for emancipation and the need to yield to historical necessity, the postcolonial intellectual inevitably situates herself uneasily vis-à-vis her *others*: the *immigrés*.

*The diasporic intellectual and her others*

In *French Hospitality*, Tahar Ben Jelloun makes an important distinction between his location as a diasporic intellectual who straddles the two shores of the Mediterranean, and that of thousands of North African migrants whose only straddling takes place in the realm of their dreams and illusions:

“In France, he [the *immigré*] dreams of the country he had left behind; in his country, he dreams of France. Between the hostility of the host country and the indifference of his country of origin, he carries with him his suitcase filled with objects and illusions. This is his only defence.” (1997: 173)

As a migrant to Canada coming from Eastern Europe, I find myself caught by the same contradictory exchange of the object of yearning: in Canada I dream of Romania, in Romania I dream of Canada. But as confusing and heart-wrenching as this emotional negotiation may be, the significant difference is that I do not negotiate my belonging between hostility and indifference. Therefore it is compassion for which Ben Jelloun implicitly advocates when pondering on the *immigrés*’ sad predicament. He discerns an interesting trait of the Maghrebian intellectuals, be they in exile or never having left the Maghreb: their deafening silence with regards to the situation of North African migrants. Ben Jelloun explains such a reaction in terms of ‘the rupture of fraternal collusions between the Western intelligentsia “producer” of ideologies, and that of the Third World, moderator of revolutions’ (1997: 110).<sup>163</sup> Perversely enough this was also the time when the discourse of human rights had really acquired a large audience. However, the issue of immigration was curiously left out of the human rights setting agenda. This of course points to the strange geography of human rights, as a set of values that need to be defended somewhere else, naturally in the Third World, while conveniently overlooked back ‘home’ in the West.

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<sup>163</sup> Ben Jelloun mentions some notable exceptions among whom Juan Goytisolo, Étienne Balibar, Stanislas Mangin, and others.

As Ben Jelloun remarks, the faces of migration in France are deeply racialized figures, whose presence evokes the uncomfortable memory of France's lost empire and glory:

“Of immigration, I only know its face and its memory. It is a body that had to change the material misery of the native land with a hope at first and then with the grim reality of depreciation and solitude. His labour constitutes his capital, his children a compensation against oblivion, his life, a long process of wearing out and of exclusion.

The home country is absent. The homeland does not reside in language or in the land. It can be found in memory [*souvenir*] and in waiting [*l'attente*].” (1997: 199)

The figures of migrants evoked by Ben Jelloun are tragic figures (mainly masculine) who had left their native villages in the Maghreb in search for work and a better life in the land of the former colonizer. As the above quote illustrates, they soon had to exchange their hopes with solitude and marginalization. The racism with which both parents and children have to live has deep roots in French consciousness, as remarked by Tahar Ben Jelloun, but also by other intellectuals such as Hafid Gafaiti (2003) and Driss Maghraoui (2003). Albert Memmi insightfully suggests in *Portrait du décolonisé*, that ‘the North African migrant [*le Maghrébin*] is not a Russian or Romanian migrant, a stranger arrived there by chance, he is the illegitimate child [*le bâtard*] of the colonial affair, a living reproach or a permanent disillusion’ (2004: 97). However, by arguing that ‘immigration is the punishment for the colonial sin’ (2004: 101), Memmi implies that it is only during the postcolonial era that France had to confront itself with racial issues. As Driss Maghraoui remarks, it is not due to post-war immigration and the end of colonization, that France had to deal with issues of race and multiculturalism. Rather it was the colonial period that was ‘at the heart of deep-rooted stereotypes and racism within French society’ (2003: 214). This argument will receive a more attentive analysis in the following chapter.

Gérard Noiriel proposes in his seminal study on immigration, citizenship, and French national identity, that the millions of migrants must be allowed to locate their personal narratives within the ‘master narrative’ of French national history (Noiriel quoted in Gafaiti, 2003: 191). However, the function of the migrant narratives is not to be located *within* a French master-narrative, but to dislocate its claims of national homogeneity, and challenge the limits of the master-narrative. It is here that the role of the diasporic intellectual becomes crucial even if fraught with tension. Both Tahar Ben Jelloun and Albert Memmi imply that by exiling oneself the intellectual chooses freedom over silence and oppression, and therefore for the diasporic intellectual the newly acquired

mobility is nothing but salutary. In the case of the migrants, however, their hard won mobility only allows them to exchange one misery for another. The difference between the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)* is not only one of class, but also one of the vision of the world, and one of voice. The question that arises here is the following: whose narratives get to be included in the French master-narrative? Certainly not that of the *immigré(e)*, but that of the *exilé(e)*. The latter becomes thus the cultural translator between the world of illusion and waiting, and that of hostile indifference and painful immobility. And the language of choice is French.

At the heart of this issue of cultural translation is the situation of the young people coming from North African families of immigrants. They are usually referred to within French society as the 'second generation' [of immigration] even though they are born in France and the only tie with the land of their parents may be the occasional visit or vacation. However, the marginalization and discrimination rooted in the French system relegated them and their families to the physical and symbolical peripheries of French society. The *banlieues* [suburban ghettos] in which most North African migrants are housed have attracted a lot of attention as spaces of exclusion, violence, and hopelessness.<sup>164</sup> Their location within French society is a painful and delicate one. As Memmi remarks,

"The son of the Maghrebian migrant has still to digest the memory of the colonial domination and that of the exploitation of labour that ensued within the former metropole." (2004: 136)

Thus caught between the burden of colonial memory and the need to escape the background of the family they see as overly traditional and antiquated, the young people of North African origin locate themselves as 'zombies', as spectres, at the margins of French society.<sup>165</sup> The purpose of this analysis is not to provide the reader with a miserabilist image of North African migration in France. I do want to indicate, however, the fragile and violent connection that binds the *immigré(e)* to the *exilé(e)*. This position of the *immigré(e)* is a metamorphosis of that of the *indigène* [native], which characterized most North Africans during colonialism,<sup>166</sup> a position which discriminates according to particular social, economic and political signifiers. This metamorphosed identification implies someone who is uneducated, mostly illiterate, on the margins of both the

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<sup>164</sup> See, for example, Didier Lapeyronnie, "La banlieue comme théâtre colonial ou la fracture coloniale dans les quartiers" (2005); and also Dominique Vidal, "De l'histoire coloniale aux banlieues" (2006).

<sup>165</sup> The expression of 'zombies' belongs to Memmi (2004: 137).

<sup>166</sup> This argument appears also in Blanchard and Bancel (1998).

Maghrebian and French societies, such as poor immigrants from the ghettoized suburbs of French cities, and immigrant workers from the rural and urban areas of North Africa.

The distinction between *immigré(e)* and *exilé(e)* appears particularly poignant in one of Tahar Ben Jelloun's interviews published in the *Yale French Review* in 1993. The interviewer, Thomas Spear, an American professor of French studies, asks Ben Jelloun how his daughter would deal with her *beur* identity as she grows older (1993: 33).<sup>167</sup> The latter replies that one should understand that *beurs* are those people of North African descent living on the periphery of French cities in miserable conditions, marginalized and constantly subjected to discrimination: '*Beur* automatically designates suburbia, delinquency, problems of assimilation, etc.' (ibid.). His daughter cannot be a *beur*, in so far as she has had a very privileged life, encountering none of the challenges and difficulties that the young *Maghrébins* in France generally do. Also, to be *beur* implies to assume a certain socio-political identity that makes you part of a larger collective, with whom one identifies through common socio-political and economic marginalization. To be *beur* also implies a certain conscious political mobilization against a system that discriminates against you. As Ben Jelloun, acknowledges, this is not the case with his daughter.

Unwittingly perhaps Ben Jelloun indicates the key issue of North African *immigrés* in France: they have problems of assimilation (1993: 33). In so far as they are inassimilable within the body of the French nation, the latter "offers" them the geographical and socio-political fringes of the nation. As Memmi noted, the *beurs* come from a different planet: *la banlieue* [the suburban projects] (2004: 140-41). They are not really French, and they are not really Arab. They inhabit a space of confused hybridity that has nothing to do with the glamorous postmodern hybridity embraced and experienced by many diasporic intellectuals, and by the hip hybrid artists and fashionistas whose images were exhibited in *Génération Métisse* (as discussed in the previous chapter). Since the body of the French nation does not want them, they do not want it in return. No wonder that during a soccer game at the famous Stade de France, thousands of young *Maghrébins* whistled in protest as the national hymn of France, *la Marseillaise*, was being sung (Memmi, 2004: 145).

In their essays on immigration, both Tahar Ben Jelloun and Albert Memmi have talked about assimilation and integration as the answer to the discrimination and exclusion issues faced by North African migrants in France. But why are these the only options offered to non-European groups? Memmi offered a partial response to this question by suggesting that the '*immigré*' is perceived as a potential traitor. At best he lives with a double loyalty, towards his country of

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<sup>167</sup> For a definition of *beur* see note 55 of chapter 3.

origin and towards the one that received him' (2004: 147; my emphasis). Naturally most migrants possess this double loyalty, but why does this double loyalty verge on treachery in the case of the *Maghrébins*, and not in the case of other European migrants in France, like the Portuguese or the Italian? I believe the answer lies in the tense relationship between Europe and Islam, a relationship that goes back several centuries. The celebrated Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf was not off the mark when he remarked that 'one is often surprised to discover the extent to which the attitude of Arabs and Muslims in general with regards to the West is influenced even to this day by events that are supposed to have consummated seven centuries ago [the crusades]' (1983: 303). On the other hand, Étienne Balibar contests the 'difference' between European-ness and Arab-ness embodied by the Christian/Muslim divide, and when he suggests that 'Algeria is irreducibly present in France as is France in Algeria' (1999: 167). However, it should be noted that this interpenetration is by no means an equal, but a deeply asymmetrical one. After all, when Jean Genet suggested that racism constitutes the innermost fabric of French society (quoted in Ben Jelloun, 1997: 58), he was implicitly referring to the ambivalent position that Arab/Muslim culture occupies within the French imaginary.

Consequently, the diasporic intellectual in the Franco-Maghrebian context is not only a mediator of culture and language, but also of a certain image of Islam. An overwhelming number of Muslim intellectuals have to offer their Western audience, more or less overtly, a *different* image of Islam, one where dissidence, toleration and moderation are possible. Many Muslim intellectuals embrace views that are more or less secular, or advocate for secularism (such as Alek Toumi in his *Maghreb divers*) in societies in which the term of 'secular(ism)' did not make sense, as illustrated in Assia Djébar's novel *La disparition de la langue française*. Thus they can be regarded as cultural hybrids who mirror in their writings and in themselves selected traits of both Western and non-Western societies.

The *différence* constituting the relation between the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)* can also be approached through Bonnie Honig's distinction between Ruth and Orpah in the Biblical story of Ruth. For Honig, Ruth, the Moabite migrant, constitutes the 'model émigré' who 'supplements the Israelite order without at the same time diluting or corrupting it' and 'refurbishes the order's boundaries through her conversion' (1999: 192). Orpah, on the other hand, 'figures the Other, whose absence keeps the community's boundaries and identity secure' (ibid.). Honig's Ruth is a figure of double articulation: she is both the example of 'good migrant', whose difference is incorporated for the benefit and re-invigoration of the Israelite order, and the foreigner, whose difference and exception(alism) is never effaced (and thus also a threat). This double articulation inhabits the position of the *exilé(e)*, who on the one hand, has integrated herself so



successfully that one cannot even tell she is an Arab (!), but whose difference is also ever so subtly enacted by the compliments she receives on her impeccable mastery of French.<sup>168</sup> The *exilé(e)*'s 'assimilation' serves to re-constitute the boundaries of the French identity, and re-inscribe the desirable and assimilable traits within the body of the nation.

The *immigré(e)*'s inability and/or refusal to assimilate is not unlike Orpah's inability and/or refusal to leave her gods and family behind and join Naomi, her mother-in-law, in her return to Israel. Orpah's figure, in Honig's interpretation, serves as the symbolic image of fundamental otherness whose stubborn difference is inassimilable, and utterly dangerous. Hence her positioning on the outside. In fact, when critiquing Kristeva's hierarchical cosmopolitanism (advanced in *Nations Without Nationalism*), Honig herself traces the analogy between Ruth/Orpah story and the situation of the Maghrebian migrants in contemporary France:

"These immigrants [Maghrebi denizens and citizens] resemble Ruth in their willingness to emigrate from their original homes, but they also resemble Orpah insofar as they remain attached to the particular culture of their home countries." (1999: 196)

I would like to go even further, and suggest that the duality which haunts the migrant's (*immigré*) foreignness also haunts the *différence* that constitutes the relationship between the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)*. When Honig re-reads the story of Ruth as a story of mourning of the severed relationship with her sister (Orpah), she points to the transnational dimension (and possibilities) of the story, whereby political communities 'interrupt projects of (re-)nationalization by generating practices of affective citizenship that exceed state boundaries' (1999: 204). The writing of the *exilé(e)* attempts to perform precisely this sort of transnational acts of mourning, memory, and diasporic communion.<sup>169</sup> Within the diasporic space created by the Franco-Maghrebian exilic writing, the figure of the *immigré(e)* emerges as the difference from within (the *exilé's* other), and from without (the foreignness within and without the French nation).

It is not very difficult to understand how Tahar Ben Jelloun can state that he offers hospitality to French language (1997: 29). Having initiated himself into the language of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Jacques Prévert, dreaming in both the Moroccan Arab dialect and in French, the diasporic intellectual has the ability and the mobility to shift between two worlds, and to mask his foreignness (with familiarity). The irony is that while diasporic intellectuals can assume the identity of their choice and invite French language into their homes, there are thousands

<sup>168</sup> I am here referring implicitly to Tahar Ben Jelloun's experience at Renault.

<sup>169</sup> This aspect is discussed in greater depth in the last chapter.

who cannot even claim hospitality into the country from which they have come. The irony does not escape Tahar Ben Jelloun, which is why he discusses the rather slim treatment of migration in the works of Maghrebians living in France.<sup>170</sup>

Alek Toumi refers to Maghrebians who write in French as *locataires de la langue française* [tenants of the French language], whose relation with the West that accommodates them is a tenuous one. On the one hand, out of solidarity with their compatriots, they feel the obligation to ‘insult [the West] in its own home’; on the other hand, they are expected to show gratitude for the hospitality they are offered (2002: 35). It is intriguing to notice that such a fragile and uncomfortable location mirrors that of the French intellectuals in Algeria during colonialism (whom Memmi calls, in his *Portrait of the Colonized*, ‘colonials’) who felt torn between the activist anti-colonial message they transmitted through their works, and the reality of their background and privileged situation in Algeria (Toumi 2002: 37). Thus it seems that the diasporic postcolonial intellectual has more in common and shares a similar position with that of the leftist French intellectuals during colonialism, who struggled between the demands of their political views and the reality of their location.

The purpose of this analysis is to show how between the diasporic intellectual and France there is a genuine relation of hospitality, which implies a mutual right to protection and shelter (as Tahar Ben Jelloun understands it): the intellectual offers hospitality to French language and culture, just as French society offers the intellectual the space to express herself freely. Such a right is rarely bestowed on the *immigré(e)*. In the afterword to the 1976 revised edition of his novel *Les Boucs* (*The Butts*), Driss Chraïbi wonders why is it that several decades after the end of colonialism, the North African migrants in France are ‘still parked at the edges of society and of humanity’ (Driss Chraïbi quoted in Ben Jelloun, 1997: 168, note 1). The answer is that the image of the colonized *indigène* has not left the imaginary of French society since colonialism (Ben Jelloun, 1997: 105; Toumi, 2002: 122; Memmi, 2004: 97-101).<sup>171</sup>

I argue that this imaginary has an inevitable fluidity that not only permeates French society in all its forms (political, aesthetic, juridical, social, etc.), but it inevitably infiltrates the imaginary and the representation practices of Maghrebians themselves. The image as stereotype or the stereotype as image is a powerful medium that contaminates and insinuates itself

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<sup>170</sup> I should note that this remark was made in 1997. Over the last 10 years there have been more and more literary and non-literary productions that have dealt with the situation of North African migrants living in France.

<sup>171</sup> For an insightful analysis on the (in)congruities of the image of the *indigène* with that of the *immigré(e)*, see Blanchard and Bancel (1998), previously cited.

into the imaginary of those with whom it comes into contact (Rosello 1998: 35).<sup>172</sup> As Jean Cohen aptly observed,

“[the] image of the *indigène* [is the image] which [colonialism] has fabricated out of nothing like a fake coin. An image is not all that bad, however, it is the worst form of oppression that man has invented.” (Jean Cohen quoted in Toumi, 2002: 118)

Therefore the close encounter between the diasporic intellectual, the *exilé(e)*, and the North African migrant, the *immigré(e)*, takes place on precarious ground and under the sign of frailty. If the former can claim affinity to both shores of the Mediterranean, and enjoys a sense of hospitality within French society, the latter's claim to belonging lies in the suitcase of her illusions. The latter's sense of time is permeated by immobility and waiting, whereas the former reaps the benefits of mobility. More importantly, they are both hybrids, but their hybridity separates them more than it unites them: the *exilé(e)* takes pleasure from her dual attachment, and many a time, diasporic intellectuals have claimed that their true home is in writing [*l'écriture*].<sup>173</sup> Such a cosmopolitan aspiration could not be farther from that of the *immigré(e)*, whose true home is only in her imagination, in the fantasy of a better life in Europe and of a dignified return to her village. Instead, the *immigré(e)* experiences hybridity as a confusing and nightmarish situation of not being able to claim belonging anywhere. The diasporic intellectuals, the *exilés*, and their others, the *immigrés*, are ‘familiar strangers’, to use Stuart Hall's expression, whose inhabited symbolic space of hospitality translates into the not so symbolic space of French social geography with its *centre-villes* [city centres] and *banlieues* [suburban ghettos].

### Concluding remarks

This chapter discerned two social categories in the Franco-Maghrebian context: the *immigré(e)* and the *exilé(e)*.<sup>174</sup> There are more elements that separate them than that unite them. What separates them is not only a symbolical and literal geography, but also language and the manners in which they experience mobility. I needed to elaborate, in the first part of the chapter, on the politics of language in the postcolony, because it seems that language is one of the primary

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<sup>172</sup> I discuss the function of stereotyping in the context of the literary productions of Maghrebian intellectuals in the following chapter.

<sup>173</sup> Such a claim has been advanced, on several occasions, by a number of postcolonial writers, such as Assia Djebar and Leïla Sebbar.

<sup>174</sup> In this chapter I discerned two broad categories. However, I gloss over other nuances to the condition of being a refugee or a migrant, to which I only hinted in this project, such as the *harkis* (see note 20 in chapter 3), the *chibanis* (see note 37 in this chapter), the *beur* (see note 55 in chapter 3), and undoubtedly others, which I intend to explore in later projects.

factors that differentiates and distances them from each other. What I understand by French language is not only the use of the language per se, but also the accession to French culture, ideas and ways of living. During the colonial Franco-Maghrebian encounter it is the encounter with French language and culture that drew the line between the *évolués* and the *indigènes*. In post-independence Maghreb, it is French language that enables the *exilés* to feel at ease in both societies and claim belonging to both shores of the Mediterranean, and it is the same French language that disabled the *immigrés* from claiming any belonging at all.

