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Text and Territory in the Maghrebi Novel

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Abstract

What does it mean for writing from the former French imperial territories of the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) to become "Maghrebi literature"? How does literature come to count as belonging to or appertaining to a particular place? Today, in the international spheres of the university and the literary market, the Francophone novel has become the avatar of literary modernity in the Maghreb. This apparently natural birth of a new literary genre and the subsequent emergence of a field of study around it is belied by the multiplicity of relations among the texts that form the corpus of Maghrebi literature to the territory of the Maghreb itself. This dissertation studies novels from within that corpus that interrogate the relation of writing to geopolitical and linguistic territories. Collectively, they suggest that, insofar as there may exist a Maghrebi novelistic corpus, it crystallizes through a practice of literary ex-centricity, or non-correspondence with the territory called the Maghreb, to which it is said to belong.

Previously, scholars have linked the modern Maghrebi novel (be it in French, Arabic, or other languages) to its engagement with European literary models and to the politics of decolonization and nationalism, with their attendant questions of language and identity. This focus on formal and historical contingencies has placed Maghrebi literature in a double bind that overdetermines its relation to territory. To enter into the increasingly global, but also increasingly uneven, literary arena, Maghrebi novels must perform their difference from the self-styled universality of European literary paradigms by insisting on their specificity as *Maghrebi*. Faced with the injunction to be about this nation or that history, I read both canonical and lesser-known texts that unfold other places and times. Part One examines temporal displacements, from a re-writing of Maghrebi colonial history that fragments it from within in Assia Djebar's

L'Amour, la fantasia (1985) to distant pasts whose vision of the future does not coincide with the Maghrebi present in Jamel Eddine Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum* (1998) and Driss Chraïbi's *La Mère du Printemps* (1982) and *Naissance à l'aube* (1986). Part Two focuses on spatial displacements through Hubert Haddad's *Le Peintre d'éventail* (2013), a novel set in rural Japan that investigates the modes of relation between art and place and reconfigures the geography of Maghrebi literary modernity and European modernism alike. Each of these texts shares in its fundamental gesture of opening a gap between text and territory. This relation always remains to be determined, allowing virtuality to come to bear on actuality by asking how literature, even as it is always already being drawn into linguistic or national horizons of thought, may also be elsewhere or otherwise.

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Abbreviations

RN Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Rose noire sans parfum* (Paris: Stock; 1998).

MP Driss Chraïbi, *La Mère du Printemps (L'Oum-er-Bia)* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

NA Driss Chraïbi, *Naissance à l'aube* (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

AF Assia Djebar, *L'Amour, la fantasia* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

HP Hubert Haddad, *Les Haïkus du peintre d'éventail* (Paris: Zulma, 1986).

PE Hubert Haddad, *Le Peintre d'éventail* (Paris: Zulma, 2013).

Nomenclature

Arabic words and names are transliterated using the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, with two exceptions. First, I use accepted English versions when available (e.g., Mustafa Kamil instead of Muṣṭafā Kāmil). Second, I retain the forms used in fictional texts, whether they have commonly-recognized versions or not.

Additionally, I use the term “Maghreb” with its conventional French spelling, rather than the technical Arabic transliteration Maghrib, to denote the region of northern Africa consisting of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, which were formerly under French imperial control, whether as an integral part of French territory in the case of Algeria (1830-1962) or as Protectorates in Morocco (1912-1956) and Tunisia (1881-1956). On the other hand, I have preferred the adjectival form “Maghrebi” over the clumsier “Maghrebine.” This hews closer to the Arabic *maghribī* and thus has the virtue of recalling the proximity of literary production in French and Arabic (among other languages) in the region.

Pour Hallie

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Introduction: Histories and Theories of Maghrebi Literary Modernity

> *Tant qu'on étudiera nos livres dans la perspective actuelle exclusivement et étroitement maghrébine — on passera à côté de l'essentiel.*
> Mohammed Dib[1]

On the Uses of Literature

In a little-known essay published only after his death, the seminal Algerian novelist Mohammed Dib takes French and European critics of Maghrebi literature to task for their method of reading and analyzing non-European texts:

> Curieux comportement des critiques français et européens en général à l'égard de nos livres. Ils ne jugent jamais en toute innocence l'œuvre d'un homme qui écrit, mais d'un Maghrébin, lequel doit justifier à chaque ligne sa condition maghrébine, condition à laquelle on le ramène sans cesse, par tous les détours du raisonnement, et par tous les moyens et dans laquelle on l'enferme à la fin aussi sûrement et définitivement que possible. L'écrivain maghrébin à leurs yeux est d'abord et spécifiquement maghrébin, puis ensuite, et accessoirement en quelque sorte, en tout cas très peu spécifiquement, écrivain. Contre toute apparence ces critiques posent sur l'écrivain maghrébin un regard qui éloigne, qui sépare, qui verrouille, et condamne à la spécificité sans recours, sans issue. Ce genre de comportement ne vous rappelle-t-il rien?[2]

What does Dib wish to remind us of with this portrait of European critics' judgment? At the very least, he emphasizes critical assessment as an essential stage in the definition of a literature, which Dib presents almost as a matter of legal judgment. Depending on the outcome, a text may be condemned, imprisoned, locked up. What evidence is admissible to inform such a decision? European critics never seem to judge the "case" (which is to say, the text) on its own merits, Dib says. Instead, they return again and again to its putative Maghrebi origins. They do not just

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[1] Mohammed Dib, "Curieux comportement des critiques français," *Hesperia, culturas del Mediterráneo* 19 (June 2015): 140.
[2] Dib, 139–40.

observe, they “set a gaze” that, paradoxically, is “against all appearances.” It matters not how Maghrebi writers or texts present themselves. This gaze has the peculiar power of enclosing and imprisoning its object on the terms of the observer rather than the observed.

Thus, they never see simply the work of a writer, but rather a specifically Maghrebi writer, where the Maghrebi quality predominates over the authorial one. When the writer’s authorial status does come into play, it does so primarily to reinforce the territorial status of the work’s Maghrebi character. Maghrebi writers, as Maghrebi, are seen to be limited in their creative powers by their own biographies, forever imprisoned within the frame of their personal origins. In this first moment, the critics’ gaze overdetermines the specificity of its object: a Maghrebi text by a Maghrebi writer, both of which demand to be read in terms of their place of origin in the Maghreb. But what is “Maghrebi” about these texts? In this question, the first moment of overdetermined specificity leads to a second of over-generalization. Dib calls this “une manière très savante d’enfermer une œuvre sur elle-même”, which, applied to Maghrebi writers and texts, serves “à enfermer l’auteur sur lui-même, à le transformer lui-même en sa propre prison et par une généralisation implicite (et même explicite) à étendre cela à la société et à la culture dont il est issu”.[3] Consequently, such a writer is inescapably, specifically Maghrebi and at the same time also becomes the very image of the entire Maghreb. Collapsing this distinction between overdetermined specificity and generality allows critics to shift scales indiscriminately between text, writer, and society in a self-justifying circle. Indeed, unlike in France, the Maghrebi author does not seem to have died. The image of the writer is like a wax seal authenticating the contents of a text as it circulates around the world. The authorial figure, who is always first and foremost “Maghrebi” before being a writer, as Dib notes, guarantees the

utility of their texts to satisfy the curiosity of the European reader.

Dib thus identifies two key parameters that have determined the reception of Maghrebi literature in French: simultaneous specificity and generality or representativity. Both of these bind this writing to the territory of the Maghreb, whose sociopolitical context is taken to be both the ultimate source and the object of Maghrebi literatures. What Dib demonstrates about European critics is only a part of the double-bind to which Maghrebi literature is subject, however. In its so-called home territory, it has been subject to nationalist logics of political engagement (among others). In tandem with European critical determinations, they constantly demand that literature serve a particular cause. On both shores of the Mediterranean, these texts encounter exigencies that they provide faithful, almost ethnographic portraits of Maghrebi peoples and nations, that they bear witness to the traumas of imperialism, decolonization, and postcolonial unrest, and that they engage in a teleological history whose ultimate form is that of the novel and the nation. This nationalist-novelist paradigm, as Kamran Rastegar calls it,[4] defines literary modernity in the Maghreb by binding the rise of the francophone novel in the Maghreb to the emergence of nationalist movements and the ultimate consolidation of independent postcolonial nation-states.

Whatever the context of literary composition, circulation, and reception may be in the Maghreb or in Europe, Dib suggests that Maghrebi literature is not *a priori* bound to the expectations that surround its connection to the Maghreb, despite being subject to such

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[3] Dib, 140.

[4] Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textural Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 6. Rastegar develops this analysis in the context of Arabic and Persian literatures in the sphere of the British Empire, but it is broadly descriptive of the inequalities encoded into world literary systems via European imperialism. Indeed, beyond structural similarities, the evolution of literature in these French and British colonial contexts are historically connected through transcolonial literary transactions as well as in

anticipatory judgments on the part of its critics. Indeed, Dib's analysis of the unequal valuation of Maghrebi literature relative to metropolitan French writing allows him to perform a curious critical twist of his own. While French literature and French critics overdetermine the reception of Maghrebi literature as something inherently limited in scope and necessarily marginal or secondary in relation to the metropole, Dib insists that European literatures are in fact the marginal ones in relation to the rest of the world: "placée dans le contexte mondial c'est la littérature produite par l'Europe, c'est la pensée de l'Europe, qui sont marginales [….] N'importe lequel de mes livres a eu plus de retentissement dans le monde que, disons, n'importe quel livre qui fait fureur à Paris."[5] Although they may be widely read in Paris, they are subject to a consumerist logic of reading, which seeks only to produce a "hit" book that responds to the whims of the present moment. By contrast, Dib claims, "nos œuvres, privées en quelque sorte de cette base, de ce terrain d'action, se trouvent du coup libérées des contraintes qui pèsent durement sur l'écrivain occidental, et peuvent se permettre, ainsi, d'être des œuvres dégagées, des œuvres de réflexion, n'étant tenues de satisfaire un certain client, à tel moment, à tel endroit."[6] In this move, Dib shifts the grounds of literary territory from a (post)colonial model of metropole and colony based on the world-systems notions of center and periphery, to the more overtly capitalist aspects of literary economy, such as sales and readership. From this perspective, he shows that it is rather the European literary economy that is overdetermined by its local conditions, whatever image it may project of itself into the world. Although Maghrebi literature lacks a comparable market base, Dib turns this apparent deficiency into an asset. Paradoxically, by being less widely read, less indebted to a base of reader-consumers, non-

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exchanges between metropolitan literatures that spread through imperial networks.

[5] Dib, "Curieux comportement," 140.

European literature becomes less bound to its territorial origins and the literary economy.

Confronted with a critical double bind that conflates specificity and generality in a vicious cycle that reproduces imperial inequalities in the literary economy, Dib relocates Maghrebi writing in a space beyond this restrictive territory. His rhetorical moves invite a broader theoretical reflection on the politics of literary territory. I take Dib to be asking us to shift our focus from reading literatures for the ways they represent particular territories to asking how they come to count as representing a territory at all. This means taking seriously the difference between the territorial formations we use to organize and analyze literatures, whether geopolitical (in various national, regional, or "area studies" guises), linguistic (like *francophonie* or "global anglophone"), historical (medieval, modern, etc.), conceptual (Third World, Global South, postcolonial, etc.), or otherwise, and the spaces that they ostensibly give rise to in literary form. Literature, instead of deriving from and representing such formations, emerges a virtual landscape in its own right. It may resemble its territorial counterpart to the point of indistinction, or it may differ from it so wildly as to be absolutely unrecognizable. Short-circuiting any *a priori* equivalency of text and territory requires different reading practices. Before any symptomatic reading of a text's politics of representation, there must come a reading of the political economy of literature in which the expressive, creative, and critical capacities of texts are territorialized on particularly literary, geographic, and political spaces. For this reason, the issue at hand is not to find texts that best represent the Maghreb or express a supposedly authentic Maghrebi subjecthood — the Maghrebi who happens to write that Dib sees European critics reading for. Instead, the logic that subtends the application of identity criteria to literature in the first place comes into question.

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[6] Dib, 141.

To put things slightly differently, we might say that European critics put Maghrebi literature to a particular use, which is to demonstrate and maintain the centrality and superiority of European writing, in the face of the multiplication of Europhone literatures in the colonial and postcolonial eras around the globe. Dib counters this use-value, which depends on the reification of literature's relation to a particular territory, by asserting a certain uselessness of Maghrebi literature. This non-utility produces a paradoxical use for Maghrebi literature as a wedge against the hegemony of European writing and criticism.[7] Being unread makes it all the more pressing to truly read this writing, not with the same reified and received ideas that have shaped its reception to this point, but precisely in its incapacity or non-utility, which is in fact rather an unrealized potential, latent within its text, and, indeed, perhaps within literature in general. This calls our attention to what is in writing that always remains to be determined and cannot be totalized. It also means that every act of reading, of deciding the undecidable in a text, is a political act. Thus, this study intervenes at the site of this tension between the irreducibility of literary speech acts to their context and their determination in practices of reading.

If, as Dib suggests, critical demands act on a text *post facto*, then they do not represent an *a priori* relation of the text to its territory of origin. Against the background of these demands, this study offers a critical reassessment of the relation between text and territory in Maghrebi

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[7] The question of the use of a particular literature (Maghrebi, francophone, postcolonial, world, etc.) returns to the question of what literature itself is, does, or is used for. Every question of *a* literature returns to *the* question of literature. For Maurice Blanchot, literature is only ever a question. It has no essence other than its own disappearance into non-literature, its inevitable openness to its own outside. As he remarks, this lends a certain strangeness to the kinds of questions habitually asked of literature: what are the trends in current literature? Where is it headed? In these questions, literature "s'interroge elle-même et indique non pas une réponse certes, mais le sens plus profond, plus essentiel, de la question propre qu'elle détient [….] précisément, l'essence de la littérature, c'est d'échapper à toute détermination essentielle, à toute affirmation qui la stabilise ou même la réalise: elle n'est jamais déjà là, elle est toujours à retrouver ou à réinventer." Nevertheless, these remain the sorts of questions critics have examined in the French-language literatures of the Maghreb: trends, tendencies, and directions, as though such writing were a barometer of societies. Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard,

literature. It presents new readings of novels from across the Maghreb, aiming to reactivate those unrealized potentialities and recalibrate the aesthetic and political expectations placed on it.

Text and Territory in the Maghrebi Novel

What does it mean for writing from the Maghreb to become "Maghrebi literature"? More generally, how does literature come to appertain to a place? This study takes up the relation between writing and territory as one of the key stakes in the established critical understanding of literary modernity in the Maghreb. This historiography locates the threshold of Maghrebi literary modernity in the struggles for national independence after the second World War, which crystallized a historical experience of imperialism inaugurated by the French conquest of Algiers in 1830. This approach has placed Maghrebi writing in a double-bind, defining it as a literature that only earns literary and political currency at home and abroad by proclaiming its locality to the (post)colony and its specificity to the experience of an entirely new literary modernity. Thus, Maghrebi literature only comes into being through the reification of its difference from literature in general and its specificity to a territory that, in return, overdetermines its readings. The texts embraced in its name have become avatars of the Maghreb, irrespective of their actual engagement with that territory. Consequently, Maghrebi literature's relation to the Maghreb has become a site where inequality is reproduced in the aesthetic and political evaluation of texts.

This has left numerous blind spots in the history of Maghrebi literature, yielded reductive readings of its canonical texts, and led to the abandonment of works that do not easily align with this framework. In this dissertation, I redress these shortcomings by presenting new readings of novels from across the Maghreb that call into question the received narrative of Maghrebi

1959), 237, 241, 244.

literary modernity, focusing on their engagements with other places and times. Through diverse conceptual, spatial, and temporal dislocations from their ostensible Maghrebi origin, these texts open up the difference between virtual literary territories and actual political ones, loosening the interpretive knot wound by the overdetermined relation of text to territory. They show that the relation between these territories cannot not given *a priori*. Instead, it always remains to be determined in a field of forces in tension, a task whose ever-contingent execution falls *ad infinitum* to both the text and the reader.[8] As each of the texts studied here interacts differently with the Maghreb and its constituent nation-states, I contend that they are fundamentally Maghrebi insofar as Maghrebi writing forms an ex-centric literature: one that exceeds the geographical and temporal territory to which it is assigned.[9]

In this introduction, I lay out the historical and theoretical stakes of this argument and trace the received historiography of Maghrebi literary modernity. To do so, I explore the category of "literary modernity" and the consequences of its current use in relation to Maghrebi writing, which takes the form of a developmental narrative. I offer a critical presentation of this theory, which moves from exoticizing or ethnographic writing to anticolonial political engagement and culminates in postcolonial social and aesthetic reconstruction. I also provide an initial reconsideration of the chronological and linguistic presumptions of this trajectory by

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[8] This field of forces is how Michel Foucault has defined power, not as an object to be possessed, but as a relational phenomenon emergent in its exercise in the domain of politics. Thus, as Foucault insists that the operation of power relations always implicates a corollary field of knowledge production, the critical apparatus that produces knowledge about Maghrebi literature (or any other) is also imbricated in the sum of its positions in the political field. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 32–38.

[9] I follow Gilles Deleuze's reading of Foucault, which distinguishes the history of forms (histoire des formes) from the becoming of forces (devenir des forces); on the one hand, an archaeology of institutions or a diagram of power relations (the prison or the hospital for Foucault; the critical apparatus of Maghrebi literature for us) and on the other an effort to "think otherwise", to understand thinking not as a process of interiority, in distinction to the exteriority of the seeable and the sayable, but of the outside (dehors), of the space of the multiplicity of forces, quite apart from their particular historical forms. Thus, a literature offers the possibility of thinking in ways not reducible to or determinable by its historical form or the institutions

introducing multilingual newspapers (in Arabic, English, French, Judeo-Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Spanish, and more) as an alternative threshold of literary modernity in the nineteenth century, which yields a quite different picture of the relations among the various literary languages of the Maghreb. While a full exploration of this longer history is beyond the scope of the present project, it nonetheless demonstrates the unrealized histories of Maghrebi literature that contemporary critical approaches have obscured, providing an important backdrop for the readings of novels in French that comprise the rest of the dissertation.

According to the developmental narrative of Maghrebi literary modernity, the novels I study fall squarely into the postcolonial period, where the memory of anticolonial struggle remains present, but the issues of contemporary society have begun to weigh more heavily in cultural production. In this chronology, the last decades of the twentieth century were meant to realize a final stage of literary evolution. By the 1980s, it was clear that French-language writing had not died out in the Maghreb after independence, as many had predicted.[10] Works in this period inaugurate new themes, perhaps representing a turning point in the literature toward images of truly postcolonial societies or toward experimental works less bound by profane, everyday concerns. Yet by the end of the decade, Algeria was on the brink of civil war and years of worsening governmental oppression in Morocco and Tunisia were approaching a reckoning that would seem to bring writing back down to earth. Perhaps nothing better defines the character of Maghrebi literary modernity under the developmental paradigm than its inability to realize this ultimate step as political upheaval continues to demand a realist, immediate response from

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that treat it. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1986), 50–51.

[10] See Salim Jay, "La mort de Driss Chraïbi," *Lamalif* 11 (April 1966): 39; Abdellatif Laâbi, "Prologue," *Souffles* 1, no. 1 (1966): 4; Mostefa Lacheraf and M. Brumagne, "L'Avenir de la culture algérienne. Entretien," *Les Temps Modernes* 209 (October 1963): 732–33. More generally, see Jean Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine de langue française: introduction générale et auteurs.*, 3rd ed. (Sherbrooke,

Maghrebi writers.

The works under study here, however, complicate the persistent folding-back of Maghrebi literature onto the Maghreb and its literary modernity. Instead, I argue that they operate in both the difference and entanglement of novelistic and geopolitical territories. Spanning the 1980s to the present decade, they include writers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia and range from the canonical to lesser-known texts by established authors and other works that have not yet received the critical attention they deserve. All of them take their distance from the territory of the Maghreb across time and space. Some interrogate the possibility that modern Maghrebi literature may bear witness to the colonial history said to produce it. Others examine more distant histories that may be inassimilable to Maghrebi literary modernity's presentist self-narration, such as Islamicate imperial expansion and resistance among conquered, assimilated, or enslaved populations. Others turn away from the persistent but ultimately unwieldy geographies of the French Empire or the Arabo-Islamic Middle East to seemingly-foreign lands, such as Japan or the "Far East" in general. From colonial Algeria to medieval Andalusia or Abbasid Iraq to contemporary Japan, this literature transforms the map of the Maghreb from an objective setting painstakingly traced by European explorers and picturesquely described by Western travelers and colonial writers into an active space of contestation. They practice a speculative cartography, creating virtual textual landscapes rather than representing extant geopolitical territories.