But as Toumi insightfully remarks in his *Maghreb divers*, the politics of language in the postcolony is still more complex. French has suffered a metamorphosis from the language of the colonizer to an instrument of resistance against and liberation from the tyranny and strictures of the post-independence Arabization projects currently unfolding in the Maghreb. Such a metamorphosis is not a mere shedding of an old skin and the donning of a new garment. On the contrary, it is a treacherous coexistence between feelings of betrayal, guilt and liberation. The diasporic Maghrebian intellectuals feel an inevitable guilt towards the language of their writing, and are constantly moved to enunciate and justify the reasons for which they write in French. It is no wonder then that Assia Djebar's *L'Amour la fantasia* (analysed in chapter 3) and *La Disparition de la langue française* have as their main protagonist the French language itself, in its tyrannical and liberating stances.

The discussion on the politics of language in the postcolony is also a pretext for the exploration of a relationship, just as uneasy and fraught with ambivalence, between the formerly colonized (in their post-colonial forms as *immigrés* and *exilés*) and the former metropole, France. This country, as remarked by Alek Toumi in a passage quoted earlier in this chapter, is the subject/object of a dialectic between 'the cruel paternal image of the West' [*un occident parâtre*] that had been rejected and fought against in anti-colonial struggles, and the image of a West as the space where the postcolonial intellectual runs for refuge and cure (2002: 113). It is intriguing to see how for both the *immigrés* and the *exilés* it represents both images at the same time, but in different degrees. For the *immigrés*, France represents the fantasy and the promise of a better life for their families. Once arrived in France, and once the realities of daily exclusion and exploitation sink in, this fantasy changes into a trap: that of belonging no longer anywhere. Their children are born in France and this is their 'home', even if for the *immigrés* home is no longer a reality, but only the lure of illusion and waiting (see Ben Jelloun, 1997: 173).

For the *exilés*, France represents simultaneously the land of freedom of speech as well as the tyrannical colonizer. The diasporic intellectual enjoys a position in French society that the *immigrés* only dream about. At the same time,

it is the former's same privileged position that becomes the object of guilt and feelings of betrayal, or at least of discomfort, since they are some of the few who can enjoy it. Hence the self-imposed mission of the Maghrebian diasporic intellectual to bear witness [*témoigner*], not only to the present but also to the past, and to the past *as* present, as Djébar confesses (1999). When Djébar muses on the difficulties of bearing witness through writing, she feels both enabled and disabled by her diasporic location and by the magnitude and delicate nature of witnessing between the colonial and the postcolonial. Fluctuating between the rhetorical intent of hybridity and the historically situated *créolité*, the various faces of migrants and migrations emerge in an international politics understood as relations of transgression and transcendence (as illustrated by the analyses undertaken in the next chapter), in which language, cultural translation, and diasporic identifications are painfully and productively negotiated.

## Chapter 5:

### **“Postcolonial strangers: portraits of migrants and migration in International Relations and in literary narratives”**

#### **Introduction**

I am interested in the ways in which international politics are performed through practices of migration. In this chapter, I engage Roxanne Doty's analysis of anti-immigrantism in Western democracies, and in particular her approach to the case of contemporary France. While very promising in her intention to conceive of practices of statecraft as a particular kind of desire in policing migrants and migration, Doty's focus remains at the level of governmental policies and regulations. Even though the author's intent is that of an insightful deconstruction of the schizophrenic and paranoiac desires that constitute practices of statecraft in anti-immigration discourses and practices, her analysis fails to even mention the terms of 'colonial' or 'colonialism.' Such a blatant dismissal is a fatal flaw, in so far as understanding processes of migration in contemporary France is impossible without it being carefully contextualized in certain (post)colonial realities. Moreover, as a number of authors (such as Étienne Balibar, Hafid Gafaiti, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Driss Maghraoui) argue, colonialism lies at the heart of grasping contemporary processes of migration in France.

It is with this caveat in mind that I turn to the exploration of performances of migration and migrants in literary texts. I examine Leïla Sebbar's celebratory discourse of hybridity performed by the strong and independent feminine character, named Shérazade, in the trilogy that shares her name. Sebbar's overly assertive and unattached heroine, who transgresses every boundary and resists every stereotyping, becomes a stereotype in her own right, that of the postmodern hybridized nomad. If Neil Kortenaar is correct in assessing that hybridity is unintelligible without a reference to authenticity and purity, and that both hybridity and authenticity are rhetorical tools that manipulate cultural symbols to endorse political action (1995:1), then Shérazade embodies the stereotype of the hybrid *par excellence*. Her hybridity is thus solely rhetorical in intent, since she refuses any notion of stereotyping in the name of an authenticity, which she hopes to unveil. To use Rey Chow's conceptualization, Shérazade conceives of herself and of the 'native' in general as a 'defiled image' whose restoration of authenticity requires her prompt intervention.

Ben Jelloun's characters from his two novels *Les Raisins de la Galère* and *Partir*, are examples of a hybridity that is historically situated and painfully negotiated. Their migrations from the periphery to the centre, as *Maghrébine* in the case of the first novel, and as *immigrés* in the case of the latter, are perceived

as transgressions, which need to be rectified by relocating them to their pre-assigned positions in the social hierarchies in which they live (see Balibar 2004). If the character of *Les Raisins* has hopes of consummating such a socio-political transgression and turn it into transcendence, the heroes in *Partir* are struck down for their hubris of acceding to a reality that is not meant for them. Ben Jelloun's solution is that of a mythical return, not to a 'homeland' that is not generous enough to welcome them, but to a state of anonymous migrancy, endlessly pursuing the voice of the inner stranger that inhabits us all.

### **Migration in International Relations: moving beyond or around the state?**

Roxanne Doty's *Anti-Immigrantism in Western Democracies* focuses on discourses of racism and anti-immigration in a number of Western democracies, one of which is France. I thought her analysis of migration discourses and the performance of desire through practices of statecraft would provide a helpful and interesting complementary perspective to the portraits of migrants and migration found in Franco-Maghrebian literary productions. In here I argue that the connection between desire and belonging performed by processes of statecraft and securitization translates into narratives of exile and fantasy, whereby escaping one's grim and limiting reality through migration or exile is both a fantasy and a process of transgression.

The literary productions that I explore in this chapter, those of Leïla Sebbar and Tahar Ben Jelloun, work with and around stereotypical images of Maghrebian migrants and of *beurs* in French society. These stereotypes have a violent genealogy linked to colonialism. The imagery associated with the 'Arab' or the 'Muslim' carries sometimes contradictory, or at least apparently contradictory, overtones: the stereotype of the brave and noble Arab knight co-existed, and to a certain extent, it still does, with that of the Arab as a cruel, lazy, and cunning person (Blanchard et alia, 2003: 39). The coexistence of these seemingly opposed stereotypes was related to their provenance. The former came mainly from Orientalist literary and artistic currents that imagined an exoticized and seductive Orient, whereas the latter came into existence in particular from popular imagination, which was fed by the myth of colonialism as embodying the binary of civilization vs. barbarism (ibid.). These myths are seemingly opposed, but in fact they constitute two facets of the same practice, which is stereotyping. There are no positive stereotypes, since idealized images refer to practices of exoticization that relegate a group to the realm of fantasy. As Rosello explains, stereotypes can be regarded as 'medieval walls behind which we feel protected and safe' (Walter Lippmann quoted in Rosello, 1998: 11). This observation implies that stereotypes construct 'a pleasurable form of togetherness', and they

are usually performed as invitations to position yourself on the side of the dominant group (ibid.).

Rosello's predicament is how to 'decline' such an invitation, since simply opposing them to 'positive' images does not diffuse their harmful potential. Consequently

“[t]o declare them wrong, false, to attack them as untruths that, presumably, we could hope to replace by a better or a more accurate description of the stereotyped community, will never work.” (1998: 13)

This discussion on stereotypes mirrors Rey Chow's concern with the politics of representing the 'native', as discussed in the previous chapters. In *Writing Diaspora*, she remarks that the politics of 'native as image' is rarely explored, in the sense that there is always a tendency to pit the politics of depth against the politics of image (surface), (see Chow, 1993: 29). This practice implies an attempt to restore the inner truth of the 'native', by substituting the 'bad' image with a 'correct' image that both annihilates the former and validates the 'native's' authenticity (ibid.). Rosello's solution to this conundrum relies not on a resistance against a bad image by replacing it with a positive one, but on a subversion of the power of stereotype by employing sarcasm and humour, and by disturbing the implied homogeneity of the stereotype. She believes the question of 'What can I do against stereotypes?' is important, but perhaps more important is 'What can I do *with* a stereotype?' (1998: 13).

I thus argue that in literary productions as in IR, images as stereotypes and stereotypes as images permeate the various narratives put forth either by writers or by academics. Such stereotypes are constantly performed whether in more prosaic forms of discourses on migration and securitization, or in aestheticized and literary narratives. And if, as argued in the first chapter, IR is an ensemble of stories we tell about the world (see Weber 2001), then the task of this chapter is doubly productive: I explore the performance of cultural stereotypes in International Relations, and the performance of international relations (with)in cultural and literary manifestations of stereotypes.

Roxanne Doty notes how

“[t]his non-place that immigration insistently points us toward is precisely where desire lurks; within anxieties about order, divisions between the inside and the outside, insecurities over who belongs and who does not. This is where desire does its productive work. This is where we must look for 'the state'.” (2003: 6)



The literary productions that are explored in this chapter deal precisely with desire: the desire of migrants for a better a life, enforced by the fantasy of Europe as a land of all possibilities; the desire of border officials and of European societies to keep them on the margins so that they may reflect themselves in the fantastic mirror of nationalism as unitary and homogeneous nations; the anxieties and insecurities of migrants about their identity and the identity of their children born on European soil; the desire of the *immigré(e)* to become an *exilé(e)*; and finally the desire of the *exilé(e)* for the authenticity and lost purity of ‘the native’ (as discussed in chapter 3), whose metamorphosis into the *immigrés* renders them defiled and less desirable. Such desires constantly infiltrate the imaginative and narrative strata of these literary encounters. But contra Doty, their purpose, however, is not to find “the state” (albeit in its unstable desiring postures), but to understand the dynamics and the perverse alchemy of racism, immigration, and (post)colonial memory.

In a chapter entitled “*Seuil de tolérance*”, Doty analyzes the case of anti-immigration discourses in France. More specifically, she focuses on the contradictory relation between ‘the schizophrenic pole of desire’ of the French state toward ‘infinite freedom, defying boundaries, promoting perpetual flow of goods, capital, and human bodies’ and the centripetal desire towards order, unquestioned identity and security (2003: 58). This tension between totalizing and non-totalizing tendencies has translated into policies that initially allowed migrants to come into France almost without restrictions ‘as cheap and mobile foreign labour’ (2003: 60). Doty adds that the increased migration of mobile cheap labour also meant the relegation of such labour to the fringes of French society. The tension that became apparent was between a certain ideal to which French society held of itself, as the cradle of human rights, and the reality of large groups of people living in a state of sordid marginalization (see Balibar 1994).<sup>175</sup>

Through a thoughtful analysis of post Second World War French policies regarding migration, Doty establishes a connection between the need of French society for cheap and dispensable labour, and the racism that permeates French political discourses and practices. Moreover, she explores the paranoid desire of the state to re-configure its identity to the standard of homogeneity, while excluding from participation those on whose labour and presence it depends for the satisfaction of its schizophrenic desire for deregulation and unimpeded commercial flows. At one point, Doty uses Homi Bhabha’s conceptualization of the nation as the disjunction between the pedagogical and the performative (2003: 62). Bhabha understands the nation as narration split between ‘the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical [understood as on a ‘pre-given historical origin *in the past*’], and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the

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<sup>175</sup> This tension receives an attentive treatment in Balibar’s “‘Rights of Man’ and ‘Rights of the Citizen.’ The Modern Dialectic of Equality and Freedom” (1994).

performative [understood as the incoherent fragments of daily life that ‘must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture’]’ (2004: 209). Therefore when Bhabha refers to the splitting between the ‘pre-given historical origin *in the past*’ and the gathering of incoherent fragments into one coherent national whole, in the case of France, the most important element in the understanding of the alchemy between national identity, immigration and racism is colonialism. I cannot see how the issue of migration in France can be discussed without making mention, and exploring the inevitable links between colonial and post-colonial exploitation of cheap labour.

Unfortunately, Doty’s analysis of France does even not mention the terms ‘colonial’ or ‘colonialism.’ To understand the absurdity of anti-immigration policies in France, the roots of racism towards migrants, and the inexplicable fear and anxiety of this society towards Muslim and African migrants in particular, one has to understand the mechanisms, stereotypes, and desires put in place and performed with the onset of the colonial rule in Africa. Max Silverman makes it clear that one cannot speak of a clear break between the colonial and post-colonial eras in France. In fact, ‘contemporary France has been formed through and by colonization’ (Silverman quoted in Gafaiti, 2003: 209). Aside from the mass migration of the formerly colonized to France and the repatriation of the *pieds noirs*<sup>176</sup> after the independence of Algeria, it is the very structure of society that still operates according to legal structures

“which were largely formed in the context of management of the colonies abroad and immigrants at home, and which are still the source of forms of exclusion today. Balibar sees colonialism as a fundamental determinant of contemporary racism: ‘Racism in France is essentially colonial, not in terms of a ‘leftover’ from the past but in terms of the continuing production of contemporary relations’.” (Silverman quoted in Gafaiti, *ibid.*)

Consequently, to analyse the legal structures and the policies that are promulgated without a postcolonial exposé, to use Linda Hutcheon’s expression, obscures the ways in which France’s racial discourse and multicultural pretensions stem from its colonial legacy. Doty’s unjustifiable omission of the postcolonial from the analysis of contemporary French society implies that redefinition of ‘what it means to be French’, as she put it, has nothing to do with the colonial legacy and its continuing reconstitution into discriminatory policies and racist discourses. She starts her examination of the anti-immigrantist discourses in France with the mass migrations that took place in the period after

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<sup>176</sup> European settlers in Algeria during colonialism.

World War II. But as Driss Maghraoui suggests, '[c]ontrary to the generally held belief' that France's violent encounters with issues of race and migration stem from the process of 'post-war immigration', it was 'the colonial period [that] was at the heart of deep-rooted stereotypes and racism within French society' (2003: 214).

Therefore to understand why France refused, through the amendment, in 1993, of Article 23 of the Code de la Nationalité Française, to grant automatic citizenship to the children born in France coming from migrant families, and thus to abandon *jus soli*, one needs to see who in particular was targeted by these laws. Most of the European migrants, such as those from Italy and Portugal, had been assimilated into French society. It is the North Africans (*Maghrébins*) and the sub-Saharan Africans who were intended as targets, because their 'visibility' and their difficulties in 'integration' made them undesirable to France. Moreover, what does this 'visibility' mean? Is it simply a reference to race? It is not only a racial reference. As Memmi insightfully remarked, in a passage quoted earlier, the *immigrés* are constant reminders of the colonial disillusion, they are 'the illegitimate children [*bâtards*] of the colonial affair' (2004: 97). Consequently, their visibility is not merely a racial visibility, but a reminder of the painful state of anomie in which the French Republic has been living since 1789. Assessing the problematic and yet successful marriage between the ideals of the French Revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity) and the expansion of the French colonial empire in its aftermath, Blanchard and Bancel claim that

"the *native [indigène]* type allows us to simultaneously think of the emancipating ideal of the French republic shared by a wide spectrum of French society, of its assimilating heritage of national unity, which has always refused that an entity exist outside the body of the nation, and also of a racialized vision of the world, since it systematically places the colonised Other to a level inferior to that of the reference model."<sup>177</sup> (1998: 33)

This statement indicates not only the paradoxical relationship between human rights and colonialism in the French context, but it also serves to illustrate the manner in which the migrant becomes a point of negotiation between the colonial legacy and the postcolonial racist policies. Moreover, another issue with Doty's examination of French anti-immigrantist practices is that it remains at the level of the state. Since the purpose of her investigation was to examine how 'statecraft is desire' (2003: 9) and how the 'non-place of immigration' is where 'desire lurks' (2003: 6), she seems to suggest that migration can be understood

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<sup>177</sup> My emphasis.

most productively within practices of statecraft. I beg to differ. I hope that my examination of a few Franco-Maghrebian narratives illustrates that migration can be productively and meaningfully explored in literary texts.

If indeed Doty wished to remain true to her aptly put statement according to which ‘the unconscious censuring of desire [...] takes the importance of a scream that echoes throughout many sites where statecraft does its work’, ranging from academic journals to remote villages, and from the street of major urban centres to ‘the many borders crossing areas in our globalized world’(2003: 2), then her investigation of anti-immigrantism should have moved beyond the listing of state enforced discriminatory policies. If indeed ‘the sites where statecraft does its work’ are multiple, then it would have been productive to explore them in their multiplicity, through an analysis of how the politics of everyday life in its sublimation of desire constitutes the realm of international politics. Doty deconstructs the dearly held notion of the unitary and rational state as the main actor of world politics (dearly held by disciplinary IR) in order to reconstitute a national space where statecraft is desire. The deconstruction is important and notable, but it does not really go beyond the supplanting of a certain set of characteristics with another set. The ultimate implication of her analysis is that the international realm is really mainly about the state, or as she phrases it, about ‘practices of statecraft.’

Moreover, Doty seems to think that by replacing one set of signifiers (rational and unitary) with another (schizophrenic and paranoid), the stereotype of the state in IR is displaced. What we have instead is a reconstruction of the state, but according to different parameters, namely as a heterogeneous and desiring set of mechanisms. What Rosello’s conceptualization of the stereotype teaches us is that the stereotype contaminates all discourse with which it comes into contact. Doty’s analysis is an enactment, after all, of her desire ‘to oppose stereotypes as meaningful statements’, which is a self-defeating attempt (see Rosello, 1998: 13). Instead, stereotypes ‘have to be treated not as the opposite of truth but as one of the narratives that a given power wants to impose as the truth at a given moment’ (Rosello, 1998: 17). Doty’s analysis had the potential to destabilize stereotypes and treat them as power-narratives, but her exploration limited itself to a demonstration of the irrationality of the state and its less than unitary nature. Furthermore, Doty’s investigation of anti-immigrantism practices within Western democracies illustrates Linda Hutcheon’s point about the dangers of engaging in postmodern deconstruction without a postcolonial exposé (as exemplified by the discussion in chapter 1). Doty’s analysis of anti-immigration discourses in the contemporary French context revolves around concepts such as schizophrenic desire, racism and migration without grounding such concepts in a much needed discussion on their (in)congruities with the legacy of French colonialism. As already mentioned, there can be no meaningful examination of anti-immigrantism

in France without an attentive contextualization of such an issue within a postcolonial framework.

### **Postcolonial strangers: Maghrébins, immigrés and beurs**

I choose to examine portraits of migrants in literary productions for several reasons. One of the reasons concerns France's relationship to its colonial past. As explained in the first chapter, France's position vis-à-vis its colonial memory is an uncomfortable one to say the least. The overwhelming position within French society is that colonialism is something located in the past, that has been consummated and terminated, which bears little relevance for the present. It is not surprising then that, in France, colonialism is the study object of history primarily, although inroads are being made recently by other disciplines, such as literary studies for example. It should be mentioned, however, that such inroads are very timid and even marginal, and that colonialism is thus considered to be the terrain of historians. Consider the following example: on February 23, 2005 a law was adopted in France that acknowledged the meritorious service of the French settlers in North-Africa (*les Français rapatriés* or *pieds noirs*) and the indebtedness of the motherland for such a service. The implications of the law are tremendous, because it encourages the French nation to imagine and reflect on French colonialism in Africa through the prism of its 'positive contributions.' Needless to say this law provoked a tremendous outcry, especially among certain intellectual circles (notably historians) who drafted a petition that demanded the abrogation of what is (very rightfully) considered to be a shameful law.<sup>178</sup>

Mireille Rosello, in her *France and the Maghreb: Performative Encounters*, talks about '[m]ultiple memories trapped behind the barbed wires of history' (2005: 29). The author remarks that 'since the beginning of the 1990s, the war between two countries [France and Algeria] is slowly becoming a historical possibility rather than a taboo' (ibid.). What this statement implies is that narratives of the (anti)colonial war in Algeria (depending on who is telling the story) have crystallized into 'official' versions of history that cater to the needs of national memory. Moreover when the process of coming to terms with colonial memory becomes the preoccupation of the discipline of history alone, there is a lack of dialogue and intersection between (hi)stories, which allows for a law like the one adopted on February 2003 to become an 'official' version.

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<sup>178</sup> See Claude Liauzu's article (a well-known historian of French colonialism) in *Le Monde Diplomatique* entitled 'Une loi contre l'histoire ['A law against history']', published in April 2005. The article can be accessed electronically at: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2005/04/LIAUZU/12080> [last accessed on October 26, 2007]. Following the public denunciations made by notable intellectuals such as Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, Claude Liauzu and Benjamin Stora, the law was repealed by Jacques Chirac at the beginning of 2006.

Jean-François Lyotard has made a controversial claim, which I have already discussed and critiqued in the first chapter, namely that the name of Algeria represents the name of an intractable difference since '[w]hat is at stake in a *literature*, in a *philosophy*, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them' (1988: 13). I agree with Winifred Woodhull's critique of Lyotard's statement according to which describing the Algerian experience as intractable, and stating that the only remnants of the political are to be found in literature and philosophy, glosses over the very grounded and grassroots mobilizations that have taken place in Algeria among students, intellectuals, women, and Berbers.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, Lyotard's statement has its own merits, in that it indicates the fact that since an open discussion on the function of colonial memory has not yet been pursued in the political public arena, instances and performances of colonial memory are to be found in literature, art and philosophy, as manifestations of a repressed encounter.

I believe that Lyotard's assessment is accurate in this respect. Since colonial memory is 'trapped behind the barbed wires of history', it emerges in innovative and productive ways in literary productions. I do not want to imply *pace* Lyotard that these are the only spaces where manifestations of the political might be glanced at nowadays. Rather I choose to explore literary productions for their unique manner of transcribing past into present, of initiating a conversation between (hi)stories. Assia Djebar muses on her function as a writer from the 'South' (as she puts it) who needs to bear witness to an encounter of memories and thus

"simultaneously [w]riting [the memory] of yesterday's colonization and that of post-colonization, or rather that of decolonization in the language of yesterday's colonizer, [...]; this is where I emerge today [...] in this space between shores that confronts me suddenly to the seashore of non-return: non-return that I would wish transitory, momentary, but behind the threat of non-return, the more than symbolical presence of rupture concretises itself." (1999: 206)

As Djebar herself acknowledges, she is haunted by the question of how to bear testimony through writing [*comment témoigner en écrivant?*] (1999: 215). This haunting question appears more or less implicitly in the writings of many Franco-Maghrebian writers whose narratives bear testimony to a colonial past that was unfolding itself as present not long ago. Simultaneously, these haunted writings also muse on what it means to be a migrant in the land of the former colonizer, and on the complex processes of negotiation that circumscribe

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<sup>179</sup> See note 17 in chapter 1.

postcolonial practices of identification. Thus, for Franco-Maghrebian writers, bearing witness inevitably means bearing witness to a particular historical and political situation, that of colonialism, but also to the conundrums, hybridities and issues of mobility with which postcoloniality is fraught.

Leïla Sebbar's trilogy entitled *Shérazade* weaves the story of a young seventeen year old woman coming from an Algerian family of migrants in France who ran away from her traditional home. The first volume of the trilogy focuses around her life in Paris among other young people, who just like her, tried to escape in one way or another from their family, their pasts or simply their presents. The second volume follows Shérazade in her travels throughout France, whereas the third volume finds the heroine in the Middle East. The trilogy is a refashioning of Orientalist painting and of the myth of the Oriental woman. Sebbar imbues her reconstruction of the Oriental myth with postcolonial sensitivities. Sebbar's Shérazade is not the opposite of Sherazade, the heroine of *Arabian Nights*. Rather she incarnates the counterpart of the Sherazade portrayed in Orientalist painting, the subdued, passive and highly eroticized woman who constitutes the object of gaze in the paintings of Delacroix, Matisse, Picasso and Ingres. In fact, she resembles the heroine of *Arabian Nights*, exuding wit, self-assertiveness and confidence. As Fatima Mernissi indicates, the Arab reading of the myth of Sherazade focuses on her 'brainy sensuality and political message' (2001: 68).

Likewise, Sebbar's Sherazade stubbornly resists Orientalist identifications, and is fascinated with the Orientalist paintings of Delacroix and Matisse. Fed up with her unpredictable Parisian lifestyle, Shérazade decides to go to Algeria and find traces of her childhood in that land. Symbolically her desire to take this journey can be understood in terms of a return to a land to which everyone else (the French people she encounters daily) ascribe her: she comes from Algeria, she belongs to Algeria. Born and raised in France, Shérazade embodies the *beur* in the feminine through the manner in which she struggles to reconcile both of her cultural backgrounds: France and Algeria. Mirroring this struggle of reconciliation, the couple Shérazade-Julien performs a dialogue and an encounter that has never happened between France and Algeria. Rosello discerns the theme of the mixed couple in the texts of Franco-Maghrebian writers as an allegory of linguistic encounters (2005: 100), and as historiographical models (2005: 113-27).

In the case of Shérazade-Julien couple, the linguistic roles are somewhat reversed since it is Julien who is fluent in Arabic (in classical Arabic), and Shérazade who is more comfortable in French even though speaking the Algerian dialect. Julien's parents had lived in Algeria during colonialism, and his father was a French teacher. He is enamoured with Delacroix' *odalisques*, yet refuses to talk about the Algerian war. There seems to be a split between a certain socio-political reality (that of postcoloniality), and a world of fantasy populated only by

the exotic and the erotic. Julien's knowledge of the Maghreb lies mainly in the latter sphere. Having grown up in Algeria, Julien has more of an Algerian past than Shérázade whose personal history is mainly French. His house is filled with Orientalist images, and he transfers this passion onto Shérázade whom he calls his *odalisque*.

Shérázade's intrigue with the *odalisque* stems from her desire to understand herself, and the way in which women like her (Maghrebian, African, the exoticized 'other') are captured by the society in which she lives. She initially indulges Julien's passion for the image, allowing him to take photos of her. But her indulgence transforms into rage at a nodal point in the narrative, when she tears to pieces all of Julien's photos of her. It is in that moment that she equates photography with pornography, and takes the decision to leave for Algeria.

Sebbar's Shérázade is an incredibly energetic, creative and resourceful woman who exudes confidence and self-assertiveness, and who demands to be listened and spoken to. She is everything that the *odalisques* in Sebbar's *Femmes d'Afrique du Nord* (analysed in the chapter 3) are not. The colonial postcards' *femmes mauresques*, whose consciousness Sebbar spoke with authority, are silent pathetic creatures and constitute cameo appearances, whose tragic tales of unfulfilled love Sebbar's commentary aimed to unveil. It is as though Sebbar constructed Shérázade to portray everything the *femmes mauresques* lack: a strong sense of self, piercing voice and critical gaze. To the stereotype of the *odalisque*, of the Oriental woman, Sebbar juxtaposes Shérázade, the stereotype of the precociously liberated and independent woman. As Richard Dyer suggests, '[i]t is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve' (Dyer quoted in Rosello, 1998: 177, note 7).

Consequently, it appears that Sebbar, in her preoccupation to replace the Orientalist stereotype with a better or more accurate description, lost focus of the 'who controls and defines such stereotypes.' Sebbar's *Shérázade* brings to life portraits of migrant women (or from migrant backgrounds, like Shérázade) who are strong and independent, and who personify Chow's non-duped 'native.' France is a young woman from Martinique who shrewdly performs the role of the exotic Black woman [*négresse*] and takes on the name of Zingha, an Angolan queen of the 17<sup>th</sup> century famous for terrorizing the Portuguese colonizers (Sebbar, 1982: 124-25). Martinique, France and Angola constitute thus a triangle in the colonial geography mapped over one feminine character. Shérázade herself assumes two nicknames: Rosa (Rosa Luxembourg) and Camille (Camille Claudel). Again, the main character takes on the identities of two remarkable women who revolutionized the arenas of politics and art, respectively. Basile is yet another strong immigrant character. He is a black man from Guadeloupe, and he uses his 'exotic' looks to attract and seduce wealthy women, without ever



pursuing a relationship with them. He is keenly sensitive to social and political issues and is sincerely interested in social change in a revolutionary sense.

It is these characters' relationship to each other and to Pierrot, the rebellious French young man who also leads a radical leftist organization, that illuminates the tensions of the social world depicted by Sebbar's narrative. It is Pierrot who is most gullible of the fantasy of authenticity: he accuses his immigrant friends of wanting nothing more from life than a bourgeois existence, which in his view is tantamount to betrayal, especially when considering their 'native' background. Pierrot's indignation can be translated as an accusation of inauthenticity. They are not *truly* victims, because they do not *act like* victims; they are interested in more mundane elements of life, such as nice cars, trendy clothes, comfort, luxury, art, literature, music, etc.

Pierrot's character plays the role of the Maoist intellectual conceptualized by Rey Chow, as 'a supreme example of the way desire works: what [h]e wants is always located in the other, resulting in an identification with and valorisation of that which [h]e is not/does not have' (1993: 10). If Pierrot's desire is to be and to have what he is not and does not have, namely a 'native' and a 'native' identity, then Sebbar's strong female characters as socio-cultural hybrids are meant to challenge the notion of a stable 'native' identity. My issue with Sebbar's portrayal of migrant hybridity, which reappears in *Génération Métisse* already analyzed in chapter 3, is the way in which it is celebrated as an endless *métissage* of cultures, styles, and intellectual trends. Her vision of hybridity is closer to the postmodern nomadism of which Stuart Hall was critical than to a historically situated hybridity. As personified by Shérazade and her peregrinations throughout France and the Middle East, her characters are unattached nomads [*nomades sans attaches*] (1988: 86).

My contention does not revolve around the notion that some people are indeed nomads. Rather I find myself troubled by the manner in which her narrative uncritically enacts the desire of her characters [*immigrés, beurs*] to become someone they are not, the *exilé(e)*. Perhaps I make myself guilty of failing to acknowledge 'the necessary mimetic energy of all counterstereotyping narratives', to use Rosello words (1998: 5). Perhaps that is the case. However, I cannot help but be disturbed by the clearly oppositional triangle constructed by Sebbar's works, between passivity, victimization and lack of agency (*Les Femmes d'Afrique du Nord* and *Mes Algéries en France*), self-assertiveness and independence (*Shérazade*), and postmodern nomadism and postcolonial cool (*Génération Métisse*). Is there no instance in which these seemingly progressive constructions of identity can blend within the same category (the *immigrés*) or within the same context? Is there no other way of confronting colonial stereotypes except through oppositional representations whose desire is to spell the truth? Is there no way in which we (academics, artists, and intellectuals) can conceive of

the ‘native’ as ‘indifferent defiled image’ (Chow, 1993: 52)? Why do we feel that our mission is to flee to the rescue of the ‘native’ and redeem her true self and sense of agency?

It is with these thoughts in mind that I turn to Tahar Ben Jelloun’s meditations on the condition of the migrant on both sides of the Mediterranean, in *Les Raisins de la Galère* [*The Grapes of Despair*] and in *Partir* [Leaving], his latest novel. The former was published in 1996, and examines the condition of migrants in the French suburban ghettos through the eyes of a young woman, Nadia, born in France from Algerian parents. The social setting of the novel is the fictional suburb [*banlieue*] of Resteville, near Sarcelles, which is a very notorious suburban ghetto outside of Paris. Tahar Ben Jelloun constructs the social geography of the novel in a manner which illuminates not only the degrees of exclusion to which the North African migrants are subjected, but also their relationship to discourses of citizenship and belonging in French society. Thus the fictional denomination of Resteville comes from the French verb “rester” that means “to remain, to stay”, which is such an apt characterization of the manner in which migrants are planted on the periphery of great urban concentrations living in a climate of social and political exclusion and isolation. Escape from these places does not happen often, since the political intent is for the *immigrés*, those inassimilable faces of French society, to remain/stay in those peripheries.

Nadia is a young woman with great intellectual potential, which she uses as her tool to escape the grim environment of the *banlieue*. Her family are Kabyles (Berbers), and her father works for one of the Renault factories. He had started his work at Renault to replace his father, an old *chibani*, who had worked himself to the point of illness, and had to return to Algeria.<sup>180</sup> Ben Jelloun’s brief reference to the old grandfather is memorable within the larger narrative of the novel, in so far as it serves to elucidate a genealogy of ‘nativization’ and exclusion: from the old generation of factory workers employed as ‘cheap and mobile labour’ (who helped rebuild post-war France), to the young generation of disenfranchised *beurs*, born in grey and grim *banlieues*, who feel they belong nowhere and have little sense of purpose. This unhappy situation does not imply

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<sup>180</sup> The *chibanis* are Maghrebians (most of them Algerian) who came to France in the 50s and 60s, at the end of the war and after, and who were mostly employed in the building of highways, subway lines, real estate, and in factories. Very few returned to North Africa, and in most cases, their families never managed to join them. Their story as a particular category of migrants is an extremely sad one, marked by loneliness, desolation, and non-recognition. Although their contribution to the reconstruction of post-war France is immense, they live precarious lives of marginal health and financial benefits. For portrayals of the condition of *chibanis* see Philippe Bohelay and Olivier Daubard, *Chibanis* (2002); and also Leïla Sebbar, *Mes Algéries en France* (2004).

that the *immigré(e)* does not attempt to reclaim her 'rights' and migrate from the periphery to the centre of French society.

This migratory attempt is illustrated in the novel by the location of Nadia's parents house: her father refused to have his family live in an HLM (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*), which is a complex of apartment buildings, partially subsidized by public funds, and situated at the periphery of the city, and which is usually meant to house poor immigrants and workers. Instead, he used his savings and built a nice house in the middle of the town, an act which aroused the envy of his HLM neighbours and the indignation of the local authorities. The idea of a family of migrants living in a beautiful house downtown [*centre-ville*] was regarded by the city hall as a direct provocation, because in their eyes, 'an *immigré* was supposed to live in the periphery, or at least in a project [*cit  de transit*] or in a rent-controlled building [*logement social*]' (1996: 16-17; my emphasis).

The irony of the story is that the mayor is a communist, and he is very assiduous in his attempt to relocate the Algerian family to their 'proper' place. Yet again Ben Jelloun's attention to detail allows the reader to make the connection between the particularity of this story and a long (hi)story of silence and betrayal between the French communists and the anti-colonial struggles in Algeria, and later on, the North African migrants in France. As explained in chapter 1, during the Algerian War, the French left adopted a shameful tactics of silence at best, when they did not openly advocate for a French Algeria. As Ben Jelloun insightfully remarked in *Hospitalit  fran aise*, 'the lack of firmness on the part of the socialist left lets loose the spectres of the old right movements' (1997: 83).

In fact,  tienne Balibar suggested, in an article entitled "*Droit de cit  or Apartheid ?*", that with respect to immigration, there is an artificial divide in France between the left and the right since both ends of the spectrum end up demonizing 'alien' workers and since the discourse seems to be similar as regards the issue of illegal workers (2004: 31-33). Balibar calls this "national republicanism," which he understands as a complex of discursive and non-discursive practices (2004: 33). This "national-republicanism" is visible in the 'institutional racism' that plagues the immigration legislation and the institutional systems put in place. Moreover, Balibar incisively indicates that what we are witnessing today in contemporary France is a 'recolonization of migration.' This process of recolonization

"can be read both at the level of daily realities and at that of the great effects of representation on the scale of humanity as a whole, the link between the two being more and more assured by the system of communications that reflects for each human group a stereotyped image of its hierarchical 'place' in the order of the world by 'virtually' projecting it

onto the place it lives. It is occasionally transformed into naked violence, particularly in the urban or suburban ghettos where the public services tend to function as if on conquered territory, under siege from the hostility of the new barbarians (when they do not simply withdraw).” (2004: 41)

It is precisely this process of recolonization, this reclaiming of the ‘hierarchical place’ for the immigrant in the ‘proper’ order of French society, which is on its periphery and as a re-imagined ‘native’, that Ben Jelloun subtly portrays in *Les Raisins de la Galère*. The fact that an Algerian family should occupy a beautiful house in the centre of Resteville, otherwise a grim suburb, is unimaginable to the communist mayor. Facing the resignation of her parents, Nadia decides to see the mayor personally and to take matters into her own hands. Although only a high school student (she is fifteen years old), she makes an appointment with the mayor. The latter assures her that the communists have always defended the interests of the majority against particularisms, therefore, in the interest of democracy her family has to be relocated into a ‘superb HLM’ (1996: 19). In other words, the presence of an Algerian family in a lovely house in the midst of a grim suburb disturbs the homogeneous social landscape. Consequently, they too have to be integrated within the joyless scenery.

The episode is tinged with the humour, sarcasm and self-derision of Nadia, a narrative strategy that allows the (otherwise tragic) situation to unveil in all its nuances and subtleties. It is in this manipulation of sarcasm and humour that Ben Jelloun most productively subverts stereotypical images of the Maghrebian *immigrés*. Unlike Sebbar’s Shérazade whose wit and beauty opens all doors for her and manages to charm and seduce everyone who crosses her path, Nadia is a much more complex character with a more sophisticated inner life: she is very intelligent, politically aware, and determined to change her lot. But she also fails and is disillusioned by the socio-political walls she encounters. With Shérazade, there seem to be no barriers and no obstacles she cannot surmount. Her free-flowing persona who does not want to belong anywhere prevents a more complex character from emerging. Nadia is presented with all her struggles, failures and successes: she is painfully situated in a socio-political situation that allows very limited choice. However, she is determined to make the most of it and escape her limited and limiting environment.

Ben Jelloun manages to conjure a whole range of individual and family portraits of *immigrés* from Resteville and Sarcelles that bring together a fragmented and varied picture of the social life in France’s racialized suburbs. These are not effortlessly hybridized nomads who feel happy not to belong anywhere, desiring to embrace a cosmopolitan chic persona. The characters brought to life by Ben Jelloun are unwelcome guests in a nation that boasts a homogeneous and unitary *national* history, striving to fit in and to offer better

lives to their children. But fitting in is never a real option, insofar as they (whether the migrants or their children who are born and raised in France) are constantly sent back to their origins, whether metaphorically or literally. It is in this ceaseless fluctuation between the symbolical and literal registers of the myth of return that the condition of the *immigré(e)* is carefully brought to light. The comments made by Nadia's father mirror the *immigrés'* conundrum: even if the migrant wanted to be integrated/assimilated, her visibility would always send her back to her roots and thus make her suspect. Nadia's father remarks that even though possessing French citizenship, she would always be taken for an Arab, since 'our land covers our skins, and puts a mask on our faces' (1996: 35).