Part One examines historical displacements. In Chapter One, I turn to Assia Djebar's 1985 novel *L'Amour, la fantasia*, which takes on the received history of Maghrebi literary modernity from within. Djebar weaves archival documents from the French conquest of Algeria,

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Canada: Naaman, 1980), 44–45.

oral histories of women's experience in the Algerian revolution, and the story of an Algerian woman growing up during the end of French rule into a complex, fragmentary narrative. Previous readings of *L'Amour, la fantasia* are emblematic of a literary history that construes writing in the Maghreb as fundamentally responsive to politics, specifically to a retrospectively-imagined nationalist form of politics. Thus, Djebar's novel appears as a "retour du référent" in the wake of the domestic political turmoil of the 1980s and 90s in Algeria (and across the Maghreb). I call this the realist aesthetics of emergency, which demands that literature bear witness to extreme political situations. I show how Djebar's novel partakes of that aesthetics in order to question it from within. *L'Amour, la fantasia* posits that writing can only testify to something that cannot be witnessed in a form other than the literary. In the novel, the referent may never fully return to a world outside of the text.

Chapter Two examines novels by the Moroccan writer Driss Chraïbi, *La Mére du Printemps* (1980) and its sequel *Naissance à l'aube* (1982), and the Algerian poet and scholar Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Rose noire sans parfum* (1998). They explore a past that is contiguous with the history of the contemporary Maghreb and its literary modernity, but do so as something that cannot be fully appropriated by it. Chraïbi's novels are set during the Islamic conquest of North Africa and Andalusia during the seventh and eighth centuries and Bencheikh's during a ninth century slave revolt in Iraq. While these events could be construed as part of the *longue durée* of the history of Islamdom and the Maghreb's place in it, the novels instead call such historical continuities into question. They explore possible futures imagined from the perspective of the past that do not coincide with the Maghrebi present and are therefore inassimilable to it. If the past and present are connected at all in these novels, it is more through the failure of the past to produce the future it had imagined than in building the reader's present.

Part Two turns to spatial displacements. Chapters Three and Four explore historical, conceptual, and fictional circulations among the Maghreb, Europe, and Japan through a contemporary novel by the Tunisian writer Hubert Haddad, *Le Peintre d'éventail* (2013). In these relations, Japan emerges as a third pole that decenters the postcolonial France-Maghreb axis that has been presumed to define literary modernity in the Maghreb. Chapter Three locates Haddad at the intersection of French modernist *japonisme* and other little-acknowledged Maghrebi literary engagements with Japan. It traces the history of representations of Japan and of aesthetic *japonisme* in Europe, which began in the decorative arts in the mid-nineteenth century and soon moved into painting before taking literary form in the early twentieth. Focusing on the stakes of deploying cultural difference in the world as a metaphor for self-knowledge or alienation, it examines currents in modernist novelistic writing in France in the postcolonial period, especially in Roland Barthes and Georges Perec. I show Barthes and Perec to be particularly concerned with calibrating the everyday and the extreme or the familiar and the strange, creating aesthetic concerns resonant with the realist aesthetics of emergency brought to bear on much of Maghrebi writing. At the same time, I show how the Maghreb was also implicated in Franco-Japanese mutual imaginings and in French modernist *japonisme*, both directly in French colonial policy and in Barthes' and Perec's writing and indirectly in the ways of mapping territories of cultural difference as a resource ripe for imperial exploitation.

Chapter Four reads Haddad's novel as a meditation on the relation between art and landscape and the ever-present possible disruption of this relation through disaster, which takes the form of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in the text. This allows the book to tackle the stakes of *japoniste* aesthetics head-on, which it does by recasting text not as a representation of territory, but as one point in an asymmetrical, a-centric field of relations, where hierarchy and

determination are always deferred by the possibility of disaster. I consider *Peintre d'éventail* alongside contemporary scholarship on historical disasters to illustrate the parallel economies of the everyday and the extreme and the familiar and the strange in the social experience of disaster and the literary engagement with territory.

Thus, I argue that what is most at stake for Maghrebi literature today are not the debates about identity implicit in the hand-wringing over terms like "écrivains d'expression française" or even "francophone", as if writing were primarily a practice of self-expression, felicitous or otherwise, but rather the territorial politics of the text, not its expression but its interpolation as an artifact of a particular territory. This requires clearing the ground of received ideas and opening up established historiographies. In carrying out these broad gestures, this study often goes straight to the horizon line of Maghrebi literature, seeking out a vantage point from which its elements suddenly cohere in a new and unforeseen way in order to think what has remained unthought in its constitution. This does not mean that there is no (longer) any use in approaching writing in the Maghreb historically or sociologically. There are always concrete situations to consider writing in, in the Maghreb or elsewhere, and many of these remain important and pressing. Nevertheless, it is much more politically and aesthetically urgent in the case of Maghrebi literature to seek its outer limits, rather than to limit ourselves to what has already been said before. This is, I believe, particularly so for a scholar working in the English-language context of the U.S. academy that, despite its distance from the Maghreb, exerts an outsize influence on which texts are read and how.

A Note on Terms

As a critique of the territorialization of literature as specific to a particular place and time,

this study moves away from oppositions between the specific and the general, the particular and the universal, or the local and the global. These oppositions tend to code power relations rather than reflect actual distinctions among literatures. As Dib shows, they lend themselves to the reproduction of social inequalities in literary form, readily collapsing into circular justifications of extant geopolitical structures. Dib uses *portée*, meaning scope or reach, as an alternative to these binary pairs. This has the virtue of evoking variable extension, rather than relying on fixed territorial boundaries. It thus draws our attention to issues of scale.[11]

This enables us to reconsider the notion of modernity as something that coheres and is operative at a particular scale. In the case of Maghrebi literature, this has historically been at the scale of the French Empire, its region of the Maghreb, and its constituent postcolonial nation-states. Concomitant with this geographical scale is a historical timescale that has focused primarily on the period of national independences and the so-called postcolonial era that follows it.[12] However, the works under study here demand constant scaling and re-scaling work on the part of the reader. The view from the Maghreb, so to speak, is inadequate to their scope, which expands and contracts across place and time. Consequently, I suggest that they make possible a

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[11] Archaeologists William Marquardt and Carole Crumley have articulated the concept of "effective scale," a vantage point on a field of study in which its heterogenous objects cohere in some identifiable, more or less homogenous regional dynamic. Deciding on "effective scale" demands a comparative investigation across scales. William H. Marquardt and Carole L. Crumley, "Theoretical Issues in the Analysis of Spatial Patterning," in *Regional Dynamics: Burgundian Landscapes in Historical Perspectives* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1987), 2-7, 16. Nirvana Tanoukhi calls for such a scalar examination of the postcolonial novel in order to "reconstruct the process by which the space of the postcolonial novel becomes differentiated, gaining the contours of a place and the fixity of a cultural location" — or, as I would put it, how it becomes territorialized on the geopolitical dynamics of the postcolonial landscape. Such processes, I suggest, are not unique to the "Africa-of-the-Novel" that Tanoukhi studies or to the postcolonial novel, but are one of the key stakes of the current global literary economy. See Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature," *New Literary History* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 605.

[12] Ato Quayson calls attention to how periodizations of postcolonial literature have implicated spatial formations, without properly accounting for them in the temporal framework suggested by the identifying prefix "post-". Quayson argues we need "to assemble reading practices that allow us to read the rhetorical, the historical, and the spatial all at once." Ato Quayson, "Periods versus Concepts: Space Making and the Question of Postcolonial Literary History," *PMLA* 127, no. 2 (2012): 348.

critique from within of the received notions of literary modernity in the Maghreb, which have previously produced the kinds of extremely narrow readings that Dib evokes in his essay.

As such, this is not a study of either literary modernism *per se* or of cultural or political modernity. Nor is it a historical inquiry into the way that Maghrebi authors imagined themselves as "modern" or partaking in a particular modernity, although there remains important work to be done in this area.[13] Insofar as I invoke such "alternative modernities," it is primarily to demonstrate the limits of a concept or category of modernity applied to literature in general. This is an inquest into the assignation of "modernity" as a valuation of some literatures against others. It is a reconnaissance mission scouting the borders that mark thresholds of modernity and an attempt to think beyond them. In other words, this is a study of the construction of a particular moment of "modernity" in ostensibly "postcolonial" novels. This Maghrebi literary modernity is not opposed to tradition, but to itself, as constituted by colonial and postcolonial projects.[14]

Seeking to reorganize territories, societies, and peoples, colonization and anticolonial nationalism both craft a teleological narrative of literary modernity culminating in the novel and the nation as derived from European forms. It is a familiar dialectical narrative of modernity,

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[13] For example, Michael Allan shows that the institutionalization of comparative literature in nineteenth-century Egypt was strongly influenced by the particularities of the Arabic tradition of *adab*, even as that term gradually become more or less synonymous with "literature" in the modern European sense. Michael Allan, "How Adab Became Literary: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43 (2012): 181–82. Likewise, Elisabeth Kendall makes distinctions among different ""modernist"" developments in Arabic literature that might be variously glossed "modern," "postmodern," or otherwise in Western critique. Such distinctions allow for "modernity" to index transformations in local social and literary contexts as much as those elsewhere. Elisabeth Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

[14] Aamir Mufti shows how contemporary Euro-American comparative literature, which tends to date the emergence of modern non-Western literatures to the mid-twentieth century, emerged from earlier Orientalist scholarship that reconfigured world literary space through the "discovery" of non-Western writing. Mufti contends that "we cannot ignore the global relations of force that the concept [of literature] simultaneously puts in play and hides from view" as it codes all the diverse and varied forms writing in this expansive, globalizing space as "literature." Aamir R. Mufti, "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 458–65. It is in this sense that literary modernity in the (formerly) colonized world grapples with itself, interpellated as the constitutive other to European

wherein colonization and decolonization are the two necessary moments in the gradual consolidation of an eventually postcolonial modernity. In this framework, literature is only valued insofar as it participates in the aesthetics of the colonization - decolonization - postcoloniality dialectic.[15] The logic of this colonial literary modernity is one of diffusion. It develops through the imperial dissemination of the French language and the novel form from metropolitan to colonial space.[16] Colonial literary modernity is therefore derivative of the European imperial tradition from which it originates. I recast the logic of diffusion with that of capture, in the sense elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Whereas diffusion produces anxiety of influence, deference to external models, and compromise between foreign form and local content, capture enables appropriation, mastery, and transformation. The apparent emergence of Maghrebi literary modernity as the bastard offshoot of French influence in the 1940s and 50s marks rather the intensification of ongoing transformations in Maghrebi writing practices above a threshold beyond which it cannot be ignored by the European, colonial, and postcolonial literary and political establishments.

In this sense, my use of "modernity" is more polemical than conceptual. I am not so much interested in re-establishing the threshold of Maghrebi literature modernity at the "right"

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literary modernity. This is not to say that it is therefore determined exclusively by such an encounter.

[15] Kamran Rastegar develops an incisive critique of the retrospective modernist teleologies of the form of the nation and the novel in the history of nineteenth-century Arabic, English, and Persian literature. Rastegar shifts focus to the transformations in the social value of texts through circulation, translation, and appropriation across regions and languages, seeking to restore contingent (albeit often failed) modernities that emerged out of the transactions among these literatures under the auspices of the British Empire. Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 3–13. I take up this longer imperial history in the Maghreb, but from the perspective of postcolonial novels. This means I am looking for possible, but unrealized transactions that are textual and virtual rather than historical.

[16] Although it will become clear that I disagree with his conclusions, Franco Moretti has laid out the stakes of this historical relation between literature and geography in the circulation of the novel form around the globe. What I find lacking in Moretti's work is a robust account of the full repertoire of political and literary gestures that may emerge from this circulation, which he reads narrowly as subject to a "law" of compromise between foreign form and local content. See Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World

time (which would be to answer the question, when does modern Maghrebi literature begin?), but in establishing that Maghrebi literary modernity begins *as* a practice of contestation[17] — not just of colonial influence, but of the languages, practices, and values of writing in general. The works I read here are constantly shifting the temporal and spatial scales of Maghrebi literary modernity without settling on a definitive periodization or territory. If they offer a theoretical account of this modernity, it is only insofar as they recuperate it from the colonial project by unfolding the received notions of Maghrebi literary modernity against itself, opening it up to new configurations of the relation between text and territory.

Blank Map or Palimpsest?

If, as Dib noted, European readers have always already known what Maghrebi writers will say before they have written anything, or before they have read it, this dissertation attempts to clear the ground of these anticipatory readings, which bear the guise of concrete situations (sociology, politics, etc.). Perhaps one should not remain at this limit, but it must always be in our thinking, at the horizon of our "concrete" work. Thus, rather than returning to a "clean slate" for Maghrebi literature, I present an approach based on palimpsest. European imperialism initially treated North Africa with *carte blanche* as a blank map, inaugurating a territorial and literary modernity based on European forms.[18] In both technical and literary documents, they

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Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000), 58; Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999), 191–95.

[17] In this sense, my polemic is almost conventional, insofar as scholars, following Timothy Mitchell, have come hold "modernity" as simply a name for conflicting or contradictory historical trajectories, whether in concern with or in isolation from one another. Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 24.

[18] *Carte blanche* means not only a free hand to act, but also a blank map and, by extension, the authority and privilege to trace its contours. I adapt this term from Alexander Weheliye, reactivating its cartographic valence, as he insists on the racialization that the term connotes. Continental European thought is "deemed transposable to a variety of spatiotemporal contexts because the authors do not speak from an explicitly racialized viewpoint (in contradistinction to nonwhite scholars who have written about racial

sought to render the landscape visible in written form, aspiring to a complete transparency of text to territory. Such a textual mastery of the land would support claims of imperial authority and colonial ownership. The proponents of colonial literatures, composed by European authors who settled in French Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, extended the logic of national genius that had territorialized artistic production in Europe on the nation-state across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the colonial world. They proclaimed a North African literary specificity, drawing distinction and legitimacy from their residence in the colonies.[19] Postcolonial literary theory and, later, world literature have taken up this model of literary territorialization. Consequently, the anti- and postcolonial novel, to count as such, has had to bear the burdens of various critical expectations, both in the Maghreb and abroad: that it faithfully depict local realities, sometimes even in a form of quasi-ethnographic description,[20] or that it take on the

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slavery, colonialism, indigenous genocide, etc.)". This double bind operates on the same conflation of specificity and generality that Mohammed Dib sees reproducing inequality in the political economy of Maghrebi literary modernity. See Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 7.

[19] Roland Lebel, an author and critical proponent of colonial literature, declared that the *roman colonial* was the culmination of the concomitant evolution of colonial writing and colonization itself. To phases of exploration, occupation, and administration corresponded travel writing, technical writing (of ethnology, geography, and so forth), and finally novelistic writing. Colonial literature thus claims to have perfected the transparent, immediate rendering of colonial territory in written form. The defining traits of this ultimate phase are locality (birth or long-term residence in the colonies), fidelity ("ils ont vécu leurs livres avant de les écrire"), authenticity ("Les indigènes qu'ils représentent sont de vrais noirs ou de vrais jaunes, et les Européens qu'ils mettent en scène ne sont pas des caricatures de coloniaux"), and expertise ("Il n'y a pas de publication technique, d'ouvrage documentaire qui vaille, à cet endroit, les bonnes pages d'un romancier consciencieux"). This supposedly realist deployment of intensely local content was the *roman colonial*'s calling card. Thus, it posited its existence as a literature by staging its difference from metropolitan writing in the form of visual mastery of the colonial landscape. Roland Lebel, *Etudes de littérature coloniale* (Paris: J. Peyronnet et Cie., 1928), 17–18.

[20] For Lebel, *littérature coloniale* "porte les esprits vers une connaissance plus précise, plus complète, et plus pratique des choses coloniales [….] Non seulement dans la peinture exacte du milieu physique (ce n'est là qu'une introduction), mais surtout dans l'étude du milieu psychologique." Presaging the legacy of this critical framework, whose reference to locality would persist even as "indigenous" writers would contest the terms of such references, Lebel even allowed for the possibility that such a task might be accomplished "par l'un de nos sujets indigènes, s'exprimant en français, bien entendu," evoking Bakary Diallo and Abdel Kader Hadj Hamou. Roland Lebel, *Histoire de la littérature coloniale en France* (Paris: Larose, 1931), 85–87. As such, Lebel saw *littérature coloniale* necessarily blurring the boundaries of literary and documentary writing: "L'œuvre d'imagination s'inspire de documentation ethnographique".

political engagements of nationalist anti-colonial resistance,[21] the generation of histories and identities for postcolonial nation-states,[22] or the healing of the wounds of past colonial domination.[23]

To understand this trajectory, I will now trace briefly the history of this reception that has defined Maghrebi literary modernity since the mid-twentieth century. In so doing, I will also signal the shortcomings and blind spots of this historiography, indicate some key stakes for the texts I analyze in the rest of the dissertation, and highlight a few areas for further research. I begin at the moment when Europeans and North Africans alike appear to "discover" Maghrebi literature from the 1940s to the 1960s. From there, I turn backward to developments in the periodical press across the Maghreb in the late nineteenth century, suggesting an alternative threshold for Maghrebi literary modernity that recognizes its significantly longer history and does not rely on the colonial separation of francophone and arabophone writing. I then return to the postcolonial period, showing how the failure to account for this longer history has perpetuated the double bind of specificity and generality in the reception of Maghrebi writing. I conclude with an analysis of how the figure of the Maghrebi writer plays into this double bind,

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Lebel, *Etudes*, 42.

[21] Maghrebi writers in the years immediately following World War II, like Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri, or Ahmed Sefrioui, were "traditionnellement présentés comme descriptifs, et qualifiés parfois à ce titre d' 'assimilés' par la critique idéologique, puisqu'ils fourniraient au lecteur occidental dont ils épouseraient les codes le dépaysement qu'il attend". Charles Bonn, "Le Tragique de l'émergence littéraire maghrébine entre deux langues, ou le roman familial," *Nouvelles études francophones* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 11–12.

[22] Shortly after Algerian independence, Anna Greki wrote that "le portrait idéal de l'écrivain algérien rêvé serait le suivant selon nos censeurs: être arabo-musulman (critère de race), être d'expression arabe (critère linguistique), être rattaché aux valeurs traditionnelles de l'Islam (critère religieux), être le héraut de notre socialisme spécifique (critère politique)." Anna Greki, "Théories, prétextes et réalités," *Présence africaine* 58, no. 2 (1966): 194.

[23] The curative function is inherently tied to locality: "In Morocco, as in the rest of the Maghreb, the novel is still recognized as emanating from a particular country, regardless of whether or not it was written or set in that country. The novel spreads balm over the wounds of a people whose dreams have been betrayed and whose memory some have tried to beguile with fables and deception." M'hamed Alaoui Abdalaoui, "The Moroccan Novel in French," trans. Jeffrey S. Ankrom, *Research in African Literatures* 23, no. 4

taking this as the starting point for new readings that do not so much seek to erase this literary cartography, but rather to draw over it, mobilizing a trope of literary palimpsest as an alternative model to the extant historiography of Maghrebi literary modernity and an invitation to develop new readings of some of its novels in the rest of the dissertation.