In another scene in the novel, the Bachirs, a Moroccan family, are confronted with the prospect of returning to their village in Morocco. The father takes the decision to return to Morocco, seeing this as the solution to a failed life in France. He is unable to understand and accept the values and the turbulent teenage fits adopted by his children, raised in a Western society, without the traditional network of support that he saw as essential to a good education. The return to the *bled* or to the village, whether as a threat addressed to turbulent teenagers, as a real prospect, or as a remote wish, is always part of the *immigré's* imaginary. One migrates to Europe to make a good living and then to return to the village in a prosperous situation. The problem is that for those parents whose children are born in France the prospect of return becomes illusory or impractical since children usually find such a prospect absolutely ludicrous.

In *Les Yeux Baissés* (*With Downcast Eyes*), the Berber girl is forced by her father to return to their village in Morocco, because he did not know how to cope with his children's disaffection with their traditions, language, and cultural background. It is rarely a case of celebrated hybridity that allows the migrant to pick and choose the values and the identifications that best suit her. Rather it is a painful struggle between the notion of 'home' left behind and the exigencies of the present location. Therefore, Ben Jelloun thinks it is ludicrous to call the children of migrants 'the second generation' (this is a common reference to the young *Maghrébins*), since they are not migrants themselves, they are born and raised in France. Rather their struggles and difficulties could be better grasped if seen through the prism of a generation of rupture, and of the discontinuity they represent. The *beurs* want to distinguish and distance themselves both from their families, whom they see resigned to their marginalization, silent about their exploitation, and fearful to speak, and from the French society at large with which they see themselves at war. Nadia perfectly voices their struggles between the failure of belonging and the limited options lying ahead:

"Which one is my country? The one of my father? That of my childhood?  
Do I have a right to a homeland [*patrie*]? I sometimes happen to take out

my ID card, oh no wait, it says: ‘*national* identity card.’ On the upper side it is written in capital letters: FRENCH REPUBLIC. I am a daughter of this Republic. *First name, last name, date of birth, height, distinctive marks, address, date of issue, issued by, signature of the bearer. Distinctive marks: nonexistent.* They have not mentioned anything. Does that mean that I am *nonexistent*? Not even ‘rebel’ or ‘enraged *beur*’ [*Beur en colère*]?” (1996: 124)

The same theme of return and of the generation of rupture appears in *Partir*, Ben Jelloun’s latest novel, published in 2006. This time the location of struggle is in Morocco, Ben Jelloun’s ‘homeland.’ *Partir* takes the reader to the other side of the Mediterranean, and explores the depressing realities of post-independence Morocco through stories of (mainly) young characters who struggle to make a future for themselves. The novel is organized in the form of vignettes that illuminate the lives of various hero(ine)s intersecting and touching each other, so that chapters are named after the main character of each story. However, the main character who reappears throughout the novel is Azel, a young Moroccan with a degree in law and with no future prospects, except long-term unemployment. He spends his days in a café frequented by other unemployed men, where they dream most of the time about crossing the Mediterranean to Spain and starting over a new and better life. The Spanish shore, which is visible from Tangiers, becomes the ultimate fantasy of a better life, so close and yet so remote. The whole novel is organized around the idea of crossing the Mediterranean. This crossing can be read as a transgression, understood as illegality (since potential migrants are smuggled into Spain by boat), and as transcendence, since leaving [*partir*] for the other shore is seen as the act of acceding to a different reality and overcoming a painfully immobile present.

In fact, *Partir* is a novel about failure, about absolute failure: those who manage to leave (like Azel and his sister Kenza) fail miserably in their new lives in Europe, and those who cannot leave (like little Malika) wither away in utter despair. Azel has a lucky break by meeting Miguel Lopez, a wealthy Spanish socialite, who is struck by Azel’s looks and desires him for a lover. Although having different sexual preferences, Azel accepts the offer and leaves for Spain with Miguel. Loathing himself for having become Miguel’s paid male prostitute, Azel gradually sinks into despair, self-hate and ruin. In an attempt to prevent the Spanish police from deporting him back to Morocco, Azel accepts to become a paid informant and give them information about certain fundamentalist groups who had approached him in Spain. Azel is found in a pool of blood in his apartment, his throat cut ‘[l]ike a mutton during Aïd-el-Kebir’ (2006: 248). His sister Kenza joins Azel in Spain, by marrying for convenience Azel’s lover, Miguel. Initially, she fares very well in Spain, and seems to be the only success

story of the novel: she is working for the Red Cross during the day, and at night she performs belly-dancing in a nightclub. However, she meets and falls in love with Nâzim, an illegal Turkish migrant, who desires her as much for her beauty as for her enviable status of Spanish citizen (acquired through Miguel) and of successful migrant. When she finds out that he is in fact married with children, Kenza has a nervous breakdown, attempts suicide, and becomes severely depressed.

Both stories are stories of betrayal. In the case of Azel, he is the one who undertakes a double betrayal (he betrays his inner self by becoming Miguel's paid lover, and his *other* sense of self by becoming the paid informant of Spanish police). Kenza is betrayed by her Turkish lover, who is also her fellow migrant, and, as she watches the broadcast of King Hasan II's state funeral on the evening news, she realizes she had betrayed her country. The solution lies in her return. The final chapter of the book is entitled "Return" [Revenir]. The finale becomes a mythical return, a flight of fancy that transports the reader to a mythical moment of redemption, when the boat takes the transgressors not to the treacherous space of the homeland, but onto an endless voyage as anonymous migrants. Ben Jelloun's final remarks voice the message that we are all migrants and we all feel the need to respond to the call of the stranger within us and to leave our homeland, which sometimes is not generous or hospitable enough to keep us there (2006: 266-67).

Ben Jelloun's final remarks echo Nicholas Xenos' conceptualization of the refugee/migrant as the modern political condition (1996). Drawing upon a genealogy of the word 'home', Xenos muses on the perverse paradox of our modern times that equates 'home' with the boundaries of a state, whereas 'home' initially referred to village, to the immediate community from which a person emerged (1996: 238). As such, movement, mobility, crossing over and transgressing seem to be the answer to such a stubbornly static notion of the modern 'home.' Simone Weil argued that '[t]o be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul' (Weil quoted in Xenos, 1996: 241). At the same time, Xenos points to the condition of refugees (and of the migrants, I add) as a 'contemporary political identity crisis' in so far as '[i]n their homelessness as statelessness they are often unwitting representatives of a cosmopolitan alternative to the idea of a homeland' (1996: 244). Such a social and political alternative seems to have been envisioned by Ben Jelloun in the final chapter of his novel *Partir*. The need for roots, as Simone Weil suggested, is indisputable in the case of Ben Jelloun's characters. They all yearn for their home, their families and the familiar. But their understanding of home does not map over the boundaries of Morocco. Rather their home is a nostalgic and legitimate desire for a place where they are welcome and accepted with generosity and hospitality.

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I suggested that a reading of literary texts offers an alternative understanding of an International Relations of migration and of linkages between postcolonies and postmetropolises. This alternative IR emerges first in the politics of language (as discussed in the previous chapter), which arise for Maghrebians intellectuals living and writing about “home”, and deciding upon audiences in their writings. Out of this politics emerge the categories of the *immigré(e)* and *exilé(e)* that reflect a lived experience of international relations, and an absence of relations that adds to our understanding. If Xenos’ argument according to which being a refugee or a migrant is the modern political condition is correct, then we should also recognize that such a modern condition does not occur equally everywhere.

The importance of this insight becomes clear when we confront a contemporary IR of migration written from a more mainstream perspective. Its ahistorical presentation and state-centrism are blind (and indifferent?) to the continuities of imperialism, where the postcolony is as much within the lived space of the postmetropole as it is outside. Thus I attempted to amplify this understanding of the IR of migration and imperialism through recourse to literary texts of Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals, such as Tahar Ben Jelloun and Leïla Sebbar.

The diasporic postcolonial intellectual, as discussed in the previous chapter, assumes a mission of writing on and bearing witness to the continuous space of memory being performed between the postcolony and the postmetropole. For Franco-Maghrebian writers, bearing witness inevitably means bearing witness to a particular historical and political situation, that of colonialism, but also to the conundrums, hybridities and issues of mobility with which postcoloniality is fraught. This is a daunting task, insofar as the diasporic intellectual’s mission is both enabled and disabled by her diasporic position as *exilé(e)*.

In contrast, Roxanne Doty’s account of anti-immigrantism in Western democracies appears undaunted by the task at hand. In her examination of French anti-immigrantist discourses, the terms ‘colonial’ or ‘colonialism’ are not even mentioned in passing. Doty’s omission of the (post)colonial in the French case seems to reiterate the stance of the French mainstream position according to which colonialism is something consummated and terminated, with little relevance for the future. Whereas, as Balibar emphatically suggests, not only is colonialism at the heart of understanding contemporary migration issues in France, but today French society is also witnessing a recolonization of migration. What follows is a radicalization of racist discourses and of exclusionary practices. Such a blatant dismissal of something so vital to understanding migration (the colonial factor) is not surprising coming from the field of IR with its by now notorious marginalization of postcolonialism from its theoretical perspectives. But



it is very surprising coming from an IR scholar who is often identified as having postcolonial sensitivities, and whose work revolves around practices of marginalization.

Because of this recurrent disillusion with critical IR's half-hearted approach towards postcoloniality, I chose literary texts as my media of understanding migration and its representations, as well as its performances. In spite of their inevitable problems, Sebbar and Ben Jelloun's portrayals of migration and migrants offer a complex understanding of the everyday politics involved in negotiating belonging and citizenship, as well as an array of spaces for its performance: the street; the privacy of one's home; the transgressing space of the boat; the couple; the mythical and the imaginary; the space of dreams, and so on. Such spaces construct a transnational network of relations of transgressions and transcendence, which is how I understand and imagine the space of international politics.

## Chapter 6

### **“Diasporic identifications, translocal webs, and international relations”**

#### **Introduction**

This concluding chapter explores the connections and tensions between the politics of diasporic identifications, translocal webs created by transnational mobility, and the geohistorical location of the discipline of international relations, as it posits its origins and its objects of study. What links these three apparently unrelated issues is a preoccupation with the study of diasporic and migrant identifications from the perspective of colonial difference, as conceptualized by Walter D. Mignolo (2000). Such a perspective allows us to grasp the unequal and asymmetrical ways in which claims to citizenship and political subjectivity are experienced. More specifically, in the Franco-Maghrebian context, it is through an examination of literary narratives that a more nuanced 'picture' of various diasporic identifications emerges, which is illustrated by the categories of *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)*. In this specific context, it is the use of literary narratives and strategies that has constructed a Franco-Maghrebian diasporic experience. The narratives of authors such as Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Albert Memmi, and so many others, mirror paradoxical diasporic experiences of 'separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place' (Clifford, 1997: 255).

I critically employ Aihwa Ong's conceptualization of 'flexible citizenship' and of the 'transnational' in order to assess the unequal experiences of the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)* as socio-political categories of the Maghrebian diaspora. Ong understands 'flexible citizenship' as a strategy of the diasporan subject who is prompted to choose her citizenship according to economic calculations driven by current shifts in global markets (1999: 112-13). Her perception of 'flexible citizenship' shapes her vision of the transnational through which she 'alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination', in so far as the practice of 'flexible citizenship' is circumscribed by a mutually supporting relation between escape and discipline (1999: 4, 19). Following Ong's understanding of the 'transnational', I perceive the web of translocal relationships that circumscribe and shape the Franco-Maghrebian encounter as possessing transversal, transactional, translational, and transgressive dimensions, which speak as much about moments of agency, resistance, escape, and self-determination, as they reflect instances of determinism, discipline, powerlessness, and silence. Thus my understanding of the encounter between France and the Maghreb does not limit itself to the 'official' portrayal of histories and characters, nor to the state-centred interactions within this region. Rather my project is concerned with the

interactions, movements, transgressions, translations, and negotiations that happen between and among individual and collective voices and memories, who situate themselves (rather uncomfortably) within the Franco-Maghrebian web of translocal relationships. It is this crossing and interaction among various voices and memories, that shapes the Franco-Maghrebian context.

I critically evaluate Ong's concept of 'flexible citizenship' and its implications for the context of migration flows and diasporic processes between the Maghreb and France. I adopt her understanding of the 'transnational', although I do not examine it through the perspective of global capitalism and its interactions with the nation-state. Thus my subsequent uses of the *transgressive* and *translational* refer to the possibility of building an alternative international relations of migration. In this alternative view, acts of indiscipline (or practices of disciplinary *transgression*) are performed through a reading of literary narratives and strategies that *translate* and mediate alternative understandings of migrant and diasporic subjectivities. They translate also alternative visions of international relations articulated with the colonial difference in mind.

The first part of this chapter, therefore, examines precisely these intersections between IR and colonial difference by attempting to trace IR's geohistorical location within the imaginary of what Mignolo calls 'the colonial modernity.' I thus explore, in parallel, the implications of Aihwa Ong's dismissal of the relevance of (post)colonial frameworks in understanding current processes of transnational mobility, and of disciplinary IR's marginalization of the postcolonial. I argue that colonial difference is crucial in grasping the dynamics of migration and diasporization in the Maghreb, insofar as it allows us to discern the nodes of power relations that structure interactions between societies (French and Algerian, for example). It also permits us to distinguish various claims to diasporic subjectivity. It is through a reading of literary narratives produced by Maghrebian writers that the complexities of such claims, and of the politics they involve in their aspiration to mediate a particular socio-political reality (that of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter), are revealed.

Moreover, as the second part of this chapter argues, such literary texts inadvertently indicate the subject of 'flexible citizenship', namely the *exilé(e)*. Her displacement allows her to reposition herself not only vis-à-vis 'this other self', as Hafid Gafaïti describes the West, but also vis-à-vis the *immigré(e)*, whose impossibility to claim 'flexible citizenship' marks the irony of postcolonial displacement. Consequently, literary narratives illustrate the ways in which the *exilé(e)* can indulge in the luxury of a re-positioning vis-à-vis the West and of a 'recovery of self'. They also indicate the manner in which the *immigré(e)*'s encounter with 'hospitality' in the West is still largely framed by a colonial imaginary that relegates this category of migrant to a peripheric position and subjectivity.

Thus, literary strategies and narratives become more than cultural productions reflecting on current socio-political events. In the Franco-Maghrebian context, they become histories of and about silences. They attempt to perform, within their narrative substance, the ‘critical labour of memory’ (Balibar 2004) by exploring those legacies and processes whose examination has been repressed and avoided by “official” discourses. Nonetheless, such a mediation of memory and forgetting is not without its violences. As the final section of this chapter indicates, these literary strategies are themselves caught within the politics and practices they attempt to denounce, even as they suggest certain possibilities of transcendence and transgression. I argue that the fantasy of authenticity and the ‘unified moralism’ (Ong’s expression) they attach to the figure of the ‘native’/*indigène* reflects a desire to transcend colonial stereotypes by counterposing a ‘purified’ (and equally stereotypical) version of the subaltern. Thus the practice of imagining the ‘native’, whether understood as the ‘sanctified native’ captured in literature and photography (chapters 1 to 3) or perceived as the postcolonial *immigré* (chapters 4 and 5), exposes the fragile and yet productive articulations between ‘local’ and ‘global’, between past and present, and between memory and history.

### **IR and the problem of colonial difference**

#### *IR and its long forsaken others*

This section critically employs Walter D. Mignolo’s conceptualization of ‘the colonial difference’ for the examination of the ways in which processes of subalternization of knowledge are undergoing transformation. I believe that a dialogue between social sciences and humanities is essential in understanding the articulations between what Mignolo characterizes as ‘local histories’ and ‘global designs.’ Mainstream IR stubbornly refuses such a dialogue. Exploring the connections between postcoloniality, social sciences (in this case IR), and literary narratives allows, however, for a re-thinking of an alternative IR, one that I would like to call transnational relations of transgression and transcendence.

In his meticulous study of the connections between coloniality and knowledge production, Walter D. Mignolo understands colonial difference as

“the space where coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. The colonial difference is the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the

confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet.” (2000: ix)

Mignolo thus conceives of coloniality as the meeting of various *local* histories, a violent encounter that is circumscribed by unequal power relations. He does not conceive of the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ as two reified categories. Rather he makes a subtle but significant distinction between *local* histories with aspirations towards global designs, and *other local* histories, seen as those spaces in which the coloniality of power of global designs is both negotiated and resisted. His intention is thus to localize knowledges with universalistic pretensions, or, to use Dipesh Chakrabarty’s expression, to provincialize Europe. Mignolo does not imagine the encounter between these two kinds of *local* histories as a univocal imposition of power, material structures and knowledge. Instead he acknowledges that this violent encounter has been mediated by complicity, resistance, adaptation, and indifference. Such a complex understanding of the coloniality of power allows for the possibility of imagining the ‘native’ or the nativized *immigré(e)* as ‘indifferent defiled image’, a practice advocated for by Rey Chow in her *Writing Diaspora* (1993: 52). As seen from the discussion in chapters 4 and 5, the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)*, as socio-political categories of migrants within the Franco-Maghrebian context, allow us to conceive of international politics as a *translocal* web of transgressive and translational relations through which colonial difference is performed in unequal and asymmetrical ways.

I thus argue that the problem of colonial difference is crucial to imagining an alternative international relations of migration. It enables us to explore the vast array of subalternized knowledges, and the strategies engaged in articulating ‘new loci of enunciation’ that are in the process of transforming such an entrenched subalternization of knowledge (Mignolo, 2000: 13). Mignolo argues that what he calls ‘the modern/colonial world order’ or ‘colonial modernities’ started in late 15<sup>th</sup> century with the conquest of America, when coloniality was revealed as the dark side of modernity. The beginnings of ‘colonial modernities’ initiated the devastation brought upon the Aztec and the Inca peoples by the Spanish *conquistadores* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Colonial modernities ‘has built a frame and a conception of knowledge based on the distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics and by doing so, has subalternized other kinds of knowledge’ (ibid.).<sup>181</sup> These ‘other kinds of knowledges’ are perceived by Mignolo to be local knowledges that have undergone a process of subjection and marginalization in the encounter between ‘colonial modernities’ and ‘local histories.’

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<sup>181</sup> Here Mignolo refers to the displacement of ‘gnoseology’ (understood as ‘knowledge’ in general, attained either by ‘mystical contemplation’ or by mathematical reasoning) by epistemology (associated with post-Cartesian reason) and hermeneutics (related to meaning and interpretation) (2000: 10).