Narratives of Maghrebi Literary Modernity

From the perspective of the European critics who set the stage for the reception of emergent Maghrebi literature in European languages in the mid-twentieth century, there had never been a Maghrebi literature, strictly speaking, prior to the French imperial presence. When the French writer Gabriel Audisio composed an article on "L'Algérie littéraire" for a colonial encyclopedia project in 1943, he likened constructing such a literary corpus to the imperial project: "Force nous sera de dresser un tableau littéraire de l'Algérie par approximations et à peu près, exactement comme l'administration française a constitué l'Algérie elle-même."[24] If Audisio nevertheless begins his history in Antiquity with the Phoenicians and dwells at length on Latin writers hailing from Rome's North African provinces, he considers these writers to belong to Phoenician and Latin literature, just as later writers would belong to Arabic or French literature. A truly national Algerian literature had to await the birth of the modern Algerian nation-state, which Audisio envisioned under the aegis of French rule. With the Algerian Revolution and independence coming in the decades after his essay, this diagnosis would soon take on a new meaning. Yet others would still retrace Audisio's historical itinerary. Sixty years after Audisio's encyclopedia article was commissioned in 1943, Jamel Eddine Bencheikh reprised its historiography in a lecture entitled "Multiples parcours dans l'espace algérien." Bencheikh

(Winter 1992): 31.

reverses the problem of borders that Audisio appealed to French colonialism to resolve by consolidating the geopolitical form of the nation. Bencheikh asks "si les frontières délimitent aussi un espace d'écriture [….] Et s'il y a une correspondance entre un pouvoir qui délimite cet espace et une culture qui y est contenue."[25] This move allows Bencheikh to posit the possibility of an "Algerian" literature (for lack of a better word) that included its Numidian, Punic, Latin, and other forebears. But to most, these still appeared to be one foreign invader after another constantly overrunning North Africa, leaving it without a literature of its own.[26]

By the 1950s, this seemed to be changing. In 1953, Audisio noted the "remarkable" fact that Arab and Amazigh North Africans were beginning to contribute significantly to French literature: "on a l'impression que ces auteurs sortent brusquement de l'ombre et qu'ils sont — pour employer un mot de mon ami l'écrivain Francis Ponge — comme 'les ambassadeurs du monde muet', d'un monde qui a été muet et qui brusquement ne l'est plus."[27] Audisio reads writing as voice and its absence as silence, or rather as an inability to speak. He thus locates the collective voice of a society in its literature. Figuring these writers as ambassadors of a world that had been silent up to that point locates the beginning of their history in the colonial moment, just as Audisio had previously claimed Algeria had lacked territorial definition before the French

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[24] Gabriel Audisio, *L'Algérie littéraire* (Marseille: Editions Jeanne Lafitte, 2012), 43.
[25] Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, "Multiples parcours dans l'espace algérien" (November 17, 2003), http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb391961638.
[26] For example, Georges Joyaux, an early scholar of Maghrebi literature in the United States, takes up Audisio's timeline in a series of articles drawing the American academy's attention to francophone Maghrebi literature. He writes that the Maghreb "by its very location at the juncture of two worlds, has been open ground for foreign invaders. Each wave has given birth to a new 'school' of North African writers who, though born and raised in North Africa, became part of the literary history of the invading civilization." Georges J. Joyaux, "Driss Chraïbi, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine, and Indigenous North African Literature," *Yale French Studies* 24 (1959): 30. See also: Georges J. Joyaux, "The French-Language North African Literature," *The Centennial Review of Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 35-50; Georges J. Joyaux, "La Littérature française d'Afrique du Nord," 32, no. 5 (April 1959): 410-418.
[27] Gabriel Audisio, "La Génie de l'Afrique du Nord, de Saint Augustin à Albert Camus," *Annales du Centre universitaire méditerranéen* 7 (1954): 161. Originally delivered as a lecture on December 12, 1953.

conquest. He thus connects the inability of speak to the lack of a delineated territory. These distinctions establish two prerequisites for a modern collective subject: it needs a literature to give it voice and borders to give it form. These civilizational criteria divide the earth's human populations at the threshold of the nation. A people without borders is not a nation, cannot possess a literature, and thus has no collective voice.

For this reason, this "indigenous" Algerian writing appears in Audisio's estimation to be an entirely new phenomenon, rather than an offshoot of the millennial history of literature in North Africa that he had previously traced (and which his subtitle reprises in a particularly Latinate, Christian form: "De Saint Augustin à Albert Camus").[28] It required the consolidation of national borders by French colonization, a position which is echoed in the typical dialectical narrative of colonization, resistance, and independence. Audisio specifically identifies the development of an "indigenous" Algerian literary modernity with the emergence of a collective consciousness, writing "que l'homme nord-africain a très rarement pris conscience de lui-même en tant que tel, en tant qu'homme nord-africain, mais que tout se passe aujourd'hui comme si l'heure de cette prise de conscience était véritablement arrivée."[29] It was specifically the growing number of indigenous North African writers that marked a very sudden, highly visible historical threshold for Audisio. Of course, this autochthonous self-awareness had to take place in French for Europeans for recognize it as such. The indigenous world had never truly been silent, let alone unable to speak.

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[28] Since the likes of Audisio or Lebel would consider writers of European descent settled in Algeria as "Algerian," the term "indigenous" distinguishes writing by colonized Arab and Amazigh Algerians from the works of Europeans and their settler descendants during the colonial period. In this, I follow Zahir Ihaddaden, who notes that, while the term does not do away with all conceptual or legal ambiguities for the colonial period, it was unanimously used by the "indigenous" French-language press to describe itself. Zahir Ihaddaden, *Histoire de la presse indigène en Algérie des origines jusqu'en 1930* (Algiers: Entreprise nationale du livre, 1983), 5–6.

Autochthonous literary writing in French predated Audisio's essays in the 1940s and 50s by sixty or seventy years, or if we include journalistic writing, by more than a century. Likewise, writing in Arabic had never stopped in North Africa, even if the region, under French rule, was not at the forefront at home or abroad of the nineteenth and twentieth century Arabic literary movement known commonly today as *al-nahḍa* or "the awakening." Of non-religious writers in either Arabic or French, many got their start as journalists, first for governmental publications, then later in independent ones. In Algeria, *al-Mubashshir* / *Le Mobacher* was an official publication of the French Algerian government that appeared in Arabic and in French translation from 1848 to 1928. Algerians employed by this paper went onto serve as the first journalists of the self-styled "indigenous" independent press.[30] A previous official paper founded in 1832, *Le Moniteur*, also contained Arabic pages, but it is uncertain whether Algerians were hired to do the translations. In Tunisia, *al-Rā'id al-tūnisī* / *Journal officiel tunisien* played a similar role as *al-Mubashshir*; albeit beginning in 1860, decades before the French protectorate was established there in 1881. In Morocco, book printing preceded periodicals, as printing presses were established from 1859 through the turn of the century, primarily in Fez and Meknes.[31] While some presses bore a government imprint and official license, no official periodical would appear until the twentieth century, to the difference of Morocco's neighbors to the east.[32] The first Arabic weekly paper was *Al-Maghrib* in 1889, but a press in European languages (English,

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[29] Audisio, "Génie," 162.
[30] Ihaddaden, *Histoire*, 35–36.
[31] It is worth noting that Hebrew printing may have existed in the Maghreb since the arrival of Jewish refugees from Lisbon in Fez in the sixteenth century. Alisa Meyuḥas Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem: History, Identity and Memory of the Sephardim* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 50. The Italian historian Manfredo Macioti claims that Jewish émigrés from Mainz (birthplace of Johannes Gutenberg, who built the first movable-type printing press in Europe there in the mid-fifteenth century) brought a printing press to Morocco in 1516. Manfredo Macioti, "The Spread of Printing in the World," *Cultures* 4, no. 3 (1979): 89–97.
[32] Zayn al-'Ābidīn al-Kattānī, *Al-Ṣaḥāfa al-maghribiyya nasha'tuhā wa-taṭawwuruhā* (Rabat: Nashr

French, German, and Spanish) existed on the northern Mediterranean coast from as early as 1820[33] and had also made its way to Casablanca by the turn of the century.[34]

These developments took place as part of a wider flourishing of a multilingual periodical, political, and literary press around the Mediterranean.[35] Many of these were multilingual, whether in the official or de facto languages of their countries of origin (Arabic and Turkish in Egypt or elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, French and Arabic in Algeria) or in the languages of a particular audience (as in Arabic and Turkish publications in Europe, whether this address was sincere or performative). Even the original, quite dry governmental circulars, which were generally distributed in a limited fashion among officials, often contained excerpts from the *Thousand and One Nights* or other literary material.[36] Later, both private and official papers might contain analysis of European and Egyptian politics, lessons on French history, reports on the "wonders of the world", and serialized novels all in a single issue.[37] While many papers had only an ephemeral existence, some achieved long-term success and, as the press and its audience developed, they began to circulate beyond the places where they were printed.[38] The Maghreb was not entirely sundered by French rule from these surrounding developments. Aḥmad Fāris al-

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Wizārat al-Anbā', 1969), 57–65.

[33] *El Liberal africano* is widely cited as the first newspaper published in Morocco. According to Zayn al-'Ābidīn al-Kattānī, it ran for a year in Ceuta, but was actually printed in Madrid. The first paper printed in Morocco itself would have been *La Crónica de Ceuta*, first appearing in 1868. Al-Kattānī, *Ṣaḥāfa*, 67, 83.

[34] Cited in Jamal Eddine Naji, "Un Maroc à imprimer avec du plomb qui reste à dater," *Libération*, November 15, 2014, Online edition, https://www.libe.ma/Un-Maroc-a-imprimer-avec-du-plomb-qui-reste-a-dater_a56018.html. More generally, see also Amina Aouchar, *La Presse marocaine dans la lutte pour l'indépendance (1933-1956)* (Casablanca: Wallada, 1990), 8, 13-5.

[35] Roger Allen, Elisabeth Kendall, and others have demonstrated how the transformations in Arabic literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries began in the periodical press, alongside and inseparable from the changes in political and cultural discourse that that form enabled. Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 24–36; Kendall, *Literature, Journalism*.

[36] Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14–15.

[37] Ami Ayalon, *The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 83–84.

Shidyāq, a pioneer of the *nahḍa* in his literary production and his editorial role in several early, important newspapers, wrote in an 1866 letter of the financial difficulties he was encountering due to outstanding payments for issues of his journal, *al-Jawā'ib,* not just in his home country of Lebanon, but also from distribution agents in Tunisia and Algeria.[39]

This periodical press was the seat of the earliest developments of what we today call variously modern or postcolonial Maghrebi literature in French and in Arabic. If, as Peter Dunwoodie has discovered, the first French-language texts by Muslim Algerians date to the 1880s, it was *El Hack* [al-Ḥaqq] / *La Vérité*, the first newspaper owned, published, and written by Muslim Algerians, that circulated such writing among a larger public in Annaba (called Bône during French rule), featuring a serialized novel, a serialized travel narrative, short descriptive tableaus, and jokes across its brief, twenty-six issue run from July 1893 to March 1894.[40] Initially published only in French, *El Hack* switched to a bilingual French and Arabic format with original content in both languages in 1894.[41] The paper provided formative journalistic, political, and literary experience to a cohort of Algerians who would go on to play important roles in all of those domains over the following decades. As David Prochaska has shown, the paper was instrumental in the development of the *Jeunes Algériens* political movement after the turn of the century.[42] Even more so, however, its bilingual format, as well as its engagement with

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[38] Ayalon, *Press*, 22–23.
[39] Letter to Ẓāhir al-Shidyāq, October 14, 1866. Quoted in Ayalon, *Arabic Print*, ix.
[40] Peter Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing in Transition: Algeria 1900-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 24, 26.
[41] Twenty-one of *El Hack*'s twenty-six issues are available online through the Bibliothèque nationale de France's open-access Gallica platform at http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb327855123 (accessed May 11, 2018). On the paper's publication history, see Ihaddaden, *Histoire*, 158–66; Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 54; David Prochaska, "Making Algeria French and Unmaking French Algeria," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3, no. 4 (December 1990): 305–28.
[42] Prochaska, 317–19. Prochaska mistakenly claims that *El Hack* appeared only in French. I also disagree with his characterization of the paper as "staunchly apolitical"; his analysis is closer to the point when he acknowledges that the paper's positions may seem reactionary in comparison to the more

translation, transliteration, and transcription, herald the multilingual environment that would later be fostered in literary clubs, debating societies, discussion circles, and charitable organizations and into which "indigenous" Maghrebi literature was born.

Thus, there remains significant work to be done on this longer history of Maghrebi literature, as Dunwoodie has done for European and colonial writers in Algeria.[43] Different but overlapping forces contributed to the contemporary negligence and historical forgetting of cultural production in the Maghreb prior to the second World War. It is clear that ignorance of Arabic cannot fully explain the sudden shift in European critical attitude toward colonized Maghrebi writers in the 1940s and 50s, as exemplified by Audisio, because it also fails to account for the forms of French-language writing that imperial subjects had been participating in since the nineteenth century, whether in the periodical press or literary projects of other stripes.

What did change at this time was that a critical mass of indigenous writers began to produce novels. The use of this particular literary form triggered an altogether different kind of recognition. While European critics taxed writers from their colonies with charges of mimicry, I agree with Dunwoodie that this is less a clear-sighted judgment of the writing's literary qualities or an unavoidably-compromised first stage in the diffusion of a literary form, but rather a reaction born out of imperial anxiety in the face of the sudden manifestation of a widespread literary and cultural energy among the supposedly-inferior and docile colonized subject.[44] Whereas Dunwoodie draws on Homi Bhabha to analyze this as a subversive mode of mimicry that deploys hybrid forms, I find it more useful to think of the Maghrebi novel as a "capture of code" in the sense elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: "plus du tout imitation, mais

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robust ideological positions of later nationalist movements, but were indeed considered radical in their own time.

capture de code, plus-value de code, augmentation de valence, véritable devenir."[45] They give the example of the relation between an orchid and a wasp, whose forms might seem to imitate one another in order to facilitate interactions essential to the life-cycle of each one: the wasp's body fits perfectly into the orchid, where it may feed, taking on the flower's pollen and carrying it to another plant. Yet in no sense can this resemblance be attributed to imitation or derivation. Rather, each originates in a genetic code that serves not only to reproduce a flower and an insect, but also makes the one useful to the other and vice versa. In this sense, Maghrebi literature's capture of a "novelistic code" does not just reproduce a European model, but develops it as its own form. Capture of code makes possible a new, (semi-)autonomous domain of literary practice, whereas mimicry relies to some extent on an ongoing dialogic relation between the (former) metropole and colony.[46] This allows for the novel form and the French language to become Maghrebi, without need for reference to hybridity.

This means that narrow ethnographic readings, theories of influence and anxiety, and outright misrecognition that imperial and colonizing societies have brought to bear on the textual practices of the colonized are elements of a strategic disposition toward the gathering force of non-imperial writing. The increasing intensity of emergent literary production demands the attention of the metropole, crossing a threshold into a zone of textual contestation. Constraining reading practices thus represent a metropolitan riposte that reasserts an imperial literary

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[43] See Peter Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
[44] Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 19.
[45] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980), 17.
[46] Mimicry subverts the mimetic codes of reading that presume an unmediated relation of the "Third World" text to its place (or culture) of origin. Homi Bhabha, "Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism," in *The Theory of Reading*, ed. Frank Gloversmith (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), 120–21. Bhabha's reading of how the "not quite/not white" impression of the colonized in colonial representation in fact unsettles the certainty of Western modes of representation is insightful and important. However, here I wish not to turn back to the (post)colonial relation as what is always already at stake in (post)colonial literature. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of*

genealogy disguised as an adaptive approach to new literatures.

Yet Europeans were not alone in their disregard of or disdain for this ascendant Maghrebi writing. Even as critics of this literature in the Maghreb began to develop their own distinctive framework for evaluating their objects of study, they remained focused on the contemporaneous anticolonial and independence period. In 1964, the Tunisian Jewish writer Albert Memmi edited the first anthology of francophone Maghrebi writers to appear in France (only after similar works had already appeared in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, as he lamented in his introduction). A notice to readers and Memmi's brief introduction were the only critical apparatus in the anthology, apart from short author biographies. The prefatory "Avertissement" outlined the anthology's selection criteria: "Nous nous en sommes tenus *aux œuvres écrites par des Autochtones.*"[47] This approach quickly became the object of many a polemic among Europeans in North Africa and on the continent.[48] Yet the anthology's stance was actually fairly equivocal. The opening notice immediately clarifies that this is only a provisional limitation, not meant to ultimately exclude other writers from North African literatures. Indeed, two "pied-noir" writers, Henri Kréa and Jean Sénac, are included in the anthology. As the editors put it concerning these two writers, who were "nés au Maghreb, et qui s'en sont réclamés avec force [....] Nous avons préféré répondre par l'affirmative à leur affirmation."[49] What is more, the anthology leaves aside

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Culture, Second (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 121–31.

[47] Albert Memmi et al., eds., *Anthologie des écrivains maghrébins d'expression française* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1964), 9.

[48] On this controversy, see Jean Déjeux, "Francophone Literature in the Maghreb: The Problem and the Possibility," trans. Ruthmarie H. Mitsch, *Research in African Literatures* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 7. Memmi would later edit an anthology of what he called the "écrivains français du Maghreb", in contradistinction to the original "écrivains maghrébins d'expression française". Albert Memmi et al., eds., *Anthologie des écrivains français du Maghreb* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1969).

[49] Memmi et al., *Ecrivains maghrébins*, 9. This opening notice is unsigned, but presumably represents the view of Memmi, the editor, and the selection committee, consisting of Jacqueline Arnaud, Jean Déjeux, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and Arlette Roth, all part of the Groupe de recherches sur la culture maghrébine run by Memmi at the Ecole pratique des hautes études.

arabophone authors as posing unresolved problems, especially regarding translation. Instead, it promises a future volume of Arabic writing from the Maghreb. Consequently, the titular adjective "maghrébin" takes on a peculiar valence, including some Europeans and excluding indigenous Arabic-language writers.

It is on these peculiarities that Memmi's introduction builds a foundation for the reception of francophone Maghrebi literature to come. Memmi takes the quality "Maghrebi" to index a specific experience of colonization. Unlike the French North African writers, who are always in the orbit of Paris, the "écrivains maghrébins d'expression française" "n'ont pas d'autre pôle d'attraction" than the Maghreb and, more specifically, the Maghreb under French imperialism. As colonized subjects, their self-expression serves "révéler l'univers intérieur et extérieur du colonisé", amounting to a kind of stock-taking, *à la* Audisio: "pour la première fois, l'Afrique du Nord se voit enfin assumée [....] Ces nouveaux auteurs sont aux prises avec leur pays comme avec l'essentiel d'eux-mêmes."[50] Thus, the anthology's timeline of 1945-1963, from the end of World War II and the Sétif massacre in Algeria as the threshold of political awakening in the Maghreb, up to Algerian independence, establishes a space in which the individual author and the nation become analogous in the writer's grappling with the nation and the self. Ever since, critics have been able to follow Memmi in moving seamlessly from one level to the other, without encountering any resistance.[51] The colonial period, political independence, and the postcolonial nation-state that emerged from it have become the cornerstones of Maghrebi literary history, to the exclusion of most other spatial, temporal, or literary horizons. In Memmi's formative estimation, they necessarily define the character and the

[50] Memmi et al., 14–15.
[51] Nicholas Harrison, "Representativity (with Reference to Chraïbi)," *Paragraph* 24, no. 3 (November

stakes of this literature. First, having been born into a "situation historique désastreuse", Maghrebi literature takes on "une *dimension* politico-sociale, en quelque sorte nécessaire."[52] At the dawn of political independence, the nature of this inherent politico-social vector remained to be determined. This horizon of possibility rapidly contracted, however. Within a decade, one of Memmi's collaborators, Jean Déjeux, would see it as an ongoing "combat for the creation of independent nations."[53] In the same fashion, Memmi's invocation of the Maghreb or North Africa rather than any one of its constituent nation-states in 1964 will find itself increasing channeled into national form over the following years. So, too, did the question of language quickly become part of the debate over the politics of Maghrebi literature. At the time of the *Anthologie*, though, Memmi sees the issue of language as primarily one of access to a public. In the long term, he believes that Arabization policies will increase overall literacy and thereby direct writers toward Arabic in order to communicate with a national or regional audience.[54] Later, however, the question of language will produce much greater anxieties, leaving some to doubt the very existence of Maghrebi literature as such.[55]

In the years after the publication of the *Anthologie*, many of Memmi's collaborators in the project contributed to the further development of Maghrebi literary criticism in works of their own. Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Roman maghrébin* and Jean Déjeux's *Littérature maghrébine de langue française* refine Memmi's timeline and elaborate on its basic elements. Broadly speaking,

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2001): 36.

[52] Memmi et al., *Ecrivains maghrébins*, 17.

[53] Déjeux, "Francophone Literature," 7.

[54] Memmi et al., *Ecrivains maghrébins*, 17–18.