What Mignolo identifies as the imaginary of the modern/colonial system has had its centres of knowledge production first in Europe and, after World War II, in North America (2000: 92-3). Thus non-Western epistemologies have been considered, for the longest time, objects to be studied, neatly defined entities that awaited the investigation and decoding of Western-trained minds. In an unsurprisingly inward-looking move, disciplinary international relations traced its ‘origins’ back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), an event which crystallized the concepts of state sovereignty and self-determination, and established the internal political boundaries of Europe.<sup>182</sup> However, Mignolo claims that the first attempts to institute an international law took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, and was occasioned by the debates between Bartolomé de las Casas and Gines de Sepúlveda, in Valladolid, on the humanity of the Amerindians (2000: 29).<sup>183</sup> These early debates were followed by the deliberations coming from the School of Salamanca on cosmopolitanism and international relations (ibid.). Such debates culminated with the promulgation of the ‘rights of the people’, which would be rearticulated during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the ‘rights of men and of the citizen’.<sup>184</sup>

Mignolo thus remarks that the difference between the two concepts is that the former referred to Amerindians, and considered them vassals of the Spanish king, and thus a people that ‘needed’ to be educated and converted to Christianity (2000: 30). Consequently, as the author subtly suggests, the imaginary of the modern/colonial system was built on a logic of erasure and assimilation of difference. I argue that it is the same logic at play that conveniently traces a genealogy of international politics to a 17<sup>th</sup> century European treaty. Inadvertently perhaps, Mignolo articulates international relations from the perspective of colonial difference: is it not interesting to conceive of the ‘beginnings’ of international relations as a series of debates concerning the humanity of Amerindians, which were circumscribed by the project of Spanish colonialism in America? Even more interesting is the fact that international relations has been defined as an “American Social Science” (see Hoffman 1987 and Smith 1995).<sup>185</sup> It is thus an intriguing thought that international relations should be rearticulated

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<sup>182</sup> For an account on the historiography of academic international relations, see Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (1998).

<sup>183</sup> Within IR, there are several exciting engagements with the 16<sup>th</sup> century debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda. See, for example, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney’s “Intimate Indians” in *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (2004); Neta C. Crawford’s “Colonial Arguments” in *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (2002); and William E. Connolly’s “Global Political Discourse” in *Identity/Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (2002).

<sup>184</sup> See also Mignolo’s article in *Public Culture*, “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism” (2000).

<sup>185</sup> See note 34, chapter 1.

from the standpoint of a different America. For, to borrow Steve Smith's expression, one wonders why the self-image of the discipline of international relations traces its pedigree between the 17<sup>th</sup> century Peace of Westphalia and the post-World War II North America.

William Connolly goes as far as to read the founding of disciplinary IR in parallel with the stories of two Christian monks, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bernardino de Sahagún, who go to the Americas to convert the Aztecs to Christianity. Gradually, however, they become convinced that such a conversion would be a violent imposition on their already superior ways of life (2002: 36-63).<sup>186</sup> Connolly intriguingly suggests that the employment of conquest and conversion, as responses to otherness, can be found in (re)readings of both the conquest of America, and of disciplinary IR. Both conquest and conversion seem to be IR's responses to otherness. Its cherished techniques are those of marginalizing the external others, and neutralizing the internal others (illustrated through the examples of the two Christian monks who sought to question the morality and ethics of conquest and conversion) who seek to interrogate its foundations (Connolly, 2002: 45). Such techniques explain the marginal status of postmodernist approaches in IR, and the less than marginal status of voices inspired by postcolonial approaches.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, disciplinary IR 'dissolves questions of identity and difference into its categories of theory, evidence, rationality, sovereignty and utility' (Connolly, 2002: 49).

Connolly's use of stories from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century illustrates the richness of connections and assumptions that can emanate from reading IR as an 'ensemble of stories', a practice which was discussed in chapter 1. Post-structuralists use the concept of intertextuality to show how any text contains a multiplicity of assumptions about and references to other texts. As such, an intertextual reading of IR implies exposing its numerous connections to, and complicities with other texts/discourses/practices, and its profound contextuality. Darby and Paolini state that power operates at the very point of textual representation and in the construction of language and discourse (1994: 387-88). Taking their cue from Foucault, they discuss the modalities through which 'dominant representations create "regimes of truth," which tend to exclude and marginalize, while at same time "normalizing" that which was previously threatening' (1994: 387).

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<sup>186</sup> For an in-depth treatment of these stories in the context of the atrocities performed by the Europeans in the Americas, and in the context of the problem of how otherness is used to secure one's sense of identity, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (1992).

<sup>187</sup> There are few honest engagements with postmodernism in IR that do not quickly dismiss it as too difficult and dense to comprehend; one example of such an honest scholarly engagement is Colin Hay's (2002).

In this sense, Rey Chow considers an oppositional politics to hegemonic knowledge, which she characterizes as the ‘enemy.’ This term is not to be understood in terms of individuals, but in terms of a ‘dominant symbolic [...] corpus of attitudes, expressions, discourses, and the *value* espoused in them’ (1993: 100). Moreover, she echoes Mignolo and Connolly’s observations in that ‘[t]he rhetoric of universals [...] is what ensures the ghettoized existence of the other, be it in the form of a different culture, religion, race or sex’ (1993: 101). Indeed, the imaginary of the modern/colonial system is one in which the rhetoric of universals (or ‘global designs’ as understood by Mignolo), particularly in the production of knowledge, operates with fierce disciplinarity.

International relations, as discussed in chapter 1, holds dear the logic and rhetoric of universals, which is ironic since it entitles itself as the field “international” relations. Such a title inevitably begs the following question: which nations are to be represented by the signifier “international”? All nations?<sup>188</sup> A survey of mainstream international relations would easily edify the curious student that the nations privileged with holding the keys to understanding international politics are nations from North-America and Europe.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, we must consider the fact that the discipline of IR was founded on a *local* history (that of the West) that cloaked and performed itself as a ‘global design.’ In exposing IR’s blindness and indifference to colonial difference, it acquires the dimension of an imperative, which allows for the possibility of imagining of an alternative international relations, as *translocal* relations of transgression and translation.

Therefore, I find it rather strange that the study of the politics of diaspora and migration between France and the Maghreb from a postcolonial perspective needs meticulous justification as to why it belongs to the ‘field’ of IR. As already mentioned, I conceive of the field of international relations as *translocal* relations of transgression and transcendence. As Aihwa Ong suggests in her *Flexible Citizenship*, ‘[t]rans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination’ (1999: 4). However, unlike Ong, I do not look at nation-states, nor do I look at movements of capital, even though movements of migrants are intrinsically linked to movements of capital. But Maghrebian

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<sup>188</sup> Moreover, such questions seem to imply that ‘nation’ is an uncontested universal. I do not employ the concept of ‘nation’ in this restrictive sense. Rather I attempt to indicate that international relations’ own formulation of the scope of its investigation is highly questionable.

<sup>189</sup> Interest in other ‘nations’, such as Russia, China, India, and others has recently been explored. However, such extra-disciplinary incursions do not constitute the norm of the ‘discipline.’



migrants' decision to relocate is not circumscribed by mere cold economic calculations. The movements of migrants from the Maghreb to Europe is also structured by a complex socio-political and historical context of colonial relations.

Such a context is primary to understanding the transnational and translational relations that have shaped the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. As seen from the analysis of Roxanne Doty's study of anti-immigrantism in Western democracies, undertaken in chapter 5, this context is crucial to grasping the complexity of the links binding diaspora, exile and migration in this specific region. While mainstream IR stubbornly refuses an interdisciplinary dialogue, exploring the connections between postcoloniality, social sciences (in this case IR), and literary narratives allows for a re-thinking of an alternative IR. I argue that it is in this connection between postcoloniality, literary narratives and social sciences that the subalternization of knowledge in IR can be challenged.

Mignolo's interest in the geohistorical location of knowledge is conceptualized as a set of 'links between the place of theorizing (*being from*, *coming from*, and *being at*) and the locus of enunciation' (2000: 115). These connections are particularly pertinent when discussing the politics of postcolonial theorizing. It is through literary strategies that narratives of exile and migration tie together various spaces and imaginaries belonging to post-independence societies and to former metropolises. Moreover, postcolonial theorizing allows for a more accurate 'location of the knowing subject in the social economy of knowledge and understanding' (ibid.). Disciplinary IR's stubborn adherence to a 'dispassionate' scientific methodology that occludes the location of the knowing subject serves to mask the ways in which Western *local histories* and imaginaries are projected as ahistorical and universalizing *global designs*. The element of colonial difference through which postcolonialism articulates its emancipatory agenda shatters the myth (and the fantasy) of impersonal and impartial location, and rigorously situates the nodes of power relations, be they in their material or ideational form.

Postcolonial literary strategies thus illuminate in a creative and dynamic manner not only the processes of locating the *knowing subject*, but also the complex links and practices that constitute the locations of the *known*. Arjun Appadurai's concern with the links between imagination and social life sheds light on the role of literary narratives as constitutive of and constituted by the fabric of socio-political life (1996: 55):

"Fiction, like myth, is part of the conceptual repertoire of contemporary societies. Readers of novels and poems can be moved to intense action (as with the *Satanic Verses* of Salman Rushdie), and their authors often contribute to the construction of social and moral maps for their readers. [...]"

Like the myths of small-scale society as rendered in the anthropological classics of the past, contemporary literary fantasies tell us something about displacement, disorientation, and agency in the contemporary world.” (1996: 58)

Indeed, the purpose of my incursions into literary narratives was to illustrate the ways in which the links between postcoloniality, literary strategies and social science can be considered part of what Appadurai characterizes as an ‘anthropology of representation’ (and of performance, I would add) (ibid.). Such an anthropology of representation and performance is inevitably linked to international relations. The ways in which people (as individuals or as collectivities) perceive their senses of self and their views of the world, thereby locating themselves within a certain socio-political sphere, carries a profound bearing on political processes. Focusing the IR research agenda on issues such as cultural processes and identification also implies bringing into the ‘field’ voices coming from other realms of social knowledge, such as globalization studies, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, literary studies, and others. Although profoundly ignorant of and arrogant towards such voices, as they do not pertain to the ‘disciplinary’ objects of inquiry in international politics, IR has nonetheless been immensely enriched by the fact that various IR scholars draw on voices such as those of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Rey Chow, Aihwa Ong, and so many others.

*The moral politics of comparison?*<sup>190</sup>

With these thoughts in mind, I now turn to the relevance of postcolonial theorizing for social science. In a chapter entitled “Geopolitics of Cultural Knowledge”, Aihwa Ong advances the argument that ‘we must move beyond an analysis based on colonial nostalgia or colonial legacies’ in order to fully grasp the new directions taken by the ex-colonized countries in their eagerness to position themselves as advantageously as possible vis-à-vis the global political economy (1999: 35). Ong’s prescription is based on the assumption that countries such as those in South-East Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong-Kong) are not interested in either colonialism or postcolonialism, since they have, ‘in their leaders’ views[,] successfully negotiated formal decolonization’ (ibid.). Upon reading this chapter, several questions sprung to mind. Firstly, who exactly is not interested in (post)colonialism in these countries, the leaders or other categories? Second, since the leaders of these countries estimate they had successfully negotiated decolonization, does it follow that decolonization has

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<sup>190</sup> I use Aihwa Ong’s subtitle from *Flexible Citizenship*, but as an interrogation.

indeed taken place? And thirdly, can one claim that ‘in many areas of the world’ (if not all) ex-colonies have *successfully* negotiated decolonization, and now they need to move on?

What would such an argument look like in the context of the Maghreb? Étienne Balibar claims, in an article entitled “Algeria, France: One Nation or Two?”, that the decolonization of Algeria was an incomplete process with devastating consequences for both nations (1999). Moreover, in more recent research, he asserts that within the context of migration processes between the Maghreb and Europe, we are witnessing a ‘recolonization of migration’ (2004: 41), as already discussed in the previous chapter. Undoubtedly the Algerian president Bouteflika or the Tunisian president, General Ben Ali, would consider that decolonization in the Maghreb is a *fait accompli*, and that colonialism is a part of the past entrusted to the labour of historians. But does it follow that, upon taking their views into consideration, we should move beyond an understanding of how postcolonial processes are circumscribing current practices of migration control? Moreover, there is a significant amount of literature in the Franco-Maghrebian space that addresses the issue of repressed colonial memory and the urgent need to have an open debate about the violence of colonialism. The Algerian war is without a doubt one of the most defining moments for the understanding of contemporary French identity (see, for example, Susan Ireland 2005 and Janice Gross 2005).

When Benjamin Stora speaks of a ‘non-meeting of memories’ and of the ‘memory of Algeria [that] continues to eat away at the very foundations of French society like cancer, like gangrene’ (quoted in Ireland, 2005: 203), he is particularly concerned about how such repressed memories spill over into various realms of socio-political life both in Algeria and in France. Moreover, Alek Toumi advances the argument that the colonial relation previous to independence has been replaced by an economic colonialism between France and the Maghreb (2002: 138). This colonialism links in complicity neoliberal interests from France and the Algerian elites. Another important issue here are the directions taken by postcolonies on the path to a ‘successful decolonization.’ What were the tactics employed by post-independence governments to effect a ‘successful decolonization’?

In the Maghrebian post-independence states, the projects of Arabization were seen as statist instruments of cultural decolonization. They attempted to eliminate all things French. In Algeria, during the civil war of 1990s, such an effort to cleanse Algerian society of all things French took a tragic turn, when intellectuals, journalists, and artists, who were perceived to be close to French values or to advocate for a democratic Algeria, were killed. As such, it seems that the French colonial project has been replaced by Arabo-islamic colonization (see Toumi 2002; Memmi 2004). In fact, Albert Memmi asserts that, in the case of the

Maghreb, ‘the revolution did not take place’ (2004: 78). Therefore, chapter 4 attempted to outline the linguistic situation in the Maghreb to illuminate one of the paradoxes of decolonization in this region. The French language has come to play a role nowadays, as an instrument of liberation and as a tool for petitioning for a democratic and tolerant Maghreb.

Moreover, I wonder to what extent societies in South-East Asia, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and even Singapore and Hong-Kong have ‘successfully negotiated decolonization.’ Perhaps the key to understanding the relation between colonial, decolonized, and postcolonial is not necessarily whether such societies (or at least their leaders) are interested in colonial/postcolonial issues. Nor is it whether the former colonizers still have a hold over such societies. Rather, the postcolonial relates to processes, practices, and attitudes that are being carried over from colonialism, and are affecting postcolonial societies in often various and paradoxical ways, as it has been seen in the Maghreb.

In *Neoliberalism as Exception*, Ong attaches the term ‘postcolonial’ to Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, and Vietnam. From the contexts in which she employs the term it seems that the connotation associated with her usage of ‘postcolonial’ is that of an *after* colonialism, thereby implying an end to colonialism. Moreover, Ong performs an unambiguous separation between Western colonialism (which in her estimation ended with the independence of these states), and internal practices of colonialism undertaken by the newly colonized states. By performing such a separation, Ong overlooks the insidious modalities through which such practices are indeed connected. In addition, Mignolo’s conceptualization of the modern/colonial world system accounts for external borders of the colonality of power (such as those of Western empires), and internal borders, those *within* various societies. I find Anne McClintock’s critique of the term ‘postcolonialism’ more compelling, and paradoxically more edifying about the usefulness of postcolonial studies. In “Postcolonialism and the Angel of Progress” she states that

“[w]hile some countries may be postcolonial with respect to their erstwhile European masters, they may not be postcolonial with respect to their new colonizing neighbours. Yet neocolonialism is not simply the repeat performance of colonialism, nor is it a slightly more complicated, Hegelian merging of tradition and colonialism into some new, historic hybrid. More complex terms and analyses of alternative times, histories, and causalities are required to deal with complexities that cannot be served under the single rubric of postcolonialism.” (1995: 13)

A theorist such as Rey Chow would disagree with the claim that Hong Kong, for example, has accomplished decolonization and has moved beyond it. I would argue that the depth of Rey Chow's work arises precisely from the manner in which she positions herself as a Hong Konger educated in the Western canon, and as 'one of the few "postcolonial" intellectuals working in the North American humanities academy today who can lay claim to having been subjected to a genuinely classic colonial education,' and who has to negotiate between her Chineseness, understood generally, and her Hong Kong Chineseness, understood particularly (1998: 161). In works such as *Woman and Chinese Modernity* and *Writing Diaspora*, she makes the claim that to understand 'coloniality' in terms of 'foreignness of race, land, and language' is both enabling and disabling, or as she puts it, both *blinding* and illuminating, in so far as

"[i]n the history of modern Western imperialism, the Chinese were never completely dominated by a foreign colonial power, but the apparent absence of the 'enemy' as such does not make the Chinese case any *less* "third world" in terms of exploitation suffered by the people, whose most important colonizer remains their own government. China, perhaps because it is an exception to the rule of imperialist domination by race, land, and language involving a foreign power, in fact highlights the effects of the imperialistic *transformation of value and value-production* more sharply than in other 'third world' cultures." (1993: 9)

Therefore, two important points emerge from this analysis: one concerns the understanding of coloniality as internal colonialism, and the second one refers to coloniality not only as 'the literal understanding of geographical captivity' (Chow, 1993: 7), but also to its *ideological* dimension, which forgoes geographical boundaries. The former is an important one, with which postcolonial theory has been grappling in its attempt to understand how the 'coloniality' of power operates. Ania Loomba uses Mahasweta Devi's story on the tragic condition of the tribal culture of the Agarias in post-independence India. She employs this literary narrative strategically, to reveal how postcolonial '[n]ational "development"' has no space for tribal cultures or beliefs', and how post-independence nationalist projects replicate 'colonial views of non-Western people' in regards to those 'minorities' who do not fit neatly with the national fantasy of unity and homogeneity (2005: 14-15). As seen in the Maghreb with the struggles of the Berber tribes, post-independence Arab nationalisms have very little patience with dissent and diversity. The policy has been, just as in the Indian case, to replicate colonial policies of violently suppressing 'rebellious' elements, and 'bring them into line with the rest of the country' (Loomba, 2005: 15).

As such, Aihwa Ong's suggestion that postcolonial studies overlooks the fact that '[m]any formerly colonized countries in South-East Asia are themselves emergent capitalist powerhouses that are "colonizing" territories and peoples in their own backyards or further afield' (1999: 35) is perhaps misguided. Postcolonial theorists such as Rey Chow, Ania Loomba, James Clifford, Stuart Hall, and many others, do in fact concern themselves with precisely this sort of internal colonialism, whether in its nationalist facet (Ania Loomba, Rey Chow) or in its capitalist dimension (Gayatri Spivak, Rey Chow). In addition, Ong's quick dismissal reveals its failure to grasp 'coloniality' as more than just 'foreignness' or Western-ness, as Rey Chow's previous quote illustrated. In addition, Ong's assertion that these new developments in 'countries formerly colonized [...] cannot be accommodated by a *universalizing theory of the postcolonial*' (ibid.)<sup>191</sup> comes as perplexing, since if there is one trait that can be attached to postcolonial theories, then it must be its preoccupation with the *particular*, with *situated* histories and encounters. Postcolonial intellectuals such as Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Rey Chow, and others, are very much aware of the fact that 'the postcolonial formation of Indonesia is quite different from that of India, Nicaragua, and Zaire' (Ong, 1999: 34). Paradoxically, Ong brushes postcolonial theory with the same *universalizing* and over-generalized stroke of which she accuses postcolonial intellectuals.

Moreover, I wonder whether Ong's facile dismissal of postcolonial theory does not neglect the *ideological* dimension of coloniality, as it exerts itself in unequal and various degrees in practices of knowledge production in academia. When Rey Chow emphasizes the fact that, during British colonialism, '[t]o study Chinese [in Hong Kong] was never against the law but was simply constructed as a socially inferior phenomenon' (1998: 163), she is referring to the versatility with which the coloniality of power, to use Walter D. Mignolo's phrase, is manifesting itself. Consequently, she acknowledges that

"the intellectual path I had chosen (that of abandoning the option of Chinese after my 'A' levels), like that of most young people in Westernised Asian countries, was still largely in conformity with the opportunities of upward social mobility that were made available and endorsed by the political system at large. (Typically, a university degree in English, History, or other humanities disciplines was the key to a respectable and prestigious job in the government bureaucracy.) To assert anything less *material value-conscious* would be disingenuous." (ibid.)<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>192</sup> My emphasis.