[55] Abdelfattah Kilito provocatively asks this existential question of Moroccan literature, whose French and Arabic writers (let alone work in any other language) are rarely treated together, save in the list form of an encyclopedia or dictionary. Abdelfattah Kilito, *Je parle toutes les langues, mais en arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 2013), 44-45. The dictionary he has in mind is Salim Jay, *Dictionnaire des écrivains marocains* (Casablanca: Eddif, 2005). This work is by the same critic who proclaimed Driss Chraïbi's death as a Moroccan author decades before, which I discuss below.

they differentiate between ethnographic literatures that cater to European expectations, literature of acculturation, which foregrounds the place of the individual between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized, militant literature fighting for national independence, and a nascent post-independence literature that both bears witness to the past and seeks to define the writer's role in postcolonial society.[56] Déjeux and Khatibi are in agreement that the long war for Algerian independence also strengthened the national quality of Maghrebi literatures.[57]

This history of Maghrebi literature crystallized into a framework for the reception of all works to come. Oriented on the emergence of independent Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, across the colonial, nationalist, independent, and postcolonial periods, the form of the nation-state installed itself at the center of Maghrebi literary modernity. Since North Africans had begun to give account of themselves in novelistic form, Memmi affirmed that "[l]a meilleure manière de comprendre l'Afrique du Nord, […] c'est de lire ses écrivains."[58] These structures of representativity that Memmi, Déjeux, Khatibi, and others articulated served to territorialize literature on the nation and its historical emergence.[59] Khatibi did not fail to take note of this national territorialization as francophone Maghrebi literature circulated outside North Africa. He noted in his *Roman maghrébin* that "l'écrivain [maghrébin] est condamné à engager le dialogue avec son propre pays. N'oublions pas que si Kateb, Chraïbi, Dib sont acceptés par l'Occident, ce n'est pas en tant que représentants universels, mais en tant que Maghrébins."[60] The individual writer, as Dib would later show, appears (almost as if on a stage) as Maghrebi first and foremost

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[56] Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine*, 35–40; Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Le Roman maghrébin*, 2nd ed. (Rabat: Société marocaine des éditeurs réunis, 1979), 27-28, 43-45.
[57] Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine*, 25–26; Khatibi, *Roman maghrébin*, 90.
[58] Memmi et al., *Ecrivains maghrébins*, 16.
[59] For Nicholas Harrison, the novel's representativity of the nation is the key concept for understanding the circulation and reception of Maghrebi literature. See Harrison, "Representativity," 30–36.
[60] Khatibi, *Roman maghrébin*, 38.

and, in her specificity, immediately and transparently comes to stand for the Maghreb as a whole.

These critics saw literary trends as responding to the socio-political evolution of the Maghreb. If this did lend itself to a developmental literary history, they did not explicitly imbue their periodization with its own narrative drive. Others have done so in the frustrated years following political independence, taking the elements of this basic framework as the arc of a tragedy. This is what Pascale Casanova calls "la tragédie des 'hommes traduits'," who are "pris dans une contradiction structurale dramatique qui les oblige à choisir entre la traduction dans une langue littéraire qui les coupe de leur public national mais leur donne une existence littéraire, et le retrait dans une 'petite' langue qui les condamne à l'invisibilité ou une existence littéraire tout entière réduite à la vie littéraire nationale."[61] By the late twentieth century, critics were frequently depicting francophone Maghrebi authors as inevitably and irreparably torn (*déchiré*) between two worlds.[62] A binary opposition between French and Arabic gave voice to these separate domains, despite the protestations of some, like Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, who recalled in *Le Monde* in 1971 that writers in either language faced the same social realities and shared the same difficulties.[63] Yet for others, the very venue of Bencheikh's publication in France, where he had emigrated after a decade spent in post-independence Algeria, betrayed an altogether different situation, where French-language writers turned to European markets and Arabic-language authors to national audiences or presses to the east in Beirut or Cairo. They saw the continued use of French as the prime culprit of the split in Maghrebi literatures, whether as the mark of a

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[61] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondial des Lettres* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 351.
[62] The notion was already present in Georges Joyaux's early articles. See Joyaux, "Littérature," 416-417. Isaac Yetiv's 1977 article demonstrates that these ideas were still current, more or less unfiltered, two decades later. Isaac Yetiv, "Iconoclasts in Maghrebi Literature," *The French Review* 50, no. 6 (May 1977): 858–64.
[63] Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Ecrits politiques (1963-2000)* (Paris: Séguier, 2001), 146.

detached elitism, a fawning Eurocentrism,[64] or a kind of pseudo-Oedipal murder of the Arabic mother-tongue[65] (never mind that literary Arabic is no one's first language in the Maghreb or that a vast number of Maghrebis first learn and speak a Tamazight language).[66] In this latter moment, the developmental narrative takes a turn to tragedy, as the novelist-nationalist telos fails to realize itself. It nevertheless remains as an unobtainable object, producing a belated postcolonial disenchantment that, somewhat ironically, becomes another stage in the developmental narrative, from derivate exoticism, to anticolonial engagement, to postcolonial nation-building, and ultimately frustrated disenchantment.

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[64] For Anne Armitage, the francophone writer, oriented toward Europe, "appears as a tragic figure, always waiting for a gatekeeper to grant him or her a writing space, and even then their created masterpieces require the gloss of another's tongue to bring them to full fruition through translation in one direction or another." Although this gatekeeper dynamic is a significant challenge facing francophone Maghrebi writers, making authors therefore into tragic figures evacuates their situation of its politics, leaving it as an inevitable historical outcome. For this reason, I prefer to describe this situation as a double-bind. See Anne Armitage, "The Debate over Literary Writing in a Foreign Language: An Overview of Francophonie in the Maghreb"," *Alif: Journal of Contemporary Poetics* 20 (2000): 63.

[65] Charles Bonn likens the emergence of postcolonial literature in ostensibly Western forms like the novel to the development of Greek tragedy: "le texte émergent plus qu'un autre se dit, comme la tragédie grecque, par une blessure fondatrice infligée à la clôture familiale [….] De même que pour Jean Duvignaud la tragédie grecque est cette scène urbaine du sacrifice des anciens dieux campagnards, de même le roman est un genre allogène, issu d'une civilisation industrielle inconnue dans la clôture traditionnelle de la famille maghrébine et ses valeurs." Rather than imagining a distinct Maghrebi literary modernity, this figures modernization as Westernization and therefore necessarily tragic, explaining in a neat circle the apparently-abortive literary, societal, and governmental projects of the postcolonial Maghreb. See Bonn, "Tragique," 12–13. Similarly, Abdellah Bounfour considers the "jouissance linguistique" of the francophone Maghrebi text and its writer to "mime l'accouplement d'Œdipe avec Jocaste", with disastrous consequences resulting from the abandonment of a phantasmatic Arabic mother-tongue (given the disparity between literary Arabic and Maghrebi dialects): "On connaît les conséquences de cet accouplement monstrueux: l'aveuglement de l'écrivain, le suicide de la langue-mère et de la langue-sœur et, enfin, le fratricide. En un mot, la tragédie." Abdellah Bounfour, "Langue, identité et écriture dans la littérature francophone du Maghreb," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 35, no. 140 (1995): 922.

[66] Fouad Laroui has written one of the latest and most visible attempts to diagnose the linguistic tragedy, reclassifying it as merely a "drama." Laroui calls for the invention of a national language, lest the nation and its literature crumble into regionalisms and separatisms. French is out of the question (166), but Laroui's presumption that Moroccan *dārija* is the authentic national language (103, 117-8, 166-8) is troubling in the way it appropriates Amazigh cultural resistance to the cause of Arabic as national language by reducing it to a mere attempt to escape the cultural blockage between literary and dialectical Arabic (103). See Fouad Laroui, *Le drame linguistique marocain* (Casablanca: Le Fennec, 2011).

"Hors sujet": The Place of the Author in the Double Bind

This is the double bind: Maghrebi literature must be specific to North Africa, even as it aspires to count as literature *tout court*, and nevertheless fail on both accounts. Although particularity provided a channel for Maghrebi literature to assert itself, it also functions as the effect of a territorialization of the literary field that emerges from the encounter between metropolitan and colonial textual practices in an imperial territory. In the same way, the author figure who has served as the guarantee of this localized literary authenticity, as Dib shows, is a marked, particular subject who must adopt an unmarked, neutral perspective, even as it is made impossible for her to do so. Despite the author's death in Europe famously diagnosed by Roland Barthes and analyzed by Michel Foucault, Maghrebi writers seem to remain alive and well.[67] Their biographies and careers are therefore exemplary of the ways that that the double bind of specificity and generality operates. The Moroccan novelist Driss Chraïbi, one of the first generation of post-WWII Maghrebi writers who also went on to have a long and prolific career, provides an illuminating example. Chraïbi has been criticized both when he does and does not write about Morocco. His first novel, *Le Passé simple,*[68] was decried for its harsh presentation of Moroccan society as hypocritical, autocratic, and patriarchal. Although the novel also denounced French colonial authority, it did not toe the nationalist line in glorifying Morocco by contrast. When some of his later novels did not outwardly deal with Morocco at all, critics wondered

[67] Barthes shifts critical attention to the reader, arguing that a text's meaning only coheres in its reading, not by any message that its author may inscribe or any intent that critics may discern in the author's biography. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," trans. Richard Howard, *Aspen*, no. 5–6 (1967): n.p. Two years later, Foucault's essay reports that the erasure of the author has become an everyday, almost banal topic for literary critics. He then lends greater philosophical rigor to this authorial disappearance by analyzing the author-function as part of a speech act that constitutes a writing as a work (*oeuvre*). Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?," *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 3 (September 1969): 73–104.
[68] Driss Chraïbi, *Le Passé simple* (Paris: Denoël, 1954).

whether he should still be considered a Maghrebi writer, with Salim Jay even declaring his literary "death."[69]

Venturing outside the Maghreb also risks an encounter with the double bind abroad. Abdelfattah Kilito relates how during the oral defense of his *thèse de troisième cycle* on the French novelist François Mauriac, one of the members of the jury commented, "Ce que vous avez fait, c'est bien. Seulement, il n'y a aucune trace de vous, de votre arabe, de votre croyance ou de votre non-croyance, de votre Maroc, de votre arabité. Pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a ce silence total?"[70] While it is true that Mauriac was a public proponent of Moroccan independence, there is no reason why a dissertation on Mauriac's novels should comment on Morocco, on Arabic, or on Islam. Only the Arabic name on the thesis's title page and the presence of the young Moroccan scholar before his committee could draw such comments. Kilito admits to trying to dissemble traces of his origin in his academic work up to that point. It is not merely that he attempts to do his work objectively, but that he must try to do it as if he were any other metropolitan French student. Learning to adopt this neutral subject-position was a fundamental part of his education in a French-style school in Morocco, where he often found his essays marked with the letters "H. S." in the margins, meaning "hors sujet", off topic. The *hors sujet* marks the peculiarity of all non-French subjects, in contrast to the unmarked neutrality of the metropolitan French subject. And yet, it is precisely for the absence of the mark of peculiarity that Kilito is criticized by his committee member.

In this last part of the introduction, I will turn to Kilito's scholarship on classical and contemporary Arabic literature in and beyond the Maghreb in order to offer a different tradition

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[69] Jay, "Mort," 39.

of analysis against which to situate Maghrebi literature. What is most important in this move is not that "Arab theory" should predominate over "European theory" or that one tradition is more appropriate or accurate than another.[71] Such arguments tend to reify the hierarchies of difference produced from the conflation of specificity and generality. The key is the particular alternative that Kilito offers, which is the creation of a critical palimpsest. This is a site where we can read power relations in the inscription, erasure, and reinscription of texts, rather than simply different possible sequences of historical forms (e.g., the primacy of French literature versus Arabic literature in influencing Maghrebi novels).

Literary Afterlives

Much of Kilito's work has examined various "author-functions" in classical Arabic literature. Just as Foucault analyzed how the "author-function" serves to constitute an *oeuvre* in (post)modern European literature, Kilito studies the historical and literary functions of plagiarists, forgers, transmitters, and more. What these various authorial figures have in common

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[70] Abdelfattah Kilito and Martine Mathieu-Job, "Entretien," 2014, https://www.mollat.com/podcasts/abdelfattah-kilito.

[71] The tendency in Western scholarship to fall back on Euro-American literary theory while ostensibly diversifying the field of literary study, as though non-Western traditions lacked equivalently general concepts, has been the object of critique on numerous occasions. There is a danger, however, in reproducing the logics of nationalism or colonialism in assuming that European theory can and should be reserved for European literature, Arab theory for Arabic literature, or African theory for African literature, and so on. To do so repeats and reinforces the inequalities already inscribed in such territorializations. See Hosam Aboul-Ela, "Is There an Arab (Yet) in This Field? Postcolonialism, Comparative Literature, and the Middle Eastern Horizon of Said's Discourse Analysis," *Modern Fiction Studies* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 733; Ayman A. El-Desouky, "Beyond Spatiality: Theorising the Local and Untranslatability as Comparative Critical Method," in *Approaches to World Literature*, ed. Joachim Küpper (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 70–71. Christopher Miller has perhaps most forcefully articulated this pitfall when he questions a Western reader's ability to "read the Other, the African, as if from an authentically African point of view, interpreting Africa in African terms, perceiving rather than projecting". Such a reader may read as much as they please, but they will never become African. At the same time, being African does not guarantee an "authentic" understanding of the text. The question thus reveals itself to be a false one, demonstrating not the impossibility of reading or knowing other literatures, but that doing so always partakes of power relations that produce inequalities. See Christopher Miller, "Theories of Africans: The Question of Literary Anthropology," *Critical Inquiry* 13, no. 1 (1986): 120–21.

is that they decouple the author-subject whose name signs texts from the body and person who write. They denaturalize any continuity between a writer's biography and the texts that bear her name. Likewise, the novels under study here attempt to finish off the overburdened figure of the Maghrebi author once and for all, whether it is by multiplying or dissecting authorial voice. These texts dismember the critical image of the Maghrebi writer who, as first Maghrebi and only secondarily an author, can only ever write from her own lived experience, which then comes to stand for the Maghreb as a whole. Instead, they render the scene of writing as one that is in the vicinity of death and tends to partake of violence, in which the body cannot be given in writing without tearing it apart. In this vein, Kilito studies a letter from beyond the grave, wherein body and letter are stitched together.[72]

The story comes from an anecdote told, retold, and transmitted by a series of classical biographers in their compilations. It is about the death of a minor classical writer and thinker, ibn Nāqiyā. The man who has come to perform the ceremonial washing of the corpse finds its hand tightly closed around a letter, in which ibn Nāqiyā has composed two brief pious verses on the occasion of his death. Kilito's reading of this anecdote and its transmission shows the story itself to be fundamentally about palimpsest, both gestural and scriptural. In his first reading, Kilito assumes that the man doing the ceremonial corpse washing must pry open the dead man's hand to discover the letter written on a piece of paper grasped tightly there. In this case, the corpse washer must undo and then re-stage the body's final pose. Upon further examination, it becomes clear that ibn Nāqiyā must have written the poem on his own palm. In this case, the washer must not only unfold his fist, but also wash the ink off his hand, since no part of the body may be left

[72] Abdelfattah Kilito, *L'Auteur et ses doubles: essai sur la culture arabe classique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 83–94.

unwashed. He then would have to re-write the lines of verse on Nāqiyā palm and close up his fist once again.

So, too, do biographers' subsequent interpretations return to and reinscribe this palimpsest. They impute a retrospective logic to the story, arguing that ibn Nāqiyā wrote these propitiatory lines to atone for a lifetime of skepticism and impiety. This authorial intention, however, is interrupted in the text of the anecdote. As Kilito notes, ibn Nāqiyā's opening line of verse begins, "I have gone," using the perfect verbal aspect. This opens up an impossible gap between author and text. As written, the letter can only properly have been composed after its author's death, or at least it only begins to speak from the place of his absence once he has passed on.[73] As such, the later restoration of authorial intention necessarily continues the anecdote's story of death and literary afterlives. Indeed, the details of the story change with each rewriting, over the course of which the hand (*kaff*) transforms through a copyist's error into a shroud (*kafan*), and consequently so, too, does its meaning.[74] It is informative that Kilito's next

[73] Kilito calls upon Roland Barthes here to identify the structure of this utterance as "le point vide, la tache aveugle" of language that narrative may occupy. Roland Barthes, "Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Allan Poe," in *Sémiotique narrative et textuelle*, ed. Claude Charbrol (Paris: Larousse, 1983), 48. The textual practice of transmission that delivers ibn Nāqiyā's posthumous letter to us by way of the biographical anecdote operates in the same way: in the radical disjunction of the author's intention and the necessarily posthumous circulation of the text. Texts only live after their authors'' deaths or, more provocatively, only dead authors can give meaning to their texts. We will have occasion to return to Barthes later as one of the main interlocutors in exchanges between the Maghreb, France, and Japan in Chapters Three and Four. It is worth noting Barthes's use of an Edgar Allan Poe story, since several other Poe texts appear in the wings of this study, so to speak. Poe's "Purloined Letter" (*The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: Widdleton, 1849, 1:262-80) and the critical exchanges about it among Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Barbara Johnson is an implicit intertext for my reading of Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* in Chapter Two, 88-95. This same story is also referenced at the end of Georges Perec's novella *Les Revenentes*, which I discuss in Chapter 3, 228-9 and in the Conclusion, 289, in the context of French modernist neo-*japonisme* and its relation to the Maghreb, as *Revenentes* contains one of Perec's most explicit engagements with French colonialism in North Africa. In the same setting, Abdelkebir Khatibi evokes Poe's "Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" (*Works*, 1:131-49). Finally, the Poe stories "The Domain of Arnheim" and "The Landscape Garden" (*Works*, 1:388-403; 4:336-45) are possible intertexts for Hubert Haddad's *Le Peintre d'éventail*, the novel I analyze in detail in Chapters Three and Four. Haddad references both of these tales by name his art book about the history of gardens in painting, *Le Jardin des peintres* (Paris: Hazan, 2000), 149.

[74] Kilito again draws on Barthes to liken prying open the closed fist to unfolding the structure and meaning

chapter opens with al-Jāḥiẓ's reflections on the different value of paper and parchment; no matter the character of the work written on it, the text on parchment will be worth more and perceived as of greater value. This is at least in part because parchment is sturdy, lending itself not just to circulation from one reader to another, but also to erasure and rewriting — in short, to palimpsest, both in the literal sense and in the figurative mode of reading practices demonstrated by transmitters of ibn Nāqiyā's posthumous letter.

In this dissertation, I, the critic, am like Kilito's transmitters, passing over again what has already been done. In this way, Kilito's analysis frames the intervention that I am making: it is necessarily after the fact and necessarily palimpsestic. I do not seek to restore Maghrebi writers' intentions nor return their works to a supposedly original context. Like the text that a reader encounters at any given moment, whether in its context of production or far beyond it, the letter on the dead man's hand recovers the moment of inscription and its intention while also remaining obscured by death. Intention and interpretation form a palimpsest. Literature, in this sense, only ever has afterlives. It always speaks from beyond the grave, taking life in a set of latent possibilities that become active at different times. By reading this way, we can see Maghrebi literature as contesting the authority of imperialist, nationalist, and other maps of North Africa without arrogating a similar authority to itself. If the page, whether a support for a map or a novel, is never blank, it is also not predetermined. I focus on how texts set up their own literary inheritances and transmissions through selective erasures and inscriptions, staging encounters with traces of the past to be reckoned with and their own potential legacies for various possible futures. These traces connect the world and the text, as well as the text and other texts, but only ever contingently. The trace relays through resemblance, but is just as prone to

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of a text. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 88-89.

dissemblance.

In this sense, these Maghrebi texts resonate with a trope common to the odes of pre-Islamic Arabic poets: meditations on the traces of an abandoned desert campsite where the poet's beloved once resided. Kilito analyzes this poetic topos as evoking the position of the poet who is conscious of composing in the stead of the semi-legendary great poets of former times. Kilito reads the poetic image of the abandoned campsite as both "la graphie d'un lieu dans le désert" and "la topographie du discours poétique tracé par les prédécesseurs."[75] In the multiple forms that writing takes as *graphie* and *topographie*, the writing of a place is bound up with its relation to a territory traced by texts, not given beforehand by geopolitical borders. Yet even as new writing has to grapple with the extant territories it encounters, it takes as its task neither the representation nor imitation of the traces it finds. Instead, the encounter itself becomes the occasion for narration, for the continuation of writing rather than its accomplishment in a perfected circle of representation: "Le poète a pour tâche de dessiner sur du dessin, d'écrire sur de l'écriture. La nouvelle écriture s'imprime sur une écriture à demi effacée; [...] face à une écriture en ruine, il faut bien que le poète y mette du sien pour qu'un nouveau campement voie le jour."[76] Literature's role is not to represent once and for all or to give to be seen, but to prolong the act of narration, to extend the domain of writing, and to speak from the site of ruination. Literature does not always return to its place of origin, but instead takes detours to other places and other times, forging relations never before imagined in the territory where it finds itself. Literature occurs by intensifying the tensions between a text and its presumed object, not in spite of them. As such, the webs of causal relations between a text and its context may exist, but are

[75] Kilito, *Auteur*, 17.
[76] Kilito, 21.

all too often unrecoverable, buried beneath the desert sands. Sands shift and points of resemblance or recognition become fleeting and ephemeral.

Thus, my readings in the chapters to follow will begin with this shifting, indeterminate geography. One of the eminently political possibilities open to the text is to slip out of its given place, to actualize the gap between its existence as a text and its assigned place in the world. It is a particularly important possibility for the postcolonial novel that is "perhaps one of the most geographically constituted objects of literary history" and consequently gets cast as an anxiety-ridden, "place-sensitive genre that supposedly *intuits* its geographic displacement as the condition of its impossibility" when bound to its geopolitics.[77] Allowing the postcolonial novel to unmoor itself from its situatedness in the world enables a critique of the territorialization of literary difference that imputes anxiety and derivativeness to the non-metropolitan text. The question that the texts under study here insist on is, to which world do we belong? They explore other worlds both possible and impossible, riffing on literature's potential un-worldliness as kinds of politics for navigating the "network of often colliding forces" that texts encounter.[78] Paying attention to the differentiation of actual and virtual territories allows us to better understand a text's ability to interact with the world while also dislocating itself from it, with scale being a key vector on which these relations emerge. Consequently, I insist on the potentiality of instability, the possibility of being otherwise or elsewhere; not simply for the

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[77] Tanoukhi, "Scale of World Literature." 600, 605.

[78] The phrase is Edward Said's, whose notion of the "worldliness of the text" I am implicitly engaging here. Said claims that contemporary literary criticism has expended too much energy on "the limitlessness of interpretation", at the expense of the "circumstance, time, place and society" that enmesh texts in the world. As such, he believes we have misapprehended the very real power relations to which texts are subject. I agree with this last point, but contend that virtuality and difference from the world are as important vectors for power relations as historical context and thus demand our continued critical attention. See Edward Said, "The Text, the World, the Critic," *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 8, no. 2 (Autumn 1975): 3–5.

pleasure of possibility as such, but because the critique of actuality will stumble when it ignores virtuality and potentiality.

Poetically, this means abandoning the *carte blanche*, the blank page to be filled in, for the endless search for traces of an abandoned desert campsite. Whereas a map can be completed, the desert is always in motion, as are the nomadic poets whose traces we seek. Such a question will lead to invention rather than resolution, just as the Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb insists that "le poète crée à partir d'une enquête, crée à partir d'une opération d'érudition."[79] Incompletion and indeterminacy are here incitations to a necessarily inexhaustible search for knowledge. The map will not be definitively filled in, but endlessly traversed. This is not to defer judgment entirely, but to avoid that form of judgment which forecloses thinking, in favor of a critique that neither fixes nor foregoes difference.

[79] Abdelwahab Meddeb, "La double généalogie de l'écriture littéraire au Maghreb" (2009), http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42806439q.

Part One: Other Times of the Maghreb

Part One examines novelistic times and temporalities that diverge from the established historiography of the Maghreb and its literature. Chapter One, "Dismembering Maghrebi literature", reads Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985) as an attempt to write Maghrebi history in a literary form, where literature does not follow from or allegorize the political history of the postcolonial nation-state. The novel instead moves along a chain of bodies and texts that remain in the wake of colonial ruination but never give form to a recuperated national body. Chapter Two, "Between Futures Past and Present", examines three novels that are set in the distant past, relative to the postcolonial Maghreb: Driss Chraïbi's *La Mère du Printemps* (1982) and *Naissance à l'aube* (1986) and Jamel Eddine Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum* (1998). Set during the Umayyad conquest of North Africa and Iberia across the seventh and eighth centuries and a ninth-century slave revolt in Abbasid Iraq, respectively, these works depict pasts whose vision of the future does not coincide with the Maghrebi present, which includes them in its history. If the past and present are connected at all in these novels, it is more through the failure of the past to produce the future it had imagined, than in building the reader's present. Through this failed historical continuity and the disruptions of colonialism and decolonization, these texts denaturalize the westward motion of Islamicate history encoded in the word *maghrib*, which equates the Maghreb with the place where the sun sets.

Chapter One: Dismembering Maghrebi Literature

Introduction

Assia Djebar's 1985 novel *L'Amour, la fantasia* is a story told in fragments, passed from hand to hand.[80] It begins with a young Algerian girl whose father leads her by the hand to her first day of school in the coastal Algerian Sahel in the 1940s and ends with the dismembered hand of an unknown woman murdered in the 1852 French siege of Laghouat, a desert oasis in the northern Sahara. Between these two moments, the novel creates a sequence of bodies and letters in narrative fragments based on oral histories and colonial archives, which are held out for the reader to grasp as part of their chain of transmission from one hand to another. The novel progresses in a constant back-and-forth movement across time and space, as well as body and voice, spanning the more than one hundred and thirty years from the French capture of Algiers in 1830 to Algerian national independence in 1962. Thus, Djebar's novel revisits the immediate colonial history of the Maghreb that is assumed to have forged the postcolonial nation-state and its literary modernity by fragmenting this history.[81] In other words, it shows that one can only ever return to this history as fragmented remnants. These fragments allow us to see a fundamental oscillation toward and away from the nation in the writing of contemporary Algerian history. The text locates this tension in the gendered violence that subtends the formation of both colonial and postcolonial territories. The transmission of history, stories, and languages from body to body tends to pass through women's bodies, which come to figure both the most extreme violence of colonization and the justification of anticolonial violence in the

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[80] Assia Djebar, *L'Amour, la fantasia* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995). First published by Jean-Claude Lattès, 1985. Hereafter abbreviated *AF*. Further citations given parenthetically.

[81] See the discussion of Maghrebi literary modernity above in Introduction, 30-43.

name of the nation-state to come. The novel thus oscillates undecidably between the allegorical image of Algeria as a Woman and the multiplicity of often-anonymous encounters, whether violent or amorous, between bodies and letters. By foregrounding this tension, the novel rewrites Algerian national history in a fractured form that at once gives form to and fragments the postcolonial nation. In this sense, it opens up other times of the Maghreb from within its received historiography.

Importantly, it does so as a canonical text addressing canonical themes by a canonical author in Maghrebi literature. While Driss Chraïbi and Jamel Eddine Bencheikh will displace Maghrebi history over a longer timescale in the next chapter, they do so in novels that have not gained the same critical weight as *Amour*. Djebar herself is one of the most widely-recognized and studied of Maghrebi writers. Over a half century-long career, she authored some twenty-odd works, including novels, essays, short stories, poetry, and theater, and directed two important films. She also exerted a strong influence on French and Francophone Studies in the United States while teaching at Edouard Glissant's Center for French and Francophone Studies at Louisiana State in the late 1990s and then at New York University in the new millennium. Her global profile among elite institutions was cemented with her election to the Académie française in 2005. Consequently, Djebar's oeuvre is both fundamental to and entrenched in established histories of Maghrebi literary modernity. This history construes writing in the Maghreb as fundamentally responsive to politics, and specifically to a retrospectively-imagined nationalist form of politics. Literature, then, would develop in the wake of a highly-structured political history that progresses through colonization, anticolonial struggle, independence, and postcolonial nation-building. In this model, literary forms follow from political situations. Consequently, some scholars of Maghrebi literature have identified a "retour du référent" in

L'Amour, la fantasia and Djebar's subsequent works in response to the domestic political turmoil of the 1980s and 90s in Algeria (and across the Maghreb). The referent's return marks a disruption in the developmental narrative of Maghrebi literary modernity, which was supposed to progress from ethnographic description to a social realism engaged in anticolonial politics and ultimately to a more open-ended, experimental artistic sphere in the postcolonial nation-state. This disruption and the political unrest that occasions it gain a tragic pathos, appearing as the repetition of a structural violence imprinted in the postcolonial nation-state by its imperial past.

I call this critical interpretation the realist aesthetics of emergency and examine how Djebar's novel partakes of that aesthetics in order to question it from within. If a socio-political state of emergency seems to demand *timely* literary responses, *Amour* unfolds the temporal disjunction that arises at the interface of literature and history. This disjointed temporality is the core of a specifically literary politics of resisting the reduction of the literary speech act to its context of enunciation. By rewriting the dual history of Algerian literature and Algeria from documentary and autobiographical sources but into a fictional form, *Amour* asks what actually remains of that past and what it would mean to assume and transmit it as a historical or literary inheritance (be it personal, national or transnational, anticolonial or postcolonial). Does, in other words, the return of the referent ever actually return back to a world outside of writing? Or can writing testify that cannot be witnessed in a form other than the literary?

I will begin by analyzing the unusual narrative temporality that *L'Amour, la fantasia* sets up in its opening chapters, which undergirds the novel's structure and makes possible its movement across disparate fragments. This narrative tense affects how the text interfaces with history and memory. Whereas the realist aesthetics of emergency takes these to be the text's referential ground, the novel instead renders them theatrically. I will then examine in detail the

question of *Amour*'s genre in critical reception. The return of the referent has primarily taken the form of autobiographical readings of the novel, which have predominated in most scholarship to date. I argue that reading *Amour* as an autobiography reinscribes the novel as a palimpsest for the realist aesthetics of emergency, which seeks to produce a liberal individual subject recognizable within a Western political paradigm. I then turn to the novel itself, which I read as an examination of the relation between the body and the letter. The networks of power that the novel traces among bodies, texts, and language all move through a gray zone that haunts the notion of a literature of emergency: where testimony is necessarily literary, that reference, if there is reference, cannot be founded outside of the text, apart from the contingent mechanisms that overdetermine it. The final question to ask of *Amour* is where its investigation concludes. Are we left with only remnants, bits of flesh that are the only "true witnesses" of a testimony that can only be spoken in literary form? Or does it return to a national body and to History, despite its detours? I will contend that what remains for Djebar is not just the other tongue, the colonizer's language that lingers as a remnant of the catastrophic ruination that was French colonization, but the possibility of another, asignifying language.[82]

Narration, Time, and Theatricality

The novel begins at dawn. This detail will gain significance in its repetition across the novel's opening pages, which establish a narrative temporality that is marked untimeliness and whose continuity is based on discontinuity. In *L'Amour, la fantasia*'s first sentence, a young

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[82] Hannah Arendt commented in an interview in 1964 that her mother tongue was all that remained for her from pre-Hitler Germany. While this mother tongue persists through catastrophe, the legacy of French in Algeria is that of the catastrophe of colonization itself. Cited in Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 159. The text of the interview is available online at https://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview_archiv/arendt_hannah.html

Arab girl in colonial Algeria leaves home for her first day of school. Her father, an instructor at the French school that she will attend, leads her, hand in hand: “Fillette arabe allant pour la première fois à l’école, un matin d’automne, main dans la main du père” (*AF* 10). The novel evokes this childhood scene in an almost ekphrastic or painterly manner. It is filled with temporal indications (première fois, matin, automne), but for the most part these do not locate it in a history properly speaking. They are rather more like elements of a tableau or a painting. One may imagine the position of the sun in the sky or picture flora in an autumnal state. Only the phrase “pour la première fois” attempts to inaugurate a chronology. This incipit, however, runs up against the use of the present participle, *allant*, that governs the tense of the sentence. This verbal particle, which can also become a verbal adjective or a verbal noun as a gerund, leaves the time of the utterance incomplete and uncertain. English does not normally consider phrases with only a participle to be complete sentences, although they would be admissible as the title of a painting, for example. French, too, generally employs a participle in relation to another, fully conjugated verb. The participle’s “present” always depends on the time of the main verb, as a function of their syntactical arrangement. Absent such a main verb, as is the case here, the continuous action of the present participle is interrupted by its own grammatical incompletion. Because the present participle here remains dislocated from the coordinates of a verbal tense system, it is “never complete, always returning, but forever unfinished”, as Sam Weber has poetically described its grammatical partiality and syntactic participation.[83]

This peculiar narrative time draws on performative strategies in the visual arts, particularly the medium of theatricality. Understood broadly, theatricality denotes the doublings and displacements of language and gesture that are most familiar on the stage, but not at all

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[83] Samuel Weber, *Benjamin’s -Abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 171.

limited to it. As *Amour* recasts the historical events, popular legends, and personal memories that it narrates variously as spectacle, theater, ballet, dance, tableau, and painting, it works in the medium of theatricality, wherein the double of reality is not mere image or reproduction, but has an existence unto itself.[84] This theatrical irreducibility of the fictional text to its putative context is already at work from the novel's first line. The iterative verbal aspect of the present participle, partaking of a finite but open-ended series of repetitions "in and as the interval linking and separating that which is presented from the presentation 'itself'", is the "grammatical hallmark" of theatricality.[85] The participle "allant" that establishes the time of narration at the beginning of the novel pushes theatricality to its limit. Standing quite apart from any other verb, the participle almost suspends its own iterative aspect and, in a sense, verbal aspect in general. The participle's verbal qualities are pushed as far as possible to the adjectival, rendering it as a quality of the young girl. It decouples this movement from its temporal articulation in a larger grammatical or narrative schema. There is a *moving* or a *going* that becomes a pure quality of the figure of the girl, rather than an action driving the plot toward its conclusion. Within theatricality, then, is the limit-case of the tableau, which here figures going *as a figure*, not as a movement in time. Iterative time bears within itself the possibility of its own suspension. What will ultimately connect the young girl's hand to the dismembered hand at the end of the novel is not a temporal progression, but rather a succession of bodies and fragments formed hand in hand.

The narrative time of the present participle also modulates the text's relation to its ostensible historical and autobiographical context. In the opening pages, the descriptive third-person narration of this tableau soon gives way to a first-person narrator, for whom the young

[84] In this regard, the play that Djebar co-wrote with her then-husband Walid Garn in 1969 is an important intertext for *Amour*. (N.B. that the original printing gives their names as Assia Djebbar and Walid Carn.)

girl figures as a memory. This narrative voice speaks from the site of its difference from the girl. This split appears as the "I" that posits itself as the remembering subject and the figure of the girl exchange narrative places, back and forth and back again, as the text oscillates between first- and third-person. By rendering memory as a tableau, the narrator conjures a figure different from but intimate to herself that offers the pure possibility of *going*. The figure of the "fillette allant" makes possible a new departure, as the first-person narrator repeats and transforms the opening sentence to read, "Ma fillette me tenant la main, je suis partie à l'aube" (*AF* 13). Displacing the father, narrator and character set out, each leading the other: it is the girl who holds the narrator by the hand, but the narrator who introduces movement into the tableau of memory, shifting from the present participle to the *passé composé*. Just as the first sentence emphasized the adjectival properties of the participle *allant* over the verbal in relation to the figure of the young girl, the action of leaving (*partir*) also has a pseudo-adjectival relation to the narrative "je" thanks to the use of *être* as an auxiliary verb. Provocatively, we might translate it as "I am gone". The remembering subject, speaking from the place of her difference to her own recollection, is already absent from the scene of memory. At the same time, the young girl, the ostensible object of this memory, precedes it in the narrative and plays her own role in the scene. Memory, then, is also operating theatrically here. The text does not record and preserve recollected images. Instead, it treats memory as a process of doubling that yields new tableaus with new figures, the combination of which enables the narrative. Thus, for example, staging the difference in the adjectival qualities of the present and past participles, *allant* and *être parti*, makes possible the first narrative move across its disparate fragments. The first-person narrator's "je" has the quality

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See Assia Djebar and Walid Garn, *Rouge l'aube* (Algiers: SNED, 1969).
[85] Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 15.

of having left, whereas the scene of the young girl's pure *going* offers a point of entry in which her place is that of the one who has already departed from it, emphasized by the repetition of *passé composé* constructions: "j'ai parcouru les eaux sombres du corridor en miraculée, [….] j'ai coupé les amarres" (*AF* 13). Thus unmoored, the narrator and the girl set out at a second dawn.

The word "aube" ends the first chapter and opens the second. The referential content of "dawn" as a descriptor is less important than its theatrical repetition, enabling the narrative's hand-to-hand exchanges. Across it, the narrator links the girl's hand in her father's to that of Amable Matterer, captain of a French frigate, as he writes in situ of being the first to sight land while approaching Algiers at dawn on June 13, 1830. The novel thus connects the young girl's initiation into the French language in a colonial school with the installation of French in the Maghreb on the heels of the siege of Algiers. Drawing on a vast archive of French-language accounts of the ensuing "expédition d'Afrique" and subsequent campaigns that extended and consolidated French rule over Algerian territory, which received its modern form from imperial conquest, the text weaves together episodes from the French conquest with scenes from the girl's childhood and oral accounts of women's experiences during the Algerian war of independence. In so doing, it would seem to be an exemplary instance of the nationalist-novelist paradigm of Maghrebi literary modernity, wherein writers take stock of national character and history, giving it voice in novelistic form. The definition of Algerian literature that Jamel Eddine Bencheikh put forth shortly after independence shows just how specific this history is, listing a series of dates that stand for what have retrospectively become the formative moments of post-independence Algerian history: "1837, 1850, 1872, 1916, 1936, 1945, 1954. Est algérienne toute forme de littérature ou de culture qui assume ces événements d'une part, qui maintient son existence à la

communauté algérienne d'autre part."[86] Indeed, most of these dates find an explicit echo in Djebar's novel. Even so, however, *Amour* does not allow for any easy assumption of such a history.

The very possibility of the objective historical reality of the postcolonial nation-state passes into the medium of theatricality as the text reprises its ekphrastic narrative mode. It depicts the scene aboard Matterer's ship by rewriting the diary and epistolary accounts of French officers and the many works produced by a generous complement of painters, draftsmen, and engravers who accompany the French forces. The "expédition d'Afrique" occasions a superabundance of written and pictorial production that almost precedes the siege of Algiers itself. *Amour* shows that figuring battle as spectacle to be as important to the combatants as is its outcome. At stake is not territory alone, but its representability. The novel transforms these sources' investment in self-representation by recasting them from a free-floating point within the scene. It adopts a perspective from which the French fleet is as much performing a "ballet fastueux" as the city is silent before an "ouverture d'opéra", making it impossible to determine "[q]ui dès lors constitue le spectacle, de quel côté se trouve vraiment le public?" (*AF* 14). Just as this scene shows that the French invasion was as much about its own self-representation as it was about military objectives, it indicates that the task of assuming the modern Algerian nation-state's colonial history in fictional form is also a theatrical undertaking. Implicated in it are a series of decisions founded in power relations, rather than supposedly-objective historical grounds: what texts and which subjects or bodies will be constituted as capable of and responsible for the task of addressing history? Who is the audience and in what form do they

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[86] Bencheikh, *Ecrits*, 27. Originally published as Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, "De la littérature algérienne d'expression française," in *Diwân algérien: la poésie algérienne d'expression française de 1945 à 1965,*

interpellate it? In the ambiguous spectacle that plays out between the French fleet and the city of Algiers, these questions do not simply return the reader to the state of contemporary Maghrebi society, but rather relay forward back across the hands that form the novel's narrative.

Realism, Emergency, and Testimony

Nevertheless, the relation between history and the postcolonial novel in the Maghreb (and beyond) has generally been reduced to a realist mode of narration that critics posit as best suited to the weighty task of assuming the past, particularly under the impetus of sociopolitical states of emergency, whether in the violence of imperial conquest and governance, of the Algerian revolution, or the domestic unrest and civil war of the 1980s and 90s. Charles Bonn and others have diagnosed a "retour du référent" in Algerian literature of this period,[87] which others have linked to a "testimony imperative" in French-language writing in general.[88] They argue that the

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étude critique et choix de textes, ed. Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi and Jamel Eddine Bencheikh (Centre pédagogique maghribin, 1967), 5–11.

[87] See Charles Bonn, Xavier Garnier, and Jacques Lecarme, eds., *Littérature francophone*, vol. 1 (Paris: Hatier, 1997), 206–9; Charles Bonn, "Postcolonialisme et reconnaissance littéraire des textes francophones émergents: l'exemple de la littérature maghrébine et la littérature issue de l'immigration," in *Littératures postcoloniales et francophonie: Conférences du séminaire de Littérature comparée de l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle*, ed. Jean Bessières and Jean-Marc Moura (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 27–42; Abdallah Mdarhri Alaoui, "Roman algérien actuel et violence socio-politique: Tendances thématiques et narratologiques," in *1989 en Algérie*, ed. Najib Redouane and Yamina Mokaddem (Toronto: Editions La Source, 1999), 133; Abdallah Mdarhri Alaoui, "Francophonie et roman algérien postcolonial," in *Littératures postcoloniales et francophonie: Conférences du séminaire de Littérature comparée de l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle*, ed. Jean Bessières and Jean-Marc Moura (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 60–61. This hypothesis has a specific historical origin in attempts to periodize Maghrebi literature, which date to the earliest comprehensive studies of the field. Generally, writing from the end of World War II to Algerian independence in 1962 is considered to be politically engaged in explicitly anticolonial stances. The decades after independence and prior to the "années de plomb" in Morocco and the rise state and Islamist violence in Algeria are broadly denoted as a period of postcolonial and postmodern experimentation. The "retour du référent" would thus be, implicitly, a return to a privileged, Sartrean model of *littérature engagée*. But this schematic approach is belied by the likes of Mohammed Khair-Eddine, whose novel *Agadir*, by way of example, merges poetic density and political critique. One might also think of Kateb Yacine, Rachid Boudjedra, and many others. As I will show below, the emergence of ostensibly autobiographical writing has favored a mistaken understanding of an inverse relation between fiction and politics.