Thus I argue it is through *material value-conscious* choices and practices that the *ideological* dimension of coloniality manifests itself. I do not deny Ong's thesis that such *material value-conscious* choices are used in ways, which subvert the idea that neoliberalism, in all its complex processes, is eminently and all-encompassingly Western. I think Ong's thesis has enormous merit in pointing to the flexible and resourceful manner in which global designs are transformed by local histories, to use Mignolo's conceptualization. Nonetheless, at the same time, to claim that neoliberalism's flexibility and versatility in South-East Asia spells the end for the relevance and the necessity of a postcolonial theorizing writ large, implies a *universalizing* and dismissive move, which Ong herself would disavow perhaps.

Talking about anthropology's preoccupation with the workings and effects of global power and wealth, Ong asserts that such a concern has prompted anthropologists to focus almost exclusively on 'the poor, the downtrodden, the marginalized, and the exploited in the third world' (1999: 30). Such a preoccupation could not be further from the research agenda of international relations, which is concerned, ironically enough, precisely with the workings of global power. Here the coloniality of knowledge acquires an interesting dimension, that of the inter-disciplinary division of labour: international relations is meant to preoccupy itself with the dynamic of inter-state relations, while anthropology will take care of the nativized others, studied at the micro-level of society.

As such, while I understand and sympathize with Ong's injunction to expand disciplinary boundaries into different territories of knowledge, I wonder to what extent such an expansion does not reproduce IR's preoccupation with the privileged. I do recognize that Ong's affirmations are addressed mainly to anthropologists. However, the way in which she formulates her project implies that there is a larger audience intended, an audience that comes from different disciplines. Ong seems to set down prescriptions that in their generalizing sweep have quite serious implications.<sup>193</sup> After all, IR's refusal to conceptualize and engage with the implications of its limited and thoroughly Western-centric criteria for 'relevant' subjects *cum* objects of study, has had quite tremendous bearing on how foreign policy is being performed in different places in the world.

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<sup>193</sup> A similar critique could be brought against my own project, insofar as I employ and advocate for a *postcolonial* perspective on world politics. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, and in this dissertation, critics of postcolonialism have brought a number of objections against the usage of the term 'postcolonial', among which the idea that 'post' can be read as an *after* colonialism, unaware of current neocolonial complicities (see Shohat 1992). However, I adhere to Stuart Hall's formulation of the postcolonial, already elaborated in chapter 4, according to which the concept points to 'both the crisis of the uncompleted struggle for "decolonization" and [to] the crisis of "post-independence" states' (1996: 244). Moreover, I employ this particular understanding of postcolonialism in the specific context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter.

The relevance of the postcolonial, and of ‘colonial difference’, as Mignolo prefers to label it, goes beyond attempts and their relative successes to deconstruct and subvert Western imaginaries from within. Or to phrase it differently, colonial difference suggests more productive strategies of subverting hegemonic structures than the mere oppositional re-readings of the Western canon. In a discussion on the attempts of African and Latin American philosophers who embarked on the task of re-reading European philosophy having colonial difference on their socio-political horizon, Mignolo makes an important distinction between ‘intellectual decolonization’ and ‘border thinking’. The former implies the ‘rereading [of] the key figures of Western philosophy in their blindness to the colonial difference and to the colonality of power’ (2000: 64). The latter, however, implies a more daunting task, that of

“mediat[ing] between philosophical practices within colonial modern histories (e.g., the practice of philosophy *in* Africa, Latin America, North America [...]) and “traditional” forms of thoughts – that is forms of thought coexisting with the institutional definition of philosophy but not considered as such from the institutional perspective that defines philosophy. “Tradition” here doesn’t mean something “before” modernity but rather the persistence of memory.” (ibid.)

Thus chapter 1 traces a sort of genealogy of intellectual decolonization in the Franco-Maghrebian context, an exercise prompted by the violence and the horror of the Algerian war. In this chapter, I argue that the works of intellectual figures such as Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, and Jean-François Lyotard are unproblematically associated with post-structuralism, without accounting for the stamp of colonial difference that indelibly marks them. Derrida and Cixous (and Albert Memmi, as it is seen in later chapters) are products of the colonial experience in Algeria, and claim for themselves a particular ‘native’ status that marks their difference: being Jewish in the Maghreb during and after French colonialism. It is their Jewishness in the Maghrebian setting, at a difficult time (colonialism and after), that allows them to claim a difference from both the West, and from Algeria. Nonetheless, it is Lyotard in his political writings on the Algerian war, who delves into a complex analysis of colonialism in the Maghreb, of the complicities and betrayals of both sides during the Algerian war, and of the prospects of post-independence Algeria.

Derrida’s project, in particular, is one that perhaps evinces best the attempt of intellectual decolonization in the Franco-Maghrebian setting. According to Robert Young, the post-structuralism associated with the names of Derrida, Cixous, and Lyotard, is a project of deconstruction that arises from the impulse of colonial difference (Young, 2001: 411-28). More importantly, Young perceives



deconstruction as a ‘form of cultural and intellectual decolonization’, which ‘expos[es] the double intention separating rational method from its truth’, namely the conflation of a myth with a universal truth (2001: 421). Or to use Mignolo’s words, Young perceives deconstruction as an exercise of decolonization that exposes the *local* histories of global designs. Derrida confesses, in the Epilogue to his *Monolingualism of the Other*, that the ultimate object of his project, namely,

“the deconstruction of phallogocentrism and of ‘the’ Western metaphysics [...] – all of that could *not* proceed from the strange reference to an ‘elsewhere’ [Algeria] of which the place and the language were unknown and prohibited even to myself, as if I were trying to *translate* into the only language and the only French Western culture that I have at my disposal, the culture into which I was thrown at birth, a possibility that is inaccessible to myself...” (1998: 70)

However, as already discussed at length in chapter 1, the desire to deconstruct Western logocentrism seems to translate itself into an almost exclusive preoccupation with logocentrism and with Western philosophy. Language and the West become both the object and the subject of desire. In other words, one can argue that perhaps Derrida’s project of deconstruction is a failed exercise in ‘border thinking’, to use Mignolo’s concept, which ultimately remains an important and highly influential method in intellectual decolonization.

My dissertation constitutes, therefore, an exercise in intellectual decolonization, which I see as crucial in IR. It is an incipient attempt, underdeveloped perhaps, to initiate some sort of border thinking, which goes beyond a re-reading of the Western canon in social sciences and humanities. Such an incipient project makes an effort to consider those narratives in which ‘the persistence of memory’, as Mignolo termed it, is a vivid concern and has the echo of an ethical imperative especially when considered in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter.

Undoubtedly my project has its own silences, violences, and margins. Even as I examine and debate the politics of authenticity as they transpire in literary narratives and photography in chapters 2 and 3, I struggle, at the same time, with my own desire for authenticity (a struggle which is unrelenting even in my everyday life). As such, while I try to uncover the nativist fantasies of several prominent Maghrebians intellectuals, I am trying to delineate and dichotomize between French and “indigenous” knowledge and perspectives, between East and West, but also between reality and fiction. As I stumbled upon a passage from Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large*, I became aware of such latent fantasies. However, becoming aware does not necessarily imply an absolution of the

transgressions, which one undertakes. Such transgressions constitute both the fuel for my projects, and my personal torments. Appadurai insightfully notes that

“even the most localized of these worlds, at least in societies like India, has become inflected – even afflicted – by cosmopolitan scripts that drive the politics of families, the frustrations of labourers, the dreams of local headman. Once again, we need to be careful not to suppose that as we work backward in these imagined lives we will hit some local, cultural bedrock, made up of a closed set of reproductive practices and untouched by rumours of the world at large.” (1996: 63)<sup>194</sup>

Indeed, I believe that Mignolo’s injunction for ‘border thinking’ and Appadurai’s caveat with regards to the dangers of ‘nativistic’ fantasies of authenticity are complementary. They are sobering accounts of a theory of diaspora and migration, which I regard as relevant to international politics. This theory does not assume the existence of pockets of unspoiled knowledge and alternative ways of living. At the same time, it does not shy away from considering alternative voices as posing a significant challenge to the way in which the ‘canon’ understands practices, such as migration and exile, within the larger field of global politics. It is with these thoughts in mind that I now move towards a discussion on the role of literary narratives and strategies in understanding the politics of exile and diaspora that circumscribes the postcolonial Franco-Maghrebian encounter.

### **The Maghreb – ‘the difference that cannot be told’?<sup>195</sup>**

#### *On the ironies of ‘flexible citizenship’*

This second part explores the claim of the Maghreb as the irreducible difference ‘that cannot be told’, a claim that has appeared in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Hélène Cixous, and Walter D. Mignolo. Thus I put forth the argument that, when examined through the prism of postcolonial migration flows, the Maghreb’s irreducible difference is as enabling as it is disabling, as mirrored by the *exilé(e)/immigré(e)* ensemble. I thus employ Aihwa Ong’s understanding of ‘flexible citizenship’ as illustrated by the image of the ‘multiple-passport holder’, and Mireille Rosello’s conceptualization of postcolonial hospitality as reflected by the metaphor of the immigrant as guest.

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<sup>194</sup> For a more elaborate and stronger problematization of the global/local nexus, see John Tomlinson’s “Deterritorialization: the Cultural Condition of Globalization” in *Globalization and Culture* (1999).

<sup>195</sup> This expression belongs to Walter D. Mignolo (2000: 69).

In an analysis of Abdelkebir Khatibi's concept of 'an other thinking', Mignolo attempts to construct the Maghreb not only 'as an epistemic irreducible difference' (something very similar to Lyotard's characterization of Algeria as 'intractable difference', as examined in chapter 1), but also as 'a geohistorical location that is constructed as a crossing instead of a grounding (e.g. the nation)' in so far as the Maghreb 'is a crossing of the global in itself' due to its '[l]ocat[ion] between Orient, Occident, and Africa' (2000: 69). Maghreb's construction as a crossing was explored in chapter 4 through an analysis of the politics of language in the Maghreb, which also illuminated the multiple character of this region (as argued by Alek Toumi and Assia Djebar) due its complex and rich historical legacies. As mentioned already, post-independence Maghrebian states (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) have engaged in aggressive projects of Arabization in an attempt to effect both cultural decolonization and to accomplish their grounding as nation-states.

Paradoxically, post-independence also saw a significant increase of migration flows from the Maghreb to Europe (France, in particular). Such migration processes led to a diasporization understood not only in terms of the displacement of people and their 'entanglement' in transnational networks (see Clifford 1998), but also to a diasporization of postcolonial literary narratives, as argued by Hafid Gafaïti (2005). More importantly, literature on migration has constantly framed such processes by an ethico-moral imperative of hospitality, whereby the receiving society is cast as 'host', and the 'immigrant' as guest.<sup>196</sup> This conceptualization of the immigrant-destination society relationship in terms of hospitality throws into focus the responsibilities and duties of the immigrant as guest, while inadvertently obscuring the ironies of such expected responsibilities and duties. Discussing the perverse relation that binds the (in)hospitable nation to the immigrant as guest, Mireille Rosello highlights the absurdity of how

“[b]eing grateful to the so-called host nation is a baffling proposition if the only contact between the immigrant and that abstract entity is a bureaucratic labyrinth of impersonal and alienating administrative procedure. And the most problematic aspect of the metaphor of state hospitality may be that in times when the official policy advocates 'inhospitality', the individual, whose hospitality was originally the model for state hospitality, is now expected to abide by the state's inhospitable norm.” (2001: 10)

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<sup>196</sup> In the context of French 'hospitality' towards migrants, see Julia Kristeva, *Nations Without Nationalism* (1993); Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *De l'hospitalité* (1997); Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Hospitalité Française* (1998); Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001); Étienne Balibar (ed.), *Sans-papiers: L'archaïsme fatal* (2007).

I believe that conceptualizations, such as Rosello's, of contemporary processes of migration between the Maghreb and Europe make an important statement with regards to perceiving the Maghreb as 'the difference that cannot be told' *pace* Mignolo, or as the name of an 'intractable difference' *pace* Lyotard. These current processes of 'postcolonial hospitality' make it possible to tell this difference, but not in a socially scientific way that distinguishes between the knowing subject and the known object. Rather the difference is told in a manner that articulates the transnational negotiations, understood as *transgressive* and *translational*, between migrants and their 'host' societies, among migrants themselves, and between migrants and the societies they left behind. As the categories of *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)* illustrated in chapters 4 and 5, in the Franco-Maghrebian context, different regimes of 'hospitality' operate and discriminate along class, race, and gender lines.

As Rey Chow perceptively notes, naming 'difference' is usually meant as an intent 'for the marginalized to have some access to the center' (1993: 107). Categories of class, gender, and race are usually conjured as 'a preestablished method of examining "cultural diversity", whereby "difference" becomes a sheer matter of adding new names in an ever-expanding pluralistic horizon' (108). Therefore, my contention with considering the Maghreb as a 'difference that cannot be told' is that such an assertion, while meritorious in its intent to eschew sameness and empty generalizations, serves to crystallize the Maghreb as the unknowable *entity*, as the ultimate *difference* to an all too known and knowable West. Moreover, as Chow's quote illustrates, naming 'difference' inadvertently tends to assume an almost automatic nod to diversity. It does not pay due attention to the ways in which working with important categories such as class, gender, and race, should go beyond naming differences we cannot tell, but to whom we owe our (equalizing liberal) allegiance. Rather such categories should be used strategically in order to illuminate one another. They should expose the discrepancies in power, mobility, and privilege not only between unproblematic categories such as the 'first' and 'third' worlds, but within various societies themselves, and in my case, within various diasporas.

Therefore, in the context of the formation of various diaporic identities, 'difference' is an important, even crucial element, in understanding the unequal articulations of power, mobility and flexibility. It should not become yet another variable, however, to which we must pay an unreflexive homage. Aihwa Ong notes that 'under conditions of transnationality', certain values such as flexibility, migration, and relocation seem to be positively inflected as opposed to stability and fixity (1999: 19). Thus what she identifies as 'flexible citizenship' as a strategy to manipulate the mobile and trans-territorial operations of neoliberal capitalism, can be understood as being 'shaped within mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape' (*ibid.*). I find such a conceptualization

compelling. As the discussion on migration in chapters 4 and 5 showed, however, ‘flexibility’ and ‘citizenship’ both in their separateness and in their association, could not be further from the lived experience of the *immigré(e)*. More to the point, in the context of migration and diasporic processes that structure the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, *who* can boast access to *flexible citizenship*?

Ong is preoccupied by the ways in which practices of citizenship are shaped by current dynamics of ‘global markets’ and by contemporary migration flows. I find her concern extremely valuable and pertinent in an age in which migration flows are caught up in complex processes of identity formations and negotiations, of citizenship practices, and economic policies. Ong advances the argument that

“[a]lthough citizenship is conventionally thought of as based on political rights and participation within a sovereign state, globalization has made economic calculation a major element in diasporan subjects’ choice of citizenship, as well as in the ways nation-states redefine immigration laws.” (1999: 112)

Economic calculation is undoubtedly an important factor in diasporic practices of citizenship. I do wonder to what extent this almost exclusive emphasis on the economic, however, does not obscure the ways in which ‘diasporan subjects’ choice of citizenship’ is a practice that needs to be qualified in terms that exceed the economic, and that pertain to categories of culture, ethnicity, and race, fragile as they might be. First, to speak of the *immigrés*’ choice of citizenship, in the Franco-Maghrebian context, would be to conceal the realities shaping the North African migrant’s situation both in their host country and in France. As a migrant, expected to be grateful to the ‘host’ French society, one is kept in a state of marginalization and ghettoization by a complex set of legal and administrative procedures that regulate her or his existence as ‘guest.’ The *immigré(e)* either has no access to citizenship or even if her or his access to citizenship is granted, her entitlements to Frenchness will be very different in practice from those of the average *français de souche*.<sup>197</sup> As the analysis of Tahar Ben Jelloun’s novel *Les Raisins de la Galère* illustrated, the practice of French citizenship for the immigrant family of North African origin is mapped out very differently in the racialized geography of the *banlieue*.

One of the problems I identify with Ong’s conceptualization of citizenship is the implicit assumption that ‘citizenship’ is a practice to which everyone has access in more or less equal degrees, or that the *choice* of (diasporic) citizenship is available to everyone. Thus she states that

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<sup>197</sup> *Français(e) de souche* is an expression in French that denotes the ‘native-born French’ or the ‘real’ French person.

“‘flexible citizenship’ also denotes the localizing strategies of subjects who, through a variety of familial and economic practices, seek to evade, deflect, and take advantage of political and economic conditions in different parts of the world.” (1999: 113)

It is important to note here the distinction between Ong’s understanding of *flexible citizenship* as the strategy available to certain privileged categories from South-East Asia (1999), and her highly sophisticated conceptualization of *neoliberal exceptions* (or *graduated citizenship*) (2006). The former refers to the category of Asian professionals who shuffle between Asia and North America, and are

“those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrat[ing] flexibility and mobility, which give rise to such figures as the multiple-passport holder; the multicultural manager with ‘flexible capital’; the ‘astronaut’ shuttling across borders on business; ‘parachute kids’ who can be dropped off in another country by parents on the trans-Pacific business commute; and so on.” (1999: 19)

The latter makes compelling and insightful distinctions between the *neoliberal exception*, which ‘gives value to calculative practices and to self-governing subjects as preferred citizens’; and the *neoliberal exception*, which marginalizes ‘other segments of population’ and renders them ‘excludable as citizens and subjects’ (2006: 16). In the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, my distinction between *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)* would follow Ong’s most recent differentiation of citizenship practices. However, the distinction with which I operate here is not framed by a conceptualization of the global dynamics of neoliberalism. Rather I am interested in those mutations in citizenship effected by the intersection between colonial legacies and memory, and postcolonial flows of migration. As discussed earlier, Ong’s dismissal of the relevance for postcolonial theorizing does not account for mutations in citizenship brought about by such complex intersections. I thus elaborate on the need to investigate differentiated citizenship (Ong’s expression) bearing in mind the colonial difference performed by the Franco-Maghrebian encounter.

The above mentioned desire and fantasy ‘to evade, deflect, and take advantage of political and economic conditions in different parts of the world’ lies on the horizon of diasporic relocation of both the *exilé(e)* and the *immigré(e)*. But only the former is able to actualize this desire, whereas for the latter it always remains at the level of failed fantasy. The distinction is not only important, it is crucial in conceptualizing diasporic practices of citizenship. For the *exilé(e)*, whose attachment and sense of belonging can unproblematically be allocated to

different shores of the Mediterranean, as Tahar Ben Jelloun notes, ‘flexible citizenship’ is a lived reality, a practice to which she has access at any time. In the case of the *immigré(e)*, however, the inhospitable conditions of the ‘homeland’ drive her or him to the other shore. Here the migrant as *immigré(e)* is met with a different kind of inhospitality, characterized by an economic and political disenfranchisement not so dissimilar from the one experienced ‘back home’ but marked by *colonial difference* in the ‘host’ society. As such, ‘flexible citizenship’ for the *immigré(e)* translates into the bitter irony of not being able to enjoy the privileges of citizenship in either country.