[88] Claire Boyle, "Autobiography," in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. William Burgwinkle, Nicholas Hammond, and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 559.

many writers who faced hostility, threats, and, ultimately, deadly violence amid political turmoil and civil war responded by producing an "écriture de l'urgence."[89] The French *urgence* connotes both writing within a present state of emergency and also an urgency in the face of that situation. This is particularly so insofar as the emergency situation is not limited to the increasing weight of a particular form of politics on the present, but also how a present extreme situation threatens to reconfigure the past, in an attempt to manage its own archivization. In response, literature acts on a "testimony imperative", developing a practice of bearing witness to emergency and, in so doing, acting on a sense of urgency toward the past (or even the way the present is being made into the past).[90] Much like the anticolonial politics of the period in which Bencheikh defined Algerian literature in his introduction to the *Diwân algérien*, an extreme political and social context seems to call for writers to go to ground, so to speak, in realist forms that facilitate the transmission of what is at risk in the emergency.

Implicit in these qualifications is a turn not just to literary realism, but to a particular conception of "reality" as the self-evident outside to all text and the site of all politics. The

[89] The term belongs to Hafid Gafaïti, who does not contest the turn to autobiography or testimony in Algerian literature, but warns against concluding that "le poids de l'Histoire et l'intensité de la crise algérienne ont abouti, presque automatiquement, à une sorte de disparition de la littérarité ou à une baisse de qualité de l'écriture". Hafid Gafaïti, *La Diasporisation de la littérature postcoloniale: Assia Djebar, Rachid Mimouni* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 33. I argue for a reading of *Amour* that goes beyond a defense of its aesthetic quality to grasp the specificity of its aesthetics, which is to say of its endangered literarity in relation to the structure of testimony and reference.

[90] It is possible that the origin of this sense of emergency/urgency and the strategies it calls for can be found in Western ethnological approaches to Africa, and the non-Western world in general, in the wake of increased Euro-American global colonial and imperial activity throughout the nineteenth century. Imperialism opened new terrain to ethnologists and facilitated their access, but it also fundamentally and rapidly transformed the very realities that ethnologists sought to study. They responded to this situation by privileging collecting and documenting tactics. They gathered countless objects meant to bear witness to a bygone, "pure" reality. Interminable lists and overcrowded display cases stood in for any interpretation. See Vincent Debaene, "'Etudier des états de conscience': La réinvention du terrain par l'ethnologie, 1925-1939," *L'Homme* 179 (September 2006): 7–62. Debaene has also sketched out a connection between (post)colonial writers and opposition to, as well as investment in, ethnographic discourse. See Vincent Debaene, "Les écrivains contre l'ethnologie? Ethnographie, ethnologie et littérature d'Afrique et des Antilles, 1921-1948," *The Romanic Review* 103, no. 3–4 (November 2013):

"retour du référent" thus imposes itself as a return to an original site of politics, outside the text, which allows it to appear as the restoration of politics rather than a particular political act in itself. Opposite this pole of the givenness of reality is the artifice of fiction. It is as though there were a barrier isolating fiction from reality that, in the face of urgency, must be pierced, or at least stretched to make transparent, so that literature may fulfill its responsibility to the extreme situation. It demands that authors refigure themselves as transmitters who relay the self, its history, and its experience of reality in autobiographical and historiographical narrative. In Djebar's case in particular, and that of third-world or postcolonial women writers in general (especially women from the Islamicate world), this has taken the form of an expectation of autobiographical writing, wherein the author becomes a transmitter of both herself and her culture to the world beyond her own.[91] As the author becomes a transmitter, her text becomes a *trace de vie*, which is to say a referent, offering a "fil d'Ariane" to lead readers out of the labyrinth of theatrical ambiguity that is the text back into the solid ground of the world. Thus, Elke Richter argues that *Amour* testifies to the presence of human existences that had fallen victim to the double violence of physical suffering in imperial conquest and erasure in the colonial archive. Yet the novel is not itself so certain of where such a thread might lead, or whether it even has a thread to offer. Despite the ostensible ethical necessity and political urgency of such a task, what a realist aesthetics of emergency would take as the mark of a transparent relation of text and world nevertheless takes textual form. *Amour* reveals the

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353–74.

[91] Reception of works by writers like Djebar outside of Islamicate contexts has fetishized the notion that Islam or Islamicate cultures forbid women's speech in general, and self-expression or representation in particular. By linking misogyny to Islam rather than patriarchal power relations in general, it absolves the Western reader of their complicity in women's oppression and affords them emotional catharsis by putting them in the place of the liberal subject who allows these women to speak freely. It also binds the postcolonial text to its imputed territory of origin all the more tightly by tracking its genealogy back to a

theatricality of this process, posing but not resolving the question how bodies and texts interact.[92]

Thus, if *Amour* transmits a testimony, it does so by always posing the question, of what and to whom? The narrator depicts herself as occupying an undecidable position with regard to what she relays and to whom. Whereas the realist aesthetics of emergency presumes that the person of the author grounds the transmission of authentic experience, in *Amour* becoming the subject of transmission is simultaneously a desubjectification: "Corps nu — puisque je me dépouille des souvenirs d'enfance —, je me veux porteuse d'offrandes, mains tendues vers qui, vers les Seigneurs de la guerre d'hier, ou vers les fillettes rôdeuses qui habitent le silence succédant aux batailles… Et j'offre quoi, sinon nœuds d'écorce de la mémoire griffée, je cherche quoi, peut-être la douve où se noient les mots de meurtrissure…" (*AF* 202). Something peculiar happens to the subject of transmission here that calls into question the identity of the narrator who is supposed to give testimony. Rendering childhood memories transmissible in the form of souvenirs, which gesture toward experience without containing it, leaves the narrator stripped bare.[93] This stripping down does not reveal the true self within, but rather desubjectifies the

specific, ostensibly non-Western sociopolitical structure.

[92] Elke Richter, "Sur les traces de la trace dans l'œuvre d'Assia Djebar," in *Assia Djebar: Littérature et transmission*, ed. Wolfgang Asholt, Mireille Calle-Gruber, and Dominique Combe (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010), 257. In this formulation, the realist aesthetics of emergency explicitly claims to resolve the Derridean problematic of the *trace*, or the endless deferral of signification. *L'écriture de l'urgence* finds an *hors-texte* in the state of emergency, which appears as its ground rather than as a supplement. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1967), 90–95. There is a kind of nostalgia for the world as a referent at work here that is not without its parallels in conceptions of world literature. Often this takes the guise of jettisoning a previous generation of literary theory as inapplicable to non-European writing practices. Yet the means of doing so too often reinscribes the inequalities that distinguish Western and non-Western writing in the first place. French literature, for example, remains the place of high theory, while Maghrebi literature is assumed to lack such conceptual death, bound as it is to an immediate realism.

[93] The *souvenir* here is both memory and memento. The narrator describes her interactions with memory in terms of physical experiences: *se dépouiller*, *porter des offrandes*, *tendre les mains*. The memories themselves become something physical, "nœuds d'écorce". The formation and transmission of these *souvenirs* operates in the same way as Philippe Hamon has analyzed the souvenirs that European travelers collected from ruins they visited. Bringing back a piece of worked stone or a pottery shard extends the experience of the ruin itself, both in the metonymic relation of the part to the whole, but also

transmitter. Transmission depersonalizes the very identity that is supposed to ground it. Likewise, the question of who shall receive these souvenirs is unresolved. When the transmitter holds out her hands in offering, she can only name figures of the past as possible recipients. An ellipsis suspends any decision on the question of reception, for the message carried by the desubjectified transmitter has no addressee. As for what she has to offer, it is only the husk that memory has become in the form of a souvenir; in peeling off her childhood recollections like so much bark, they have become marked with illegible scratches that testify to their dispossession but transmit only the effect of memory.

In short, the narrator radically questions the possibility of possessing a message that may be transmitted and, in its transmission, be appropriated by its receiver. Consequently, dispossession is ultimately what the narrator transmits, or rather is the site of her voice: "Je ne m'avance ni en diseuse, ni en scripteuse. Sur l'aire de la dépossession, je voudrais pouvoir chanter" (*AF* 202). She does not perform the function of the speaker or the writer, which the terms *diseuse* and *scripteuse* designate in their barest form in French. What would be gained should the narrator realize her desire to be able to sing (though not, therefore, to be a singer, *une chanteuse*)? In singing, the voice may sidestep or exceed language and emerge from the non-identity of the body that speaks and the subject of discourse articulated in the linguistic shifter "I." Should the narrator realize her desire to sing in this "zone of dispossession" (*l'aire de la dépossession*), she would be able to bear witness despite the desubjectification the speaking "I" undergoes as it emerges in the event of discourse, in its difference to the body that it identifies as its source and that tries to identify itself as a subject in that "I". If there is testimony in *Amour*, it

in the prolongation of the process of decomposition that creates ruins in the first place. Philippe Hamon, *Expositions: littérature et architecture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: José Corti, 1989), 64–66.

is in this non-coincidence of the living being and the subject of language as the place of the witness.[94] But what may be transmitted in such a song is not a transparent representation of an extreme situation, but rather something specifically literary. It testifies to something that can only be rendered in literary form. The narrator, her own hands extended outward, follows a series of outstretched hands, from the girl and her father walking to school to Matterer writing aboard his ship, and across many other links in between. Along these chains, it tracks the moments of exchange between texts and bodies, the points when violence moves from the body to the letter and back and forth again.

Novel and Autobiography

The title page of Djebar's novel reads: "*L'Amour, la fantasia*. Roman." That third word in minuscule capital letters hangs onto the title, appended only by a line break, without punctuation. It does not belong to the title proper, but it nevertheless invites the formation of a sequence of nouns, linked by their proximity, with no need to take on a verb or other complement to form a clause. The peculiar syntax of Djebar's title transforms an otherwise conventional paratext into a chain of relations between words whose sense can only be elucidated by turning the page and making of that trio the first three elements in a sequence that continues through the text.

Most readers have passed over that third term, "Roman," on their way into the text, perhaps understandably. Clarisse Zimra claims that Djebar's editors are responsible for that

[94] This division is what Giorgio Agamben identifies in glossolalia as the hiatus at the core of language. Responding to Derrida, Agamben holds that "this impossibility of joining the living being and language […] — far from authorizing the infinite deferral of signification — is what allows for testimony", which "*takes place in the non-place of articulation*." Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*. 130, 115-117

subheading, concerned as they were to make the book marketable.[95] Many scholars have instead insisted on identifying the work as an autobiography. Their influence on *Amour*'s reception is such that it is almost as if they had scratched out the word "Roman" from the title page and written "Autobiographie" over it. It is as though the novel becomes literature by ceasing to be a novel, by guaranteeing its source of origin in a particular life, bounded by a particular state, with its borders, its history, its language. The critical transmutation of novelistic writing into autobiography displaces a desire for literature into the desire to present oneself on the literary scene. Representation replaces creation: what matters is to see oneself and one's compatriots under the stage lights. Even as (or perhaps rather because) it attempts a uniquely literary rewriting of the history of francophone writing in the modern Algerian nation-state, *Amour* interrogates this territorialization directly.

What is at stake in the question of *Amour*'s genre? For many critics, it is no less than a cultural revolution that is at issue. Jeanne-Marie Clerc states the case plainly: "Oser dire 'je' quand on est une femme musulmane constitue une revendication d'autonomie proprement révolutionnaire."[96] These critics see autobiography as a gendered form in Muslim society, where women's presumptive seclusion from social space is refracted by a particular, formal exclusion from first-person narration.[97] Some directly connect the subjection of women's bodies and the interdiction on women's writing. Hafid Gafaïti refers to a ritual practice, where infants are given

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[95] Clarisse Zimra, "Autographie et Je/jeux d'espace: Architecture de l'imaginaire dans le Quatuor d'Assia Djebar," in *Postcolonialisme et autobiographie: Albert Memmi, Assia Djebar, Daniel Maximin*, ed. Alfred Hornung and Ernstpeter Ruhe (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 125.

[96] Jeanne-Marie Clerc, "Choc des cultures, affrontements éthiques et morale de l'écrivain chez Assia Djebar," in *Assia Djebar*, ed. Najib Redouane and Yvette Bénayoun-Szmidt (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 323.

[97] Patricia Geesey, "Collective Autobiography: Algerian Women and History in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia*," *Dalhousie French Studies* 35 (Summer 1996): 153.

water to drink that contains dissolved passages of scripture written in vegetal ink,[98] as the moment when, "in Arab-Muslim culture, the body, from birth, is textually given". He then invokes Lacan to argue that "because social power is always naturalized in writing, this rite of passage marks the infant's status as object of the father's law."[99] Consequently, women's mastery of writing, amplified by autobiographical form, would both reveal and rupture culturally-inscribed patriarchal rule.

One begins to see how the drama staged here unfolds: out of the fog of unwieldy cultural designations, out of a crowd of indistinguishable voices speaking in foreign tongues, under the sign of the father, a single woman steps forth. She is the transgressive figure who resolves the paradox of particularity and universality: she violates both cultural and paternal law.[100] What is more, she does so by emerging as an individual subjectivity, enunciating an identity that renders her recognizable to the Western reader, with whom she can now have an exchange on familiar ground. The content of Clerc's second revolution for Algerian women is, properly speaking, becoming recognizable to the other as a liberal individual subject.[101]

Yet this apparent transcendence of difference ends in an impasse, caught between a vague but nevertheless overdetermined notion of cultural specificity and the universalist pretensions of a discourse like psychoanalysis. Just as this kind of critical fiction fails to account for the

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[98] For a comparative analysis of such practices, see Finbarr Barry Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 459–94.
[99] Hafid Gafaïti, "The Blood of Writing: Assia Djebar's Unveiling of Women and History," *World Literature Today* 70, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 813.
[100] This generalization of a single lived experience to stand for an entire region is precisely the paradox of specificity and generality that Mohammed Dib inveighed against regarding his European critics. See the discussion in Introduction, 11-6. Dib, "Curieux comportement."
[101] Clerc suggests that *Amour*'s polyphony testifies to the difficulty of speaking the self for postcolonial women writers. As I will demonstrate later, this entirely misses the point of the novel. Clerc, "Choc des cultures," 330.

theatricality of *Amour*, reading it as a realist account of an individual and a nation, it also neglects its own performative impulses. This constitutive contradiction within *littérature maghrébine d'expression française* is owed at least in part to Jean Déjeux, whose shadow looms large over critical approaches to the field.[102] Déjeux contends that Maghrebi literature is, from the outset, oriented on the West, "né d'un désir ardent de faire connaître aux étrangers les réalités maghrébines et de donner à voir les Maghrébins." This desire to present oneself on a literary stage (distinct from a desire for literature) animates Maghrebi literary modernity. It would seem, however, that Maghrebi writers cannot fully realize this desire on their own. Appearing onstage does not guarantee that one will be understood. Déjeux positions himself as a kind of translator who will help over-hasty Westerners correctly decipher Maghrebi self-presentations. He offers a cultural translation to his readers, cautioning that "le 'je' et l'exposition du moi, de l'homme-sujet, ne vont pas de soi dans le contexte de la civilisation et de la culture arabo-musulmanes."[103] Instead, first-person narrators in Maghrebi novels really speak for a collective "we".

Just as the individual yields to the group, Déjeux's culturally overdetermined interpretation of the Maghrebi "we" recedes rapidly into an ahistorical typology that sets the stage for the myriad critical interventions hyper-focused on Djebar as a woman enunciating a first-person autobiography: "Au Maghreb - et plus largement en pays musulman ou encore dans les sociétés agraires - c'est, en effet, l'homme social qui compte avant tout dans les attitudes et les conduites traditionnelles reçues par la communauté. L'individu ne doit pas se singulariser (Surtout pas les femmes, qui n'ont pas dans ce contexte à se mettre en valeur dans la vie

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[102] For more on Déjeux's role in shaping the field of Maghrebi literature, see above in Introduction", 40-1.
[103] Jean Déjeux, "L'Emergence du 'je' dans la littérature maghrébine de langue française," in *Autobiographies et récits de vie en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991), 23.

publique puisque leur domaine est celui de la maison et de l'espace privé)."[104] The specificity of Maghrebi literature suddenly collapses into an Orientalist conception of "Muslim lands" and then a rudimentary ethnology of agrarian societies, all defined by their difference from Western individualism, of which autobiography is the literary manifestation. In this construal of the field of Maghrebi literature, women's autobiography becomes the mark *par excellence* of modernity, demonstrating a transition from primitive collectivism to liberal individual subjectivity.

Saying "I" thus becomes the telos of postcolonial women's writing in a paradoxical movement, since the woman writer may only appear triumphantly as an individual subject within the confines of liberal individual subjectivity's restrictive universality. An endless, structural vacillation between singular and universal characterizes the critical appraisals of Djebar's work as autobiography. The autobiographical writer says "I" to break out of the cultural constraints embodied in the collective "we" only to ultimately disappear within a different conception of the universal. Gafaïti concludes that Djebar "atteint ainsi l'objectif de tout écrivain qui partant du singulier tente de se fondre dans l'universel.[105]"

This desire for the universal is not apparent, however, when Djebar herself speaks about the autobiographical aspects of *Amour* and her "Algerian Quartet" more broadly. She instead focuses on the particular contingencies that those works confront. Critics have nevertheless drawn extensively on Djebar's interviews and other public statements to support reading *Amour* as a turning point in Djebar's oeuvre, where she at last becomes able to write autobiographically. Yet Djebar is much more circumspect regarding the autobiographical nature of her work than her readers have made it seem. In an interview with Mildred Mortimer published in 1988, Djebar

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[104] Déjeux, 24.
[105] Hafid Gafaïti, "L'Autobiographie plurielle: Assia Djebar, les femmes et l'histoire," in *Postcolonialisme et*

admits that having openly declared *Amour* to be an autobiographical project prior to its publication made it hard for her to give written form to even her most banal childhood memories. She does invoke cultural specificity as a possible cause of her reticence, speculating on the role of her "éducation de femme arabe", which discouraged speaking of oneself, and her use of French.[106] More telling, however, is that the particular memories she is talking about are those that have nothing to do with the Algerian War of Independence. It is, therefore, not strictly speaking of oneself that poses a problem, but doing so without the pretext of the Revolution to justify the public exposition an individual subjectivity though its connection to the Algerian nation. The problem that Djebar describes is the emergence of Algerian women as speaking subjects in the framework of nationalist historiography and literature, not just in literary form in general. This is a problem that pertains to a particular historical configuration, rather than an ostensibly-universal teleology of liberal individual subjectivity.

In an interview with Lise Gauvin that appeared almost ten years later, the problems of the Algerian nationalist framework figure even more prominently in Djebar's observations, especially insofar as they align with the state of emergency that critics have seen as demanding a particular realist aesthetic response. Following the outbreak of civil war between the Algerian state and the opposition Front islamique du salut in the early 1990s, she recalls feeling as though "c'était au cœur de la culture algérienne que le danger s'installait." She confronts the intensifying violence of the national framework with a kind of autobiographical project that again declines to deliver a strict autobiography: "Ma réaction a été de m'enfermer dans cet appartement et pendant trois mois de faire ma propre anamnèse, de remonter dans la mémoire de ma mère, de ma grand-

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autobiographie: Albert Memmi, Assia Djebar, Daniel Maximin, ed. Alfred Hornung and Ernstpeter Ruhe (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 159.

mère [....] Petit à petit j'ai oublié le présent, j'ai oublié même la mémoire familiale, et au centre du livre il y a, comme dans *L'Amour, la fantasia*, une interrogation historique, une reconstitution historique."[107] Although she begins with a period of individual anamnesis, writing only follows when she starts to forget the present and her family's place in it. Through this forgetting, she turns from an individual story toward a historical investigation. As a writer, she responds by breaking out of the borders of nationalist historiography and situating her project in a lineage of autobiographical writing that passes from Augustine through ibn Khaldun. With the authorization of this translingual writerly kinship, which goes beyond a litany of dates, she can claim that "les premiers textes autobiographiques sont de mon pays" and locate herself in a tradition of relations among languages with Augustine and Ibn Khaldun, who "étaient dans une même situation de langue. Je ne pouvais rester dans une espèce de particularisme [….] Je pouvais réfléchir sur ces rapports de langue dans une perspective séculaire. Ecrire en français sur ma propre vie, c'était prendre une distance inévitable."[108] Taking her distance from self-presentation in writing, Djebar turns to a historical exposition of the problems that confront individuals in societies. In her particular case, it is the relation between language and body that comes to the fore.