The different *translations* in terms of lived realities of ‘flexible citizenship’ in the Franco-Maghrebian context of migration flows lie at the core of the previous chapter. Such an important distinction between *translations* allows for a more complex understanding of the *transnational* and *translocal* practices of diasporic subjectivity. Aihwa Ong’s prescription according to which anthropology has been overly concerned with the disenfranchised, the marginalized, and the subaltern, translates into an understanding of ‘flexible citizenship’ that privileges a specific category of diasporan subjects whose access to various citizenships is never a luxury or a fantasy, but an option that can always be satisfied. Ong’s emphasis produces an alternative and complementary vision of the effects of ‘global markets.’ I suppose the purpose of studying diasporic subjectivities, in all their varied manifestations, is not necessarily to privilege one vision over another. Or more to the point, it is to assume that by focusing on a particular category of diasporan subjects, one has a more accurate view of the workings of translocal citizenship practices. I think it is through the study of the *relation* between and among different categories of diasporan subjects, who are (dis)empowered and enabled/disabled differently by claims to and practices of citizenship, that an alternative international relations of migration might be able to emerge.<sup>198</sup>

However, Ong makes a valuable critique of diaspora studies and of its preoccupation with the ‘subjective experiences of displacement, victimhood, cultural hybridity, and cultural struggles’, which are implied to be instances of resistance to and transgression against an adverse global economic system (1999: 12-13). The author notes that there is a certain ‘unified moralism attached to subaltern subjects [that] now also clings to diasporan ones, who are invariably assumed to be members of oppressed classes and therefore constitutionally opposed to capitalism and state power’ (1999: 13). Such remarks echo Rey Chow and Asha Varadharajan’s concerns with the sanctification of the ‘native’ and with the portrayal of the ‘subaltern’ as ‘an idealized image of themselves [the academics prone to sanctifying the ‘subaltern’],’ while ‘refus[ing] to hear the dissonance between the content and manner of their speech and their own

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<sup>198</sup> Again, I think that such a relation emerges most acutely and is more fruitfully explored in her *Neoliberalism as Exception*.

complicity with violence' (Chow, 1993: 14). The analysis undertaken in chapter 1 on the ethics of studying the subaltern illustrates these very preoccupations.

However, there should be a distinction between delineating the politics of studying the subaltern and the implied irrelevance of postcolonial or subaltern studies to understanding diasporic subjectivities, and their complicities with the workings of capitalism and state power. I do not think Ong intends a complete dismissal of the relevance of the subaltern in grasping diasporic processes. But her conceptualization of 'flexible citizenship' leaves me wondering about how such a practice of an (implicitly) autonomous and agency wielding individual or collective relates to alternative practices that speak of limited choices and impaired agency. Agency is practiced, within the arena of diasporic processes, in very different and asymmetrical ways by various individuals and categories. I sympathize with Ong's concern to introduce not only a different focus on subjectivity in diaspora studies, but also a different conceptualization of subjectivity as shaped by contemporary processes of global capitalism and state power. Nonetheless, I believe that her focus in *Flexible Citizenship* becomes an exclusive focus, one that does not and cannot accommodate *mixed* practices of diasporic subjectivity.

*Coloniality as a state of exception? Literature, colonial legacies, and memory in the Franco-Maghrebian context*

As seen from the study of the Franco-Maghrebian context of migration flows analysed in the previous chapter, 'flexible citizenship' translates into very different lived experiences of various diasporan subjects. Moreover, Ong seems concerned with how an 'exclusive focus on texts, narratives, and subjectivities' masks the larger structural (whether material or symbolical) dynamics that shape such 'victimhood and ferment' (1999: 13). This might be the case with anthropological articulations of global capitalism and imperialism. Such exclusively focused articulations are conspicuously absent (or perhaps even nonexistent), however, from IR's engagements with diasporic and migration processes.<sup>199</sup> It is a discipline, whose understanding of complex transnational, translocal and international processes is obstinately limited to the interactions of nation-states understood as rational and unitary actors caught up in a game of

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<sup>199</sup> *Grosso modo* perceived, the main engagements with migration in IR revolve around securitization, whether concerned with the securitization of the border through a development of surveillance strategies and technologies [see William Walters, "Mapping Schengenland: Denaturalizing the Border" (2002); Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration" (2000)]; or concerned more generally with the securitization of migrants [David Campbell, *Writing Security* (1998); Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization" (1995); Ayse Ceyhan and Anastassia Tsoukala, "The Securitization of Migration in Western Societies: Ambivalent Discourses and Practices" (2002); Roxanne Doty, *Anti-Immigrantism in Western Democracies* (2003); Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency* (2006)].



survival and domination. Thus to IR, the notion of ‘texts, narratives, and subjectivities’ as important tools for producing an alternative understanding of such processes seems irrelevant and inconsequential.

Consequently, the purpose of chapter 5 was also to introduce the reader to the possibility that literary narratives can not only put forth a different perspective on migrant and diasporic experiences, but also they can acquire important valences when read and interpreted through the prism of the critical labour of (colonial) memory, to use Balibar’s expression. This argument becomes acutely pertinent in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. Hafid Gafaïti argues that in a country such as Algeria, ‘the novelists are the real sociologists and historians’ (2005: 15), insofar as the novel written by North African writers of French expression has become a cultural manifestation of the necessary task of memory.<sup>200</sup> However, Gafaïti is careful to point here to the *sociological* and *historical* role of the Algerian novel, which has come to mirror ‘the weight of current events’ (2005: 23).

As Mireille Rosello’s study on the performative encounters between France and the Maghreb illustrates, the absence and repression of the work of colonial memory from public debates translated into a proliferation of literary texts that explore the practice of ‘hauntology.’ Through such a practice “[n]ot only do the living come to talk to the dead (to their dead), but they also meet other people, individuals that history forbids them to befriend” (2005: 129). These forbidden (post)colonial encounters address the politics of obsessive fear and nagging memory, which I examined, in chapter 3, in the context of the feminine spectral presences of some of Assia Djebar’s literary productions (*L’Amour, la fantasia* and *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*), and Leïla Sebbar’s collaboration to the *Femmes d’Afrique du Nord. Cartes Postales (1885-1930)*. Thus in the name of a ‘historicized memory’ (Pierre Nora’s phrase), Djebar (and other Franco-Maghrebian writers) attempt to reflect on their own history, both as individuals and as collectives. As such, one could make the case that Franco-Maghrebian authors are writing a history of silences and about silences (‘stories about the *absence* of stories,’ cf. Rosello, 2005: 111).

The politics of memory and forgetting between France and the Maghreb tend to come into focus regularly, whether through political, economic, or cultural encounters. Articles featured by *Le Monde* and BBC News, in December 2007, give accounts of Nicolas Sarkozy’s visit to Algeria in a climate of political tension. Public opinion in Algeria requested that he apologize, on behalf of the French state, for the practice of torture and for the atrocities committed by the French Army in Algeria during the Algerian war of independence.<sup>201</sup> Sarkozy’s

<sup>200</sup> My translation. All quotations from French sources are my personal translations.

<sup>201</sup> See “En Algérie, Nicolas Sarkozy dénonce le colonialisme français” in *Le Monde*, December 3, 2007 (<http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3212,36-985462@51->

message stated that if France and Algeria are to move together toward a better future, then one must look at the past straight in the face (*regarder le passé en face*), and hence 'the terrible crimes' that were committed during the war have made victims on both sides of the confrontation. Interestingly enough, such a speech was given during a meeting between the French President and a number of Algerian business leaders. According to the BBC News' article, Sarkozy's visit in Algeria hopes to the increase 'economic ties between the two countries, expressing the hope of signing contracts worth 5bn euros. The contracts include billion dollar investments in the Algerian oil and gas business by the French energy companies Total and Gaz de France.' Also, according to the same article, France is already the biggest investor in Algeria outside the energy sector.

As the articles featured by *Le Monde* and BBC News were eager to indicate, both France and Algeria have strong economic interests in maintaining their relationship on positive terms. As such, Sarkozy's message performs a double duty: that of moral equalization between the French and Algerian parties during the Algerian war of independence, and thus conveniently neutralizing the colonial difference that had separated the two; and that of token denunciation of colonialism to appease political tensions so that business can go on as usual. This more than symbolic form of condemnation was uttered so as to legitimize further the unambiguous status of the French Republic as the land of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, in which the period of colonialism figures as the state of exception, a moment of temporary madness in the magnificent and generous history of France.<sup>202</sup>

Thus, the state of exception is left to the study of historians. Given that the past was now straightforwardly gazed at, both France and Algeria need to move beyond the colonial legacy of the past. As already discussed in chapter 5, such a message sits very comfortably with the overwhelming opinion within French society according to which colonialism is something located in the past, which has been consummated and terminated, and which bears little relevance for the present. It is not surprising then that, in France, colonialism is the study object of history primarily. Inroads are being made recently by other disciplines, however, such as literature for example. At the same time, it should be noted that such inroads are very timid and even marginal, and that colonialism is thus considered to be the terrain of historians.

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[981390.0.html](#); accessed on December 3, 2007); and Aidan Lewis, "France-Algeria ties still strong" in BBC News, 3 December 2007 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7121412.stm>; accessed on 3 December 2007).

<sup>202</sup> The BBC News article quotes Sarkozy: "Yes, the colonial system was profoundly unjust, contrary to the three founding words of our Republic: freedom, equality, brotherhood," he said. "But it's also fair to say that inside the system, there were many men and women who liked Algeria, before having to leave it."

Aiwha Ong unambiguously stated that since leaders of many formerly colonized states estimate they have successfully negotiated decolonization, and since economic interests are prompting such states on the path of capitalism, academics need to move beyond (post)colonial frameworks (1999: 35). But in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, I find such a proposition to fit neatly within the already ongoing “official” discourses in both France and Algeria. To move beyond the (post)colonial framework in the Franco-Algerian context suggests a disturbing moral equalization between both colonizers and colonized, and thus effectively neutralizes any politicization of memory and colonial legacies. Such a convenient and expedient dealing with the ‘past’ obscures the ways in which coloniality might be continuing in other forms, such as those of economic interests and cultural-ideational ones, which bind in complicity elite French and Algerian interests.

Therefore, the continuation of coloniality needs to be understood beyond facile notions of territorial occupation. For instance, Rey Chow opposes the idea that Orientalism does not apply to East Asia since China was never fully territorially colonized (an argument advanced by Ong in *Flexible Citizenship*, on page 36), by stating that

“[t]his kind of positivistic thinking, derived from a literal understanding of the significance of geographical captivity, is not only an instance of the ongoing anthropological tendency to deemphasize the ‘colonial situation’ [...]; it also leaves intact the most important aspect of Orientalism – its legacy as everyday culture and value.” (1993: 7)

Such a colonial ‘legacy as everyday culture and value’ brings into focus the naturalized assumptions and constructions with which we operate unreflexively. Moreover, an easy dismissal of the relevance of colonial difference ignores the fact that to discuss the continuing legacies of colonialism does not imply a static understanding of coloniality as a process of material and ideational domination that lasted for a limited period of time. Coloniality is a process whose manifestations alter and metamorphose with time and with the emergence of various socio-political and economic conditions. For example, blatantly racist stereotypes during colonialism transmute into more subtle ones, which bear similar connotations, but are inflected differently. In the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, the works of Mireille Rosello (1998), Pascal Blanchard (2003) and Nicolas Bancel (1998) attest precisely to this process of transmutation of racial stereotypes in French media, cinema, aesthetic productions, popular culture, and literary texts, which have endured from before the colonial period, have suffered alterations during colonialism, and are continuing in the everyday contemporary culture under various guises.

Such stereotypes do not endure unchallenged and unsubverted. As seen from the analyses undertaken in chapters 2 to 5, both photography and literary narratives operate with a subversion of stereotypes. Whether such attempts are successful or not, it is another matter, which substantiates the politics of authenticity, representation, and cultural decolonization, as they emerge from an examination of the function of stereotypes in the everyday. As Rosello indicated, contemporary Franco-Maghrebian literary narratives and aesthetic productions (in cinema and theatre) seek to subvert not only those stereotypes aimed at representations of the *Maghrébins* as a racialized category. They also aim those aspects of the French imaginary, such as the concept of French identity perceived as homogeneous and unchallenged. In this sense, Rosello claims, in *Postcolonial Hospitality*, that '[f]iction can introduce the possibility of dissident narratives and invite us to conceptualize oppositional practices of [postcolonial] hospitality' (2001: 174).

The important point to remember about literary strategies is that, while aiming to subvert stereotypes and to offer emancipatory alternatives, they are themselves caught up, inevitably, within those politics they seek to expose and challenge. Hafid Gafaïti discusses the emergence of a diasporisation of the Maghrebian intelligentsia, which has involved the exile of many Maghrebian intellectuals to France (and Europe more generally). Such an exile inevitably 'starts by a series of betrayals: betrayal of brotherhood, betrayal of collective memory, and of the given word' (2005: 240). The very possibility of betrayal arises in a postcolonial context, in which the diasporic intellectual, or the *exilé(e)*, becomes the subject of a paradox. She leaves the country for whose independence she has advocated, due to a climate of political hostility and repression, and seeks 'hospitality' in the country that had been identified as the oppressor for so long. Perhaps James Clifford encapsulates best the relation between (post)coloniality, legacies of the past, and contemporary diasporic processes, when he states that

"[t]he term 'postcolonial' (like Arjun Appadurai's 'postnational') makes sense only in an emergent, or utopian, context. There are no postcolonial cultures or places: only moments, tactics, discourses. '*Post-*' is always shadowed by '*neo-*.' Yet 'postcolonial' does describe *real, if incomplete, ruptures* with past structures of domination, sites of *current struggle* and *imagined futures*.'" (1997: 277)<sup>203</sup>

Thus the postcolonial, seen in its complexity, encompasses both continuities and ruptures, ongoing struggles, and open possibilities. But Gafaïti's terminology, that of 'diasporisation', even as he refers to experiences of exile,

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<sup>203</sup> My emphases.

brings into focus an interesting and important position.<sup>204</sup> In the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, the experience of exile of the Maghrebian intelligentsia has acquired diasporic valences via literary strategies. In other words, it is the use of literary narratives and strategies that has constructed a Franco-Maghrebian diasporic experience. The narratives of authors such as Leïla Sebbar, Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Albert Memmi, and so many others, mirror paradoxical diasporic experiences of ‘separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place’ (Clifford, 1997: 255). Moreover, such texts acquire the function of enacting memory, performing the present, and mediating the future.

As the analyses in chapters 2 to 5 show, the romanticized figure of the ‘subaltern’ or of the ‘native’, evoking lost moments of authenticity, and that of the *immigré(e)*, as defiled ‘native’, mediate the encounter between literary strategies, colonial legacies, and contemporary processes of migration and diasporization. The figure of *immigré(e)* negotiates, therefore, the ambiguities of the position of the *exilé(e)*. Her defilement reflects the disconnect between a desire for authenticity, whether as an imagined future or as clearly reconciled past (as reflected in the idealized figure of the ‘native’/subaltern), and a confrontation with the lived realities of the everyday - as mirrored by the less than romantic figure of the *immigré(e)*. However, it is precisely the (treacherous?) relationship between the *exilé(e)* and the defiled figure of the *immigré(e)* that *translates* the predicaments of various diasporic experiences and of the asymmetrical and unequal claims to citizenship and political subjectivity.

Hafid Gafaïti discusses the *transnational* dimension of the literary narratives written in French by Maghrebian diasporic intellectuals, which are integrated into what he calls ‘hybrid cultures’ (2005: 51-52). Such a statement implies the sort of transnationality that enjoys the privileges of ‘flexible citizenship’ and of hybridity, understood as ‘an exhilarating and liberating condition’ (Marie-Paule Ha 1995). As James Clifford remarks, ‘[d]iasporist discourses reflect the sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland not as something simply left behind but as a place of attachment in contrapuntal modernity’ (1997: 256). Clifford borrows the idea of contrapuntally lived experience from Said’s meditation on exile and displacement, through which ‘being from’ and ‘being at’ are experienced simultaneously and in tension.<sup>205</sup> This notion of contrapuntally lived diasporic experience is very helpful

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<sup>204</sup> James Clifford makes the distinction between diaspora, understood as *communities* linked together in transnational networks ‘living here and remembering/desiring another place’ (1997: 255), and exile, taken from Said’s conceptualization of exile, as an individual experience of displacement (1997: 365, note 9; see also Said 2002).

<sup>205</sup> See Edward Said’s “Reflections on Exile” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2002).

in allowing us to understand and explore the ambiguities, within which the diasporan subject's sense of belonging and political entitlement are suffused. As Gafaïti indicates, exile and diasporization for the Maghrebian intellectual has implied both betrayal and a loss of self. However, it also involves a recovering of (another) self and of speech (*recouvrement de la parole, d'une parole autre sur soi*) (2005: 240-41). This recapture of self within the exilic experience implies also a repositioning of the self with what Gafaïti calls 'this other self' (*cet autre soi*), the West (2005: 240).<sup>206</sup>

From the perspective of the *immigré(e)*, is there a repositioning of self or recovering of self? How is such an experience of displacement and relocation to be lived? The figure of the *exilé(e)* reflects the characteristics associated with Aihwa Ong's 'multiple-passport holder' who 'embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets' (1999: 2). But the experience of the *immigré(e)* teaches us that being a 'multiple-passport holder' is not a unified experience that encompasses all migrants or diasporan subjects. The *immigré* is confronted, on a daily basis, with the dreary and humiliating experience of postcolonial (in)hospitality, whereby the immigrant is the uninvited and unwelcome guest who must show his gratitude towards the society that both fears and needs him.<sup>207</sup> Since Memmi makes the argument, as discussed in chapter 4, that the Maghrebian migrant is a constant reminder of the embarrassing colonial legacy (2004: 97-101), the latter's repositioning vis-à-vis the West continues to be framed by a colonial imaginary with its deeply racialized vision.

Moreover, the *immigré(e)* is thrown into a contrapuntally lived experience, which she or he finds both confusing and threatening. This 'cultural limbo' (Marie-Paule Ha 1995) acquires a more painful and sharper edge as it is negotiated between the older and the younger generations, who identify themselves as *beurs*.<sup>208</sup> Thus, reading and interpreting literary narratives such as those of Leïla Sebbar and Tahar Ben Jelloun, allowed me to explore and to expose these particular tensions between generations, among migrants themselves. It also permitted me to look at the migrant family and at the manner in which postcolonial 'hospitality' continues to carry a hefty currency even for the so-

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<sup>206</sup> A similar argument formulated as a prescription (that of the necessity to reposition oneself vis-à-vis the West) for the purpose of transcending the violence of colonial legacies appears in Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé* (1985: 157), and in Alek Toumi's *Le Maghreb Divers* (2002: 113).

<sup>207</sup> The experience of immigration from the Maghreb to France (or to Western Europe more generally) has been largely a male experience, insofar as, within the patriarchal structures of Maghrebian societies, it is the man who is supposed to provide for his family. For further clarification on this issue, see the discussion in chapter 4.

<sup>208</sup> For an understanding of the term, see note 55, chapter 3.

called ‘second-generation migrants’, who are actually born and raised on French soil.

Consequently, Ong’s understanding of flexible citizenship, and Mireille Rosello’s conceptualization of postcolonial hospitality speak about the quandaries of understanding the complex articulations between ‘local histories’ and ‘global designs’ within the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. More to the point, processes of migration re-frame this postcolonial encounter through resurrections of historical memories (legacies of colonialism of which the *immigré(e)* acts as a constant reminder), and the creation of postcolonial moments always overshadowed by ‘neo-colonial’ ones (as argued by James Clifford, and as experienced by the impossible claim of the *immigré(e)* to ‘flexible citizenship’). Also such a re-framing takes place through claims of new imperialisms (Arabization projects in post-independence states, and neoliberal interests that bind together French and Maghrebian elite interests). This idea of the uneasy and fragile negotiation between ‘local histories’ and ‘global designs’ as experienced within the contested space of diaspora, takes me to the final section of this chapter, in which I explore the tensions present in *writing* and understanding diasporic identities from the perspective of colonial difference.

### **On the lures of diaspora and transnationalism**

According to the arguments advanced in chapter 3, regarding ‘nativist’ representations in literature and photography in the Maghreb, I make the case that practices of sanctifying and/or exoticizing the ‘native’ speak about a desire to take possession of an authentic experience long lost in a globalized and (post)modernized world, and tend to claim authenticity through the purified image of the ‘native.’ The categories of *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)* allow us, therefore, to understand who the knowing subject of such a desire is, and who constitutes its *failed* known object. As the examination of photographic and literary encounters with the ‘native’ hoped to illustrate, the figure of the ‘native’, captured in its dissoluteness (Alloula, Sebbar, Memmi) or in its sanctity (Djebar, Ben Jelloun) is both related to and removed from that of the *immigré(e)*. But images of dissoluteness co-exist with those of sanctity in a troubled interaction, whereby one stereotypical image is opposed with another one, equally stereotypical.

There are ambivalent articulations of the ‘native’ and of the *immigré(e)*, and of their relation, which inadvertently emerge from such literary and photographic productions. The figure of the *immigré(e)* is thus supposed to be different from that of the ‘native’ in so far as the former belongs to a different time and to a different space (postcolonial France). That being said, she is inextricably related to the image of the ‘native’ because the imaginary, within which her identity is crystallized, in postcolonial France, is still largely inflected by a colonial frame. This situation has prompted authors such as Tahar Ben

Jelloun, Mireille Rosello and Albert Memmi to suggest that the imagination of a great part of French society as regards its interactions with Maghrebian migrants has still not been decolonized.

Albert Memmi's *Portrait du décolonisé* embodies perhaps this disconnect and tension between a desire to move beyond colonial legacies, as prescribed by Ong, and the impossibility to do so. Memmi's essay is divided in two parts, one focusing on the postcolonial citizen and on the situation of post-independence states, and the other on the figure of the Maghrebian migrant. The first part of the essay witnesses a casting away of the thesis advanced in his *Portrait du colonisé*, which had made Memmi famous in the intellectual world in 1957. Consequently, the first part advances the argument that post-independence states' plight of poverty and underdevelopment is not due to the legacies of colonialism, whose continuity in current processes he denies. Rather such a sordid state of affairs needs to be linked to 'local' conditions of corruption and to a self-defeating attitude that he identifies as *dolorisme* (perhaps best translated by 'self-pity') (2004: 35). This attitude of the formerly colonized suggests an attribution of responsibility to an external agent, the (ex)colonizer, who is now seen as culpable of all the evils plaguing the post-independence state. Thus Memmi builds an argument not only against the notion of 'neo-colonialism', but also he makes the claim that colonisation was not entirely negative, because it had some benefits for the colonized societies (2000: 37)!

When such a fierce and uncompromising argument against the very existence of neo-colonialism is built within the first part of the essay, the reader harbours little hope that the treatment of the Maghrebian migrant will fare any differently. However, with the second part, the tone changes considerably and even surprisingly. If for the postcolonial citizen of post-independence Maghrebian states he sees no reason to muse on legacies of colonialism, there seems to be a strong suggestion in Memmi's text that such a continuity of legacy is not outlandish in the case of the Maghrebian migrant. The author discusses how the young Maghrebian migrants resemble 'zombies', and how they come from a different planet, that of the *banlieue* (suburban ghetto) (2004: 137-40). Thus, he is aware of not only the marginalization of Maghrebian migrants within French society, but also of the possibility that the colonial imaginary continues to operate in this specific context. Memmi thus remarks that "[t]he son of the Maghrebian migrant has still to digest the memory of the colonial domination and that of the exploitation of labour that ensued within the former metropolis" (2004: 136). Such a statement traces, perhaps unintentionally, a sense of continuity (one also marked by ruptures and alterations) between the past whose relevance he dismisses in the first part of his essay, and the present economic exploitation of migrant labour.



James Clifford remarked that there are no guarantees of ‘postcolonial’ solidarity within diaspora (1997: 261). The categories of *exilé(e)* and *immigré(e)* serve to evoke a fragile and troubled relationship between the two, but also between such categories and practices of (post)colonial memory and forgetting. Rather the claimed or perceived solidarity (between the writer and the objects of his fantasy for authenticity, between the *exilés* and the *immigrés*) masks the politics of the privileged diasporic subject whose nostalgic memory is meant to stand in for the ‘native’s’ subjectivity. Chapter 3 illustrated the manner in which such a troubled relationship is mediated by an array of literary and photographic strategies, which are complicit in crystallizing a set of nativist representations with aspirations to authenticity: miserabilist portrayals, whereby the ‘native’ and/or the *immigré* are confined to a condition of abjection and dissoluteness (Memmi’s engagements in *En Tunisie*, and in his essay *Portrait du décolonisé*; Ben Jelloun in *Partir*); exoticized and glamorized exposés whereby the feminine ‘native’ and/or *immigrée* exude nothing but orientalized sensuality, ranging from silent compliance to uninhibited liberation (both stereotyped understandings of presence or lack of agency) (Sebbar’s photographic and literary productions); quasi-sanctified feminine presences whose victimhood seems almost unsurpassable (Djebar in *L’Amour, la fantasia* and *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*); and idealized and mythical accounts of tribal lifestyles (Ben Jelloun in *Haut Atlas: l’exil de pierres*).

One of the lures of imagining and writing diaspora is thus this fantasy of authenticity that almost inescapably hovers over the *exilé(e)*’s acts of imagining the ‘homeland’ and the ‘native.’ As Sontag has aptly remarked, this act of supplementing the image by enlisting a socially concerned writer to spell out the truth of the photos stems from a moralistic fantasy, which desires to make the photo perform something that it can never do, namely speak (Sontag, 2001: 105-6). Caught between sanctification and exoticization, commodification and defilement, the ‘native as image’ enriches with its surplus value the subjectivity of those voices who yearn for authentic experiences and lost origins.

Moreover, a sense of moralism seems to surround the diasporan subject herself, whether understood here as *exilé(e)* or *immigré(e)*, and attach to her persona the function of subversion and the potential of liberation, in so far as she is supposed to disturb the homogeneous national imaginary and to pose a challenge to uncontested practices of identity and belonging (see Ong, 1999: 14-15). The analyses provided throughout the chapters provide, I hope, a more ambivalent picture of the diasporan subject, and of both the violence and subversive potential that accompany practices of diasporic subjectivity. Furthermore, I thought it was important to underline how a certain privileged diasporic subjectivity, that of the *exilé(e)*, tends to assume the authority of voice

and perspective to speak for and correct the wrongs done against oppressed subjectivities (whether diasporic or ‘indigenous’).

I do not deny that there is emancipatory potential in the strategies employed by the texts and images analyzed throughout this dissertation. I hope to have provided a more nuanced engagement with such texts and images that acknowledged their merits even as it signalled their dangers. Ong is right in her observation according to which there is an unproblematized assumption that

“transnational mobility and its associated processes have great liberatory potential (perhaps replacing international class struggle in orthodox Marxist thinking) for undermining all kinds of oppressive structures in the world. In a sense, the diasporan subject is now vested with the agency formerly sought in the working class and more recently in the subaltern subject.” (1999: 15)

Such an unproblematized assumption does not account for the ways in which diasporic agency is asymmetrically practiced, and how some diasporan subjects find themselves in much more advantageous positions than others from which to exercise influence. From the perspective of colonial difference, and in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, such an assumption obscures the ways in which colonial legacies hover over diasporan subjects in highly unequal ways: the position of the *immigré(e)* is a metamorphosis of that of the *indigène* [native], which characterized most North Africans during colonialism, a position which discriminates according to particular social, economic and political signifiers. This metamorphosed identification implies someone who is uneducated, mostly illiterate, on the margins of both the Maghrebian and of French societies, such as poor immigrants from the ghettoized suburbs of French cities, and immigrant workers from the rural and urban areas of North Africa.

Writing and understanding diasporic practices is thus riddled with an inescapable ambivalence stemming from the imperative of going beyond colonial nostalgia (which tends to sanctify the ‘native’), and from the necessity of ‘acting out [colonial] memory’ (as argued by Janice Gross 2005) as a means to heal the wounds of the past, exorcize repressed memories of colonial violence, and testify to ongoing oppressive structures. Thus the practice of imagining the ‘native’, whether understood as the ‘sanctified native’ captured in literature and photography or perceived as the postcolonial *immigré(e)*, exposes the fragile and yet productive articulations between ‘local’ and ‘global’, between past and present, between memory and history.

### Conclusion

In an essay entitled “Diasporas”, James Clifford remarks that ‘contemporary diasporic practices cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation-state or of global capitalism. While defined and constrained by these structures, they also exceed and criticize them: old and new diasporas offer resources for emergent ‘postcolonialisms’ (1997: 244). The analyses of Roxanne Doty and Aihwa Ong’s interpretations of migration flows and diasporic practices, undertaken in this chapter and in the previous one, illustrate what is at stake in imagining diaspora and migration flows as rigidly circumscribed by the dynamics of nation-states (Doty) and global capitalism (Ong). More importantly, the critique of both these theories aimed to expose the significant impact that overlooking or dismissing colonial difference had on the understanding of these transnational practices. In the Franco-Maghrebian context of migration and diasporization, the notion of colonial difference not only inscribes the parameters of a socio-political legacy which has carried a tremendous bearing on how Frenchness or Algerian-ness (for example) have been performed as national identities. Even more, the idea of colonial difference becomes a painfully lived reality with the ongoing processes of migration between the Maghreb and France.

The *immigré(e)* embodies, in a sense, both the awkward and painful legacy of colonial occupation (in the figure of the ‘native’/*indigène*), and the contemporary experience of exploited labour and socio-political marginalization. Living thus on the periphery of the ‘host’ society, the *immigré(e)*’s claim to ‘flexible citizenship’ in an age of transnational mobility acquires the bitter irony of not being able to meaningfully claim belonging to either side of the Mediterranean. The *exilé(e)*, as defined and conceptualized in this dissertation, becomes both the mediator of and the pole of privilege and difference to the *immigré(e)*’s experience. This project has suggested that the *exilé(e)* can also claim a ‘native’ status for herself, as in the case of Derrida and Cixous, who define themselves as ‘the *only* Franco-Maghrebian’ (Derrida, 1998: 12) and *inseparab*, respectively (Cixous, 2006: 24), but also in the case of the Maghrebian authors discussed so far.

The negotiation between the *exilé(e)*’s ‘native’ status and her position of privilege complicates the picture of who the diasporan subject is and what her limits are in the practice of political subjectivity and belonging. Some of the limits were explicitly explored in here, such as the politics of hybridity, language, and citizenship. I turned to literary texts and photographic images for the exploration of such issues, since it is the use of literary narratives and strategies that has constructed a Franco-Maghrebian diasporic experience. Such an experience, narrated from the perspective of colonial difference, also inevitably points to the *real* subject or beneficiary of the kind of ‘flexible citizenship’ that comes with transnational mobility, and indicates its object perceived both as lack (the

*immigré(e)* whose condition is that of an inassimilable difference within the body of the French nation), and as desire (the ‘native’/*indigène* whose function is to evoke lost moments of authenticity).

What binds these issues together is an intent to offer an alternative practice of international relations, one that arises out of reflections upon migration flows and diasporic practices as performed by literary narratives produced in the Franco-Maghrebian context. As the earlier discussion on the subalternization of knowledge seems to suggest, mainstream IR’s blindness to colonial difference manufactures a practice of international relations that is stubbornly state-centric and rigidly Western-centric. To introduce the problem of (post)colonial difference in IR suggests a much more nuanced engagement of transnational mobility and of the socio-political subjectivities it enables, but also of the relations and locations of power that structure transnational practices.

My methodology of reading literary narratives so as to decipher the construction of diasporan subjects and of the relations of power that circumscribe their relation in the postcolony, stems from the unique socio-political context of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter. The exile of many Maghrebian intellectuals and writers, and their constant preoccupation to reflect in their writings on a complex and delicate socio-political reality, has accounted for the following thesis. In the Maghrebian context, ‘literature and politics are intimately connected, [so that] the text and its context are inseparable’ (Toumi, 2002: 6). This complex politicization of the literary text in the Maghreb traces its origins not only in the violence of the colonial encounter, but also in the complicated postcolonial realities that bind the former antagonists (colonizer and colonized).

Thus, literary strategies and narratives become more than cultural productions that reflect on current socio-political events. In the Franco-Maghrebian context, they become “stories about the *absence* of stories” (Rosello, 2005: 111), that is they attempt to perform, within their narrative substance, ‘the critical labour of memory’ (Balibar, 2004: 222),<sup>209</sup> by exploring those legacies and processes whose examination has been repressed and avoided by “official” discourses. Such a critical labour of memory, however, is itself implicated in its own relations of power and privilege towards those whose memory they attempt to resurrect, and those whose painful and marginalized realities they strive to denounce. Nonetheless it is this complication of memory, forgetting, and witnessing that allows for an alternative international relations of migration to emerge.

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<sup>209</sup> This expression appears in Balibar’s article entitled “Europe: Vanishing Mediator?” (2004).

### **Transgressing International Relations. Concluding remarks**

In this dissertation I suggested that a reading of literary texts offers an alternative understanding of an International Relations of migration and of linkages between postcolonies and postmetropolises. This alternative IR emerges from an examination of the various facets of the 'native' as they are performed in the Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial encounter. Such an examination involved exploring unexpected claims to a 'native' status that brought about a re-thinking of disciplinary boundaries (chapter 1); an incursion into practices of spectrality in photography and literary narratives (chapters 2 and 3), whereby the postcolonial diasporic intellectual is engaged in the practice of collecting 'endangered authenticities' (Chow, 1993: 48). Moreover, an alternative understanding of IR can also be perceived from the politics of language and hybridity (chapters 4 and 5), which arise for Maghrebians living and writing about "home", and deciding upon audiences in their writings. Out of this politics emerge the categories of the *immigré(e)* and *exilé(e)* that reflect a lived experience of international relations, and an absence of relations that adds to our understanding.

The importance of this insight becomes clear when we confront a contemporary IR of migration written from a more mainstream perspective. Its ahistorical presentation and state-centrism are blind (and indifferent?) to the continuities of imperialism, where the postcolony is as much within the lived space of the postmetropole as it is outside. Thus I attempted to amplify this understanding of the IR of migration and imperialism through recourse to photographic and literary narratives of several Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals, such as Albert Memmi, Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Leïla Sebbar. In undertaking this task, I was deeply inspired by Cynthia Enloe's double injunction that, when trying to understand the workings of a political system, the student of international politics needs both to be armed with energetic curiosity and to listen carefully at its margins (1996: 200-201). It was thus my attempt to listen as carefully as possible at the margins of the Franco-Maghrebian political encounter. I do not claim that the margins which I have identified and examined here are the only margins, nor that I have managed to locate such marginal spaces with unquestioned accuracy. Rather the purpose of this project was to look at IR from a different perspective and from a different space. Throughout this dissertation I have attempted to question and transgress IR's analytical economy, whose self-proclaimed common sense has been so aptly interrogated by Enloe:

"There is, I think, a serious flaw in this analytical economy [of IR], and in the research strategy that flows from it. It presumes *a priori* that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that exactly how they are *kept* there could not possibly be of

interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer. A consequence of this presumption is that the actual amount and the amazing variety of power that are required to keep voices on the margins from having the right language and enough volume to be heard at the centre in ways that might send shivers up and down the ladder are never fully tallied.” (1996: 188)

Following Enloe’s injunction, I have thus attempted to show that ‘margins, silences and bottom rungs’ are not naturally silent and far from power. In fact, it is through complex and dynamic translocal webs of relations that such margins are *kept* as marginal. The Franco-Maghrebian encounter provided, in my view, an intriguing opportunity for examining not only margins and silences, constituted in the various facets of the ‘native’, but also the voices and practices of what Spivak calls the Native Informants (or the postcolonial diasporic intellectuals) who see themselves as the spokespersons of the Third World’s oppressed. Therefore, I was not particularly interested in an examination of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter from the perspective of the centre. Such a perspective would have undermined precisely the notion of an ‘encounter’, with its connotations of transgression, accident, and hauntingly nagging memory of colonial violence (see chapter 3). A state-centrist vision of this encounter would have erased the hyphen that separates and unites the Franco-Maghrebian couple, and it would have assumed that we are dealing with autonomous and separate entities, rational and unitary actors: France, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. As Étienne Balibar indicates, in the Franco-Maghrebian context, the assumption of separation and autonomy is an illusion (see 1999 and 2004). From Balibar’s perspective, France and Algeria, for example, are still very much bound together, ‘for France today was made (and doubtless is still being made) in Algeria, with and against Algeria’ (1999: 162).

The migration flows between France and the Maghreb disrupt a state-centric understanding of this encounter. My recourse to literary strategies hopefully allows the reader to glimpse the complicated translocal webs of power relations, which mediate political, social, and cultural negotiations. Privileging a postcolonial perspective has enabled me to explore hierarchies of power in their multiple practices, as inflected by race/ethnicity, gender, and class. These categories are not explored as fixed and immutable indices. Rather I attempted, following Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, to show that ‘their meanings derive from their specific locations and histories’ (see Chowdhry and Nair, 2004: 17). Therefore, exploring margins, silences, and bottom rungs in the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, and the voices who claim to mediate their marginality and break their silence, has provided the opportunity to also understand how racial, gendered, and class hierarchies illuminate each other.

Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney assert that IR, in its current shape, is ‘itself partly a legacy of colonialism’ (2004: 2). Marshall Beier reminds us that

‘international relations theory is a powerful social force in its own right and is therefore susceptible to becoming an instrument of domination’ (2004: 110). What these statements imply is that imagining the ‘field’ of IR is never an innocent practice. Following Walter D. Mignolo (2000), I suggest that IR is in need of both intellectual decolonization and of border thinking. As discussed in chapter 1, practices of intellectual decolonization in IR have been ongoing for the last couple of decades, and have made tremendous strides towards undermining the structure and the main assumptions of the discipline. I argue further that it is time we move towards border thinking. Such a practice would involve exceeding the necessity to re-read the ‘canon’, albeit in critical and imaginative ways, and to envision alternative practices that draw upon marginalized, silenced, and ignored knowledges (Mignolo’s *local histories*). These knowledges could and should constitute an IR of multiplicity, as a ‘field’ of *transgressive*, *translocal*, and *translational* possibilities.

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