The "Retour de la violence"

For the autobiographer, the first encounter between body and language is the untenable promise of the text to translate the author's lived reality into written form for the reader. Djebar asserts that the text will ultimately betray both writer and reader, because "quand on croit

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[106] Assia Djebar and Mildred Mortimer, "Entretien avec Assia Djebar, écrivain algérien," *Research in African Literatures* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 203.
[107] Assia Djebar and Lise Gauvin, "Territoires et langues: entretien," *Littérature* 101 (February 1996): 74.
[108] Djebar and Gauvin, 78. *Amour* also invokes Augustin and ibn Khaldun (*AF* 300-1).

traduire on trahit." Thus, to ward off the possibility of such a betrayal, Djebar walks back her earlier claims about the autobiographical project of *Amour* and its sequels. She concludes, "je ne dirai pas que c'est une autobiographie, plutôt que c'est une préparation à une autobiographie."[109] Her novels play out this structure of deferral. The definitive autobiography, the complete enunciation of the speaking subject, is always in preparation.[110] The autobiographer is always ever only preparing the definitive text of their life. The writing self is never fully manifest in the written text because writing is prospective; the self mutates in written form in ways that cannot be predicted from the beginning of the writing act.

Djebar argues that this split between the writing and narrating subjects inevitably causes representation to misfire. The autobiographer, she suggests, acts on a totalitarian impulse and comports herself as a pharaoh or monarch who dictates their royal chronicle to a scribe. The scribe is summoned to this scene of self-inscription to perform the purely mechanical role of realizing the ruler's desire while sparing her the drudgery of manuscription. And yet, the scribe's arrival introduces a split within the autobiographical subject. The distance, however minimal, between the monarch's utterances and the scribe's hand renders visible a gap (perhaps always already there) between the desire for self-representation and the realization — or rather, non-realization — of that desire in its translation onto the page.

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[109] Djebar and Mortimer, "Entretien avec Assia Djebar," 203.

[110] Djebar's autobiographer is something like the inverse of Gilles Deleuze's alcoholic, who never wants one last drink, but rather is always after the drink before the last, before the one that will destroy him: "S'il dépasse le dernier dans son pouvoir, pour arriver au dernier qui excède son pouvoir, il s'écoule, à ce moment-là il est foutu [….] Si bien que quand il dit le dernier verre, c'est pas le dernier, c'est l'avant-dernier. Il est à la recherche de l'avant-dernier. Il ne cherche pas le dernier verre, il cherche le verre pénultième." Pierre-André Boutang, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, DVD, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions Montparnasse, 2004). Deleuze's alcoholic lives only in a peculiar form of the *passé composé*, of what he has been or has done. Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), 184–85. The autobiographer's problem, however, is rather that of Sindbad's final voyage in the *Mille et une nuits*, which, as Abdelfattah Kilito has shown, always turns out be his penultimate journey, because of the simultaneous retrospective and prospective position of the storyteller. See "Le sourire de Sindbad" in

Thus divided from the outset, autobiography returns to the self as Other, in what Djebar calls a "retour de la violence". This means that it is not just the disjointed return that is violent, but that some other, earlier violence comes back in it. Djebar evokes this former violence as the way that the text "vous déchire, vous arrache un lambeau de vous-même". This violence between text and body points to the other aspect of Djebar's scene of writing: at the same time as scribe and queen embody the crack within the autobiographical subject, they are bound together by their intimate proximity. They are so close, it seems, that it is as if, at times, the scribe's hand had slipped and spread its ink directly onto the ruler's body. It is only when the monarch cries out as the final text is taken away for binding, wresting away strips of her flesh, that the inken graft of paper and skin becomes known. As the text circulates apart from its double source, it seems to stare back: "il vous fige littéralement, vous statufie," Djebar says.[111] The despot who lived only to write finds herself turned to stone by her text, a petrified remnant left behind as strips of her own living flesh voyage in her words. The conjunction of life and writing crumbles, giving way to the question of the exchangeability of the body and the word.

When *Amour* raises the issue of saying "I," it is in the same context of body and language. The narrator, recalling her grandmother's criticism of her own sister for having spoken too forcefully of her personal struggles among an audience of women relatives and neighbors, wonders: "Comment une femme arabe pourrait parler haut, même en langue arabe, autrement que dans l'attente du grand âge? Comment dire 'je', puisque ce serait dédaigner les formules-couvertures qui maintiennent le trajet individuel dans la résignation collective?…" (*AF* 223). At first blush, it seems a rhetorical question, more meant to express despondency at the self-

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Abdelfattah Kilito, *L'Œil et l'aiguille: essai sur les Mille et une nuits* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992), 62–85.
[111] Assia Djebar, "Violence de l'autobiographie," in *Postcolonialisme et autobiographie: Albert Memmi,*

imposition of strictures on speech among women. Yet alongside the impossibility implied by the repeated interrogation "comment", there is also a practical inquiry: if one may not say "I" in this way, what about another? What other forms may a speaking body take? The novel turns to its investigation of the relations among languages for an answer. The narrator contemplates her position, having long left the confines of family space because she attends school, relative to her chastised great-aunt and their different possibilities for expression:

> Laminage de ma culture orale en perdition: expulsée à onze, douze ans de ce théâtre des aveux féminins, ai-je par là même été épargnée du silence de la mortification? Ecrire le plus anodin des souvenirs d'enfance renvoie donc au corps dépouillé de voix. Tenter l'autobiographie par les seuls mots français, c'est, sous le lent scalpel de l'autopsie à vif, montrer plus que sa peau. Sa chair se desquame, semble-t-il, en lambeaux du parler d'enfance qui ne s'écrit plus. Les blessures s'ouvrent, les veines pleurent, coule le sang de soi et des autres, qui n'a jamais séché. (*AF* 223-224)

The narrator presents herself displaced from the female "théâtre des aveux" of her youth into an operating theater, where she parses memory not by projecting it onto a screen but by pulling apart the body that bears it. Performing a self-autopsy, she wonders whether she has truly been spared one form of silent mortification, since she has instead fallen into another, more loquacious one.

What separates the two scenes is language: the narrator gets around the interdiction on speech in one language by using another, shifting from spoken Arabic to written French. Paradoxically, however, the act of articulating childhood memories in writing once again refers back to its own non-identity with an inarticulate body that cannot speak. This seems to not be simply because the child is too young to express herself or to have learned to write, but rather because writing does not restore voice to the body here. Writing is what strips it of its voice in the first place, just as transmitting memories desubjectified the remembering subject. Here,

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Assia Djebar, Daniel Maximin, ed. Alfred Hornung and Ernstpeter Ruhe (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 90.

Djebar's narrative "je" splits at the site of this body, cut apart by its own linguistic scalpel, into first- and third-person narration (the novel constantly shifts between the two). Following the movement of the surgeon's knife, which the patient wields on herself, the "autobiographical pact" is broken as a gap opens between the narrator and her body.[112] The "corps dépouillé de voix" is the crux of this movement. It lingers hauntingly in the middle of the passage, at once the body of the narrator, the great-aunt, all the women at the gathering, and of no one at all. Across this ambiguous, unattributable body, the narrator shifts from first-person pronouns ("*ma* culture", "ai-je […] été épargnée") to third-person singular ("[*s*]*a* chair") and, finally, third-person plural ("le sang de *soi* et des *autres*"). The narration transforms rapidly from self to self-as-other to others, across the body stripped of its voice.

The transformation is irreparable. It comes about by literally peeling away the flesh in shreds of childhood language. There is nothing salvific about Djebar's dissection of embodied memory. It can only occur under the knife, with all the attendant violence, the pen following immediately behind. What remains is not a whole body, a coherent self whose being is disclosed by the narrator's "I," but mere bits of flesh.[113] The task that the novel sets for itself is to traverse

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[112] Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975). The success of (auto)biographical depending relies on this pact, in which the author promises to give a faithful account of his or her life to the reader and nothing other than that. Narratologically, this means collapsing the category of author, narrator, and character, putting the name that signs the (auto)biographical text under heavy stress that is, in my estimation, liable to snap at any moment.

[113] I do not read this as the traumatic repetition of colonial violence on the postcolonial body, nor do I take the novel as a therapeutic gloss on past trauma. Instead, I follow John Neumann's argument that such readings reduce the present to a mere repetition of the past and elide a text's claim on the present: "[p]ostcolonial and ethnic studies have sensitized readers to the way narratives salvage disavowed pasts in order to reclaim the voices of the disenfranchised," he writes, but "much of the work by today's global writers falls beyond the pale of this redemptive vision. Such readings risk demoting the literary to a mere gloss on the 'authentic' experience of trauma while positing a curative trajectory often resisted by the novels themselves." Justin Neuman, *Fiction beyond Secularism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 137. The language of this passage focuses precisely on a vivisection in the present. It does not discover the historical wound that constitutes the postcolonial subject. Instead, it pulls itself apart to create remnants of the present situation, following the tensions of a particular situation to their conclusions. These remnants refer back to the remnants that persist from the past, but in a relation of

the relations among those strips of flesh. It takes up the remnants of language and body that mutually inflect one another and make each other circulate and it seeks to place them in horizontal relations, not the vertical chains of authoritative *isnad* that guarantee the authenticity of sayings collected in the Islamic Ḥadīth tradition on the basis of the certainty and reliability of their transmitters.

The Second Skin

In Djebar's scene of writing, body and text are both the fragmented products of power relations and something that remains and reconfigures the authority that commanded them. As such, Djebar is part of an effort in the Maghreb and around the Mediterranean to think the body and the letter in relation to power as remnants that pose questions of translation (not just across languages, but also in the exchanges between languages and bodies and displacement of bodies and texts in space, often at the summons of a king). The concept of the remnant itself poses a problem of translation. In Djebar's formulation, the remnant is an aspect of earthly power, unlike some messianic theories of the remnant grounded in Christian political theology.[114] *Amour* deals

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relay, not of repetition, of identity of present and past. In *Amour*'s vivisection, cuts are certainly traumatic, but they are not trauma, in the sense of the word that immediately infuses the act of cutting with a surfeit of meaning; instead, it is a dismemberment that drains all signification, that reveals an originary lack of signification.

[114] Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz* is the most significant recent effort at thinking the problem of what remains after the event, even one so cataclysmic as the Shoah. As such, it is a tantalizing interlocutor for Djebar's novel. Yet, at least insofar as its conceptualization of the remnant is concerned, it runs up against several limitations in the present context. First, Agamben's concept of the remnant is avowedly "theologico-messianic". He derives it by reading *shear yisrael* and *sherit Yosef* in Isaiah 10:22 and Amos 5:15 through Paul's Letter to the Romans in the New Testament, where "the remnant appears as a redemptive machine allowing for the salvation of the very whole whose division and loss it had signified". The remnant thus becomes what is in-between, the disjunction of part and whole or, in the case of Auschwitz, the *Muselmann* and the survivor. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 162–63. While Islamic theology is beyond the scope of this dissertation, suffice it to say that the Arabic cognate, *su'r* or *su'ra* does not appear in the Qur'ān and that the closest synonym, based on the root *bā'-qāf-yā'*, has a complicated semantic range. By way of example, it gives on of the names of God, "al-Bāqī", conventionally translated as "the Everlasting" or "the Eternal". In the Qur'ān, *bāqiya* and *baqiyya* refer at times to the lack of a remnant, whether in terms of past generations' knowledge of good (11:116), of evil-

in the irreparable and therefore does not refer the remnant back to a whole through a redemptive logic. The novel, then, follows more so in the footsteps of the likes of Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, a nineteenth-century Lebanese Maronite Christian converted to Islam whose career as a writer, newspaper editor, translator, scholar, and traveler took him from Lebanon to Malta, Egypt, Tunisia, England, France, Turkey, and beyond. Whether translating the Bible into Arabic, composing poetry for the Queen of England or the Tunisian bey, remonstrating with French Orientalists, or editing semi-official newspapers in Cairo and Istanbul, al-Shidyāq's writing and translation reflects a conscious engagement with the forms of authority that occasioned his work.

Nowhere is this truer than in *Kitāb al-sāq ʻalā al-sāq fī mā huwa al-fāriyāq*, published in Paris in 1855 and only recently translated to English as *Leg over Leg or the Turtle in the Tree Concerning the Fāriyāq*. Defying generic classification in terms of Arabic or European literatures, the work presents itself as, first and foremost, an account or compendium of the lexical wealth of the Arabic language, which possesses, by al-Shidyāq's reckoning, a nearly-inexhaustible catalogue of synonyms. What is interesting about these words, however, is not their redundancy, but the fact that they are not exactly synonymous, as indicated by the term

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doers visited by God's wrath (69:6-8), or of disbelief that God roots out (8:7); at others, it denotes a coming sign of Islam's inheritance from Jewish traditions (2:248) and what remains lawful according to God's will (11:86). Finally, in some Shīʿī readings, the *baqiyyat allāh*, divine remnant, in 11:86 becomes a watchword for the authority of the imamate and, by extension, a title for the "hidden imam" who will return at the end of times. Regardless, this does not operate on the same premise of original sin and redemption as does Christian messianism. Todd Lawson, "Typological Figuration and the Meaning of 'Spiritual': The Qur'anic Story of Joseph," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 2 (2012): 230.
Second, there is no attempt in *Remnants* to activate the many subterranean historical connections between European colonial violence, the Second World War in general, and the Shoah in particular. This is in spite of the fact that Agamben's analysis of the possibility of bearing witness to the experience of Auschwitz is centered on the figure of the *Muselmann*, German for "Muslim", that he reads from Primo Levi to describe a prisoner in the most extreme state of dehumanization. The use of the term points to a cultural imaginary whose boundaries stretch not only beyond the camp, but beyond the borders of Europe as well. One example of this is Simone de Beauvoir's *La Force des choses*, which invokes on facing pages the "Musulmans" killed in the Sétif massacre in French Algeria (just days after Nazi Germany's surrender) and the "*musulmans*" of the newly-liberated concentration camps. Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force des choses*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 52–53.

itself: al-Shidyāq writes, "I cannot support the idea that all 'synonyms' [*al-alfāẓ al-mutarādifa*] have the same meaning, or they would have called them 'equi-nyms' [*al-mutasāwiya*]. They are, in fact, synonymous only in the sense that certain of them may take the place of certain others."[115] Synonymy denotes exchangeability, not equivalence. Indeed, the Arabic word for "synonymous" derives from a verbal form that also denotes the action of things following one after another, piling up, or forming a single line. This distinction is crucial because it marks language as that which is never identical to itself, whether in reference to a point of origin or a set of norms. Al-Shidyāq analyzes the emergence of synonyms as a product of a simultaneous de- and re-differentiation within language. In his prefatory "Author's Notice," al-Shidyāq evokes the creation of Arabic as a singular moment when all words corresponded to their own, distinct objects: "[t]he Arabs [...] assigned to each type of beauty, length, etc., a specific name, and it is only our distance from their days that makes us think they all mean the same".[116] In other words, language originates in the absolute absence of synonymy or equi-nymy. In the beginning, there was always a *mot juste*. The distance of the present from that original moment, which has clouded that precise distinction among words, is both temporal and cultural. It is precisely a process of cultural, historical, and linguistic change, or differentiation, that de-differentiates original meanings and re-differentiates them through this very process of change.

Al-Shidyāq's extends his reading of synonymy as the exchangeability of words to the relation of languages and bodies. The aptly-named chapter "That to Which I Have Alluded" raises the issue of naming and of interpellating through another aspect, that of the title (meaning an honorific or a position that a person may bear or occupy). The chapter begins as a matter of

[115] Aḥmad Fāris Al-Shidyāq, *Leg over Leg or The Turtle in the Tree Concerning the Fāriyāq: What Manner of Creature Might He Be*, ed. Michael Cooperson, trans. Humphrey Davies, 4 vols. (New York:

distinguishing between Eastern and Western cultures in terms of how they perceive titles to relate to bodies. This site of cultural differentiation, however, becomes one of translation that ultimately allows for the theorization of the remnant. The question of the title is the extent to which it is synonymous to the person so named and, just as in the scene of language invention, how essential that title is to the body so designated. Al-Shidyāq distinguishes two different ways that titles relate to bodies: on the one hand, "in the minds of Orientals" a title "is an insignificant fleshy protuberance or a flap of skin [*hana nāti'a aw zanama*] [...] that dangles from a man's essential being; on the other, "[t]o Occidentals [...] it is a second skin [*julayda*] that wraps itself around the body."[117] The latter bond can be cut without altering the nature of the body that the title holds to, whereas the former cannot be removed from the body that bears it without transforming the nature of that entity. In both cases, however, an exchange becomes possible where the title grafts itself onto the body *as flesh,* and in turn the body becomes grafted into language *as a synonym*, as something different from but that can take the place of the title that names it and that it embodies.

Al-Shidyāq thus identifies a point at which these two ways of standing in for bodies can themselves substitute for one another, at a point where language and body mutually affect and translate one another: "both generally have their origin in an itch that affects the bodies of those in positions of power [...] and such itches cannot be scratched, without creating either a flap or a second skin."[118] Power relays itself across the asymmetrical exchange of body and title as synonym. The itch, here, translates and transfers violence between language and body. The second skin detaches itself from a specific title or from a specific body and displaces itself onto a

New York University Press, 2013), 1:46-49.
[116] Al-Shidyāq, 1:49.

relation of power. Al-Shidyāq gives the example of a man who has angered a king, "that man sending him a naked intercessor to placate him, this intercession soothing the eruption of the king's anger, the aggravational modality then combining with the gymnological quiddity, these two forming a second skin around the one who'd been in fear of losing his first skin through flaying".[119] This itch is the site of translation of a power relation between bodies and languages into a second skin of embodied language. What's more, it is presented in translation, as the convergence of (at least) two cultural and linguistic contexts. Translation here takes on the force of its Latin etymology, to carry across, in this case, to literally make a body appear, to summon a body or a text. Also at work is the resonance in Arabic of *tarjama*, to translate, with *rajama*, which can connote stoning to death, marking the violent encounter of a royal order and its bodily object. The fleshy protuberance or the second skin are both grafts added to the body, but also what remains of the body in its function as a relay of power relations. It is the remnant produced by its own ruination, by scratching the itch that summons it up for either execution or pardon.

The Body and the Letter

Having seen how Djebar recasts the return of the referent as a return of violence, in which the writing and transmission of memory and history fragment the self and the nation rather than consolidate it, we may return to those three words on the title page: "*L'Amour, la fantasia*, roman." Far from demanding the critical invention of an autobiographical foundation, they initiate a sequence of relations that traverses the novel from the title through the final pages, where the narrator ponders her place amid the relation of languages in Algeria past and present:

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[117] Al-Shidyāq, 2:134-135.
[118] Al-Shidyāq, 2:135.
[119] Al-Shidyāq, 2:137.

"'L'amour, ses cris' ('s'écrit'): ma main qui écrit établit le jeu de mots français sur les amours qui s'exhalent; mon corps qui, lui, simplement s'avance, mais dénudé, lorsqu'il retrouve le hululement des aïeules sur les champs de bataille d'autrefois, devient lui-même enjeu: il ne s'agit plus d'écrire que pour survivre" (*AF* 299). Fantasia is replaced by polyphonous cries, rendered undecidably inseparable from each other and from the act of writing in the homophony of *ses cris* and *s'écrit* (a chain that continues to proliferate beyond the written page: *ses* or *ces*, *s'écrit* or *s'écrie*), just as there are multiple entries to writing in the novel: from French printing presses to the young Arab girl going to French school, the initiation to Arabic in Qur'ānic education to passing hints at Amazigh languages and Tifinagh script (of which a full archaeology will come in *Vaste est la prison*),[120] and chthonic, hieroglyphic traces of the past in the landscape that only appear in literary form. The narrator abandons the role of autobiographer, who lives to write, preferring to write in order to live, to find the point at which her body and the bodies of her ancestors meet in the form of distinct yet indistinguishable cries, overlapping in the space of a printed word.

Just as the young schoolgirl's hand meets that of the French frigate captain Matterer across the repeated setting of the dawn in the novel's opening pages, these cries are doubled in the introductory paratext. Two epigraphs from European sources evoke asignifying cries. The first is an enigmatic note, evoking an impersonal "cri déchirant", from Eugène Fromentin's *Une Année dans le Sahel*, whose place in the novel is bracketed until much later.[121] The second is from the Baron Barchou de Penhoën's 1835 first-hand account of the French capture of Algiers five years before. It speaks to the invader's acclimation to the terrain of battle, but also to the

[120] Assia Djebar, *Vaste est la prison* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).
[121] Eugène Fromentin, *Une Année dans le Sahel*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1859), 335.

relations between languages already gestating in the conflict. Barchou notes that the soldiers guarding the French camp have to learn "distinguer du pas et du cri de l'Arabe, ceux des bêtes fauves".[122] For the watchmen, it is not so much a matter of understanding what their enemies are saying, since they presumably did not speak Arabic. It is rather about discerning bodies from the sounds they utter and thereby assessing the risk that they pose. In the animal call, they hear a body that presents no danger, whereas the Arab's bestial cry indicates the approach of a body whose call signals a coming encounter.

This epigraph quoted under the title of the novel's first part, "La prise de la ville, ou, l'amour s'écrit" immediately precedes the narrator's memory of her first day attending French school, led there hand-in-hand by her schoolteacher father. This oblique juxtaposition begins to calibrate the parameters of possible, but heretofore unsuspected relations between bodies and texts. *Amour* opens not with the conjoining of life and writing, the latter pouring forth from the former, but with this juxtaposition of the body and the letter, which dance back and forth, changing places, exchanging one for the other. These exchanges produce meaning, rather than express a fixed cultural semantic substrate, just as the novel cannot be reduced to a realist aesthetic responding to a social state of emergency. As such, the novel explores how different writing practices situate the "second skin" where bodies, language, and power interface, extracting these exchanges from culturalist overdeterminations about the postcolonial nation-state, Islam, and women. As these fragments circulate in the novel, they take on different meanings as they are picked up at one point and handed off at another. In this way, gendering becomes all the more important because it operates as an analytic and a mechanism of power,

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[122] Auguste Théodore Hilaire Barchou de Penhoën, *Mémoires d'un officier d'état-major* (Paris: Charpentier, 1835), 199, http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30055832f.

rather than as the predetermined object of a reified discourse.

Amour coordinates the motions of body and letter, to identify their secret or obscured moments of contact and exchange, by putting them into circulation in its theatrical, novelistic space. In this field, their latent qualities occluded by the national form of history may become active and reveal aspects of history that can only exist in fictional form. In the novel, adolescent love letters, accounts of the French conquest of Algeria, women's oral narratives, and the bodies they inscribe all enter into yet another textual encounter. The novel turns the unwitting letter of each text it rewrites into a missive. Whether they are clandestine letters or postcards legible to all, public reports or secret dispatches, they all enter into an exchange with the novel as second skins, sites that bear the trace of the itch that produced them, but which also may be scratched again, as it were, in new contexts. The narrative proceeds by moving across such exchanges of text and body, as in its first part where it alternates between titled chapters reflecting on the narrator's childhood encounters with writing and numbered chapters that retell pivotal events in the French conquest of Algiers by rewriting European sources.

Throughout, the hand is the site of these exchanges, whether it be the hand that writes, that extends itself to grasp another, or that offers or receives a letter. The terms of the exchange are never predetermined, nor are they ever neutral. Across the text, the meeting of body and letter through the hand entails both intimacy and danger, from love to violence or seduction to rape. The proffered hand puts the exchange of letter and body in the proximity of dismemberment. The outstretched hand sometimes suffers violent consequences for the message it bears, or simply for being the site of exchange at all. So, too, do the bodies that inscribe themselves in or are summoned by the iterative encounter of exchange, across space and time. This is the "retour de la violence" of the autobiographical text, whose author, according to

Djebar, experiences their writing as though it ripped out pieces of their flesh as is circulates in the world. *Amour* stages yet one more exchange, which it appends to the sequence of encounters that it follows, to approach the remnant as what lingers of the past and how it persists. The novel shows how, in the meeting of body and letter, they each reconstitute one another as remnants and as remnants of one another. Even as a body sends a letter in its stead, the two ultimately relate only via the intimate proximity of the hands that inscribe and that hold the page. Exchanged for the body, the letter does not appear as a part that refers back to a whole, but only the remnant that it itself constitutes and which, therefore, also constitutes it.

This is a contiguity of parts without metonymy that makes them refer back to a whole, like the movement of the present participle *allant* in the novel's first sentence. Djebar describes this intimacy in the "Ouverture" to her collection of short stories, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*. There, she disclaims "'parler pour', ou pire 'parler sur'," in favor of "à peine parler *près de*, et si possible *tout contre*."[123] The French "tout contre" means right up against and creates an image of affective and corporeal intimacy, back to back or arm in arm, in the simultaneous proximity and distance that is touching. Standing with rather than standing for Algerian women is both the bodily disposition in which Djebar writes and which is only made possible by her writing. If metonymy is, as Roman Jakobson has suggested, the mode of realist narration, *Amour* prefers to linger in a metaleptic sub-metonymy, where parts call back only to other parts, constantly deferring the whole.[124] In so doing, it disclaims metonymy's affinity with metaphor, which is that both route relations back to a prior, primary, and external ground. This is the crux of the novel's project: calibrating the body and the letter, the intimate and the historical,

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[123] Assia Djebar, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1980), 8.
[124] Roman Jakobson, "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles," in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison*

but without routing this connection through allegory, which would restore the remnant to a belated wholeness, as either metonym or metaphor. In particular, the novel, like a letter scrawled on a scrap and carried away on the breeze, seeks a different mode of exchanging body and text that does not reproduce women's lives and experiences as allegories of the nation-state, the Algeria-Woman.[125]

Thus, in the second part of this chapter, I will follow many outstretched hands in the novel to the remnants they inscribe and gesture toward. What do these hands offer in exchange? It holds out fragments of text and the strips of flesh that they inscribe. The hand tenders all that remains. What remains is the French language (but which is never far from Arabic or Berber), which encodes a series of letters in the life of the young woman narrator, as well as a "pyramide d'écrits" recording the French conquest of Algeria (*AF* 67) and thus inscribing the bodies of "femmes, enfants, bœufs" (*AF* 82, 94), and which translates, in the text, Algerian women's oral narratives of their experiences during the war of independence "en langue étrangère" (*AF* 201).

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and Contrast, ed. René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), 43–44.

[125] Ample scholarship in postcolonial studies has discussed the figuration of the nation as a woman. As Anne McClintock insists, "Nationalism […] is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse", rooted in the reproductive imagery of birth, the family, and domesticity (motherlands, fatherlands, native lands, homelands, adopted countries, and so on). Anne McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender, Race, and Nationalism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 90–91. Elleke Boehmer distinguishes a male metonymic role in the nationalist "family drama" from a female metaphoric one, such that "[f]igures of mothers of the nation are everywhere emblazoned but the presence of women in the nation is officially marginalised and generally ignored." Elleke Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa," in *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*, ed. Susheila Nasta (London: The Women's Press, 1991), 6. Yet, as I argue here, simply writing women into a metonymic relation with the nation is not sufficient to subvert nationalism's patriarchal imaginary. Rather, metonymy and metaphor both locate the ultimate signification of women's bodies elsewhere, in the space of the nation, which in turn implicates those bodies in nationalist discourse, as Joanne P. Sharp argues: "women's bodies and the symbolic body of the nation become significantly enmeshed both discursively and materially in hegemonic nationalist discourse. The safeguarding of life of/in women is consistently written in terms of the security of the nation." Joanne P. Sharp, "Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity," in *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996), 100.

As the novel passes over its sources, feeling out their texture in a close reading that is always also a close rewriting (perhaps brushing it against the grain),[126] there emerge “scories” and “scrofules” at the moment of the encounter between body and text, with its attendant potential for violence. These aberrant protuberances and excess castings are not merely what survives destruction or what persists from before the moment of ruination. It is the product of violence. It is a trace that embodies the touch of destruction, the mark that did not so much escape harm as inscribe it, standing in the place of what is no more. Even as such, it is also a kind of excess. It was not spared ruination, but rather somehow was born out of a process of annihilation. It is the surplus of war, a protuberance from an ill-healed scar. And as a scar, it is what makes possible writing history in literature.

Going to School

For the young girl protagonist, the letters she learns in school and that she receives from her classmates introduce her both to love and to its attendant dangers. The text immediately lays out what is at stake in such encounters: “Dès le premier jour où une fillette ‘sort’ pour apprendre l’alphabet, les voisins prennent le regard matois de ceux qui s’apitoient, dix ou quinze ans à l’avance: sur le père audacieux, sur le frère inconséquent. Le malheur fondra immanquablement sur eux. Toute vierge savante saura écrire, écrira à coup sûr ‘la’ lettre. Viendra l’heure pour elle où l’amour qui s’écrit est plus dangereux que l’amour séquestré” (*AF* 11). The quotation marks that highlight the verb “sortir” indicate the importance of boundaries between inside and outside here. By attending school and learning to write, the young girl can “go out” both in body and in

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[126] This is famously the task that Walter Benjamin assigns to the historical materialist so as not to fall into the trap that historical documents pose as they side with the victors of history. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 256–57.

word. Leaving the protective (and restrictive) confines of the home in order to encounter letters comports clear risks in the eyes of the community. Outside the home, the girl's body is exposed to attempts on her honor. At issue is that virginity must be preserved in word as much, if not more so, as in the body. In the coupling of "vierge" and "savante", the latter will inevitably win out over the former. This is not because European-educated girls inevitably stray from their communities' moral expectations, but because the conception of "virginity" here is fundamentally about a regime of visibility (just as the figure of the Algeria-Woman projects a certain public image of female bodies in relation to the nation). Between colonized Algerians and French-language education, however, this danger takes on a sociopolitically over-determined excess of signification. The risks to personal and family honor map directly onto the colonial situation. Protecting a young girl's body from violation immediately comes to mean preserving the integrity of the Algerian nation in the face of imperial conquest. Thus, the confines of the home become a gendered threshold within the Algerian community. The image of girls' and women's bodies safe within the house serves to guarantee the preservation of the colonized community under French rule. Of course, paradoxically, this image itself must circulate as a norm in conversation and social relations, through which this internal, gendered boundary is policed. Notably, the young girl protagonist is never actually prevented from "going out," but her and others' comings and goings, in person or by letter, visible or clandestine, occasion discourse among characters and in the novel's narration.

There is thus a hidden risk beneath community perception, a risk to every individual female body, which may at any moment be called upon as an allegory of Algeria. Sequestering her body becomes a means of preserving the nation against foreign influence. It is not so much a danger to the girl as to her family, who are doomed to failure in their efforts to preserve her

honor, at least in the eyes of the neighbors. The ultimate risk, for both the girl and the community, is that the encounter with letters is irreparable. It creates a rupture that neither the family's vigilance nor the neighbors' intrusiveness can prevent: "Le geôlier d'un corps sans mots — et les mots écrits sont mobiles — peut finir, lui, par dormir tranquille [….] Si la jouvencelle écrit? Sa voix, en dépit du silence, circule. Un papier. Un chiffon froissé. Une main de servante, dans le noir. Un enfant au secret. Le gardien devra veiller jour et nuit: L'écrit s'envolera par le patio, sera lancé d'une terrasse" (*AF* 11-12). The letter — and especially the letter written in French — becomes a means for the body to escape the confines of even the most well-guarded home. What happens to the letter that sneaks out of the house via the balcony? And what of the body still confined within those walls? What other unexpected and perhaps as of yet unknown encounters have taken place? Usually these moments are obscured from sight, as with the neighbors' gaze. Those prying eyes contrast implicitly with the hand of the father, who leads his daughter to school. Later, however, his becomes a hand that pries, a hand that tears, when it intercepts a letter sent to his teenage daughter by a boy from school.

This letter comes from a fellow student, no doubt from a European settler family. Its arrival announces the fulfillment of the neighbors' prophecy and thus elicits the father's anger: "A dix-sept ans, j'entre dans l'histoire d'amour à cause d'une lettre. Un inconnu m'a écrit; par inconscience ou par audace, il l'a fait ouvertement. Le père, secoué d'une rage sans éclats, a déchiré devant moi la missive. Il ne me la donne pas à lire; il la jette au panier" (*AF* 12). Here, the father's hand, the same hand that first led the young girl to school to learn French, intervenes to ward off the danger he perceives as embodied in the letter. An invitation to youthful love becomes an occasion for violence, both in the destruction of the letter and the potential loss of virginity, even if by word alone. The father attempts to prevent his daughter from reading the

very language he has enabled her to learn. Yet the irreparable cannot be undone; the father cannot ultimately stop the letter from reaching his daughter, since it already did so long ago. Even as the father intercepts the letter, even before anyone reads it, it already calls the narrator into an exchange with it. This is precisely what she discovers when she later pieces the letter back together and reads that "Le correspondant [….] propose cérémonieusement un échange de lettres 'amicales'. Indécence de la demande aux yeux du père, comme si les préparatifs d'un rapt inévitable s'amorçaient dans cette invite" (*AF* 12). This is the reason for the father's anger: he knows he arrives on the scene too late, that the exchange has already taken place, that it will always already have taken place. When the adolescent narrator pieces the torn-up letter back together, she does not really restore it. The ceremonious correspondence will never be realized, so that first letter will always lack a reply. Instead, she reads the text as already a remnant, only ever reaching her as a fragment, as she recalls meeting eyes with the boy she imagines to have sent it during a prize ceremony at the end of the previous term. This slice of memory is reconstituted by and in the text, without ever giving the writing subject or reaching its addressee as whole subjects. It therefore neither requites a colonial circuit of desire nor returns to an anticolonial allegory that isolates women's bodies as images of the nation.

Instead, the letter is like a second skin, the only place where two bodies meet, albeit at a distance, and in an encounter shot through with power relations realized in the intervention of the father's hand that flays, so to speak, this missive come from beyond the home. This encounter magnifies the gendered aspect of such encounters. It is worth noting that the "second skin" in al-Shidyāq's Arabic, "julayda", may evoke male circumcision. It is the diminutive of "jalda," a word which already evokes not the whole skin of a body, but a part or piece of it, like a hide. The *julayda* is thus a small piece of skin, evocative of a foreskin. Here, however, it is more like the

hymen, even as the letter's presence indicates it has already torn. The father's tearing of the letter can only repeat a gesture already completed. If father was unconcerned about virginity as visibility, he nevertheless creates a new boundary to preserve, even though he has arrived too late. But even as one danger comes from outside the home, another comes from within it, once the letter has already penetrated there — and not all letters get intercepted. During a summer spent in the countryside, the young girl's cousins let her in on their secret correspondence: "Cet été, les adolescents me firent partager leur secret. Lourd, exceptionnel, étrange [….] Les jeunes filles cloîtrées écrivaient; écrivaient des lettres; des lettres à des hommes; à des hommes aux quatre coins du monde; du monde arabe, naturellement" (*AF* 21). Though the girls, as young women, are largely confined to domestic space, alongside the other women of the family, they have received enough education to write letters in French to men who post classified ads in women's magazines. They respond pseudonymously, writing under the names of famous Arab singers and movie stars. Because their own father does not speak or read French, the cousins' letters arrive and escape the house unnoticed, passed from hand to hand. They move through a channel not fully regulated by the regime of visibility, finding a mode of expressing desire that does not rely on circulating representations of the self and its place in social order. Even as the girls are kept in place, their missives traverse the length and breadth of the Arab world — a world they can only safely cross in translation, in French, and under other names. These letters enable an impossible exchange among bodies in a certain disposition with respect to the texts that they send forth in their stead.

Yet the risk remains of other encounters that might return back to those bodies in different ways. The letters must pass beneath many eyes, including those of the local postman, who must have understood what was afoot. The girls are not unaware of the dangers they face:

"Il y avait eu dans nos villes, pour moins que cela, de nombreux pères ou frères devenus 'justiciers'; le sang d'une vierge, fille ou sœur, avait été versé pour un billet glissé, pour un mot soupiré derrière les persiennes, pour une médisance…" (*AF* 22). For women, there is a real risk that epistolary travel-at-a-distance will translate into immediate, bodily violence.

At the same time, the movements of letters can also reconfigure regimes of visibility through circulation. By putting private correspondence into novelistic exchange, *Amour* is able to pose the question of self-projection onto the page through these texts. But it also considers the public circulation of bodies inscribed in texts, even in unwitting cases, such as when the narrator's father sends a postcard to his wife while traveling for work. In this instance, a new form of affectionate expression is haunted by a sense of possible violation by means of a letter. The intimate expression of this act is magnified by the fact that the father addresses his wife by name: "mon père, de sa propre écriture, et sur une carte qui allait voyager de ville en ville, qui allait passer sous tant et tant de regards masculins, y compris pour finir celui du facteur de notre village, un facteur musulman de surcroît, mon père donc avait osé écrire le nom de sa femme qu'il avait désignée à la manière occidentale: 'Madame untel…'" (*AF* 57). Using the wife's name — even though it is implicitly her married name, which signifies that she belongs to the husband's household — creates an epistolary relay between the letter, the gazes that fall upon it, and the woman's body. The letter offers a new avenue for the expression of affection between a husband and wife, but it can only ever do so within the context of the world in which it circulates. It therefore must vie with an existing arrangement of bodies that privileges images of invisible women's bodies, such as addressing a letter to the household, "la maison", even as it recalibrates this regime.

It is paradoxically the postcard's intimate expression (use of a woman's name) that

renders it public. The names of a sender or an addressee on a letter circulate beyond the exchange between sender and receiver and beyond any knowledge of the letter's content — although on a postcard, this is exposed for all who can to read, as well. Adopting a European "realist" mode of address and eschewing the traditional circumlocution of "la maison," initiates a chain of exchanges that far exceeds the straightforward reference linking a name and a body. This sequence extends beyond the postal system. When the mother goes to visit her relatives, she tells them about the postcard as a pretext for evoking the challenges and benefits of her family's life with her husband's occupation. The postcard's journey is unexpectedly prolonged, beyond its addressee to her own audience. She projects herself forward through the letter, describing her life as a native urbanite, stuck in a small town with children to care for and a husband who travels often for work. But the other women cut her off, taking the pretext for the main object of discussion: they

> s'étaient écriées devant la réalité nouvelle, le détail presque incroyable:
> 'Il t'a écrit à toi?'
> 'Il a mis le nom de sa femme et le facteur a dû ainsi le lire? Honte!…'
> 'Il aurait pu adresser tout de même la carte à ton fils, pour le principe, même si ton fils n'a que sept ou huit ans!' (*AF* 57).

On each pole of this exchange, the postcard constitutes the wife's body as accessible to, and therefore in need of protection from, public address by the word that passes from hand to hand. *Amour* will continue its investigation of the consolidation of this gendered circulation beyond a supposed Muslim misogyny by connecting this letter with the French colonial writing that operates its own regime of visibility of Algerian women's bodies. The postcard was a key element in this colonial gaze, too.[127] Thus, the novel reads the policing of gendered interior and

[127] In a significant study of colonial-era postcards, Malek Alloula (Djebar's ex-husband) argues that "Il n'y a pas historiquement d'exemple de société où les femmes furent autant photographiées dans l'intention

exterior communal spaces that takes place in and around the father's postcard to his wife alongside the way that French writing brings those same bodies into public circulation, from the hand of an officer to the parliament in Paris, all the way down to the novelist more than a century later.

Going to War

Having plotted the coordinates of body-letter exchanges in the protagonist's childhood, spanning inscriptions of desire and expressions of love mingled with the threat of violence, the novel puts those exchanges in relation with the history of the colonial context in which they took place. The narrator likens the isolated cousins' letters responding to strangers' personal ads to the proliferation of French accounts of the conquest of Algiers in the immediate aftermath of the events of summer 1830. The officers, she says, were as if taken by with a "fièvre scriptuaire", which led some two dozen of them to publish their memoirs within a few years of the siege and spread like a contagion among the civilians who accompanied them, including an abbot, several doctors, and a painter. Both these writers party to the capture of Algiers and the protagonist's young cousins seem to be taken with a kind of disease that compels them to write: "Une telle démangeaison de l'écriture me rappelle la graphorrhée épistolaire des jeunes filles enfermées de mon enfance" (*AF* 66-67). Both are afflicted with an incurable itch whose only salve is an excessive, unending stream of text, a second skin that puts them in touch with other bodies elsewhere. Both, as we shall see, implicate the location of women's bodies and an image of the nation or territory gendered female.

But was it in fact the same malaise in both cases? The young girls' letters betoken an

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d'être livrées au regard public." Malek Alloula, *Le Harem colonial: images d'un sous-érotisme.* (Paris:

irreducible experience of something beyond the confines of their house. They send letters to project avatars of themselves into the world, even all that ever returns to them is the smallest, most insignificant trace of the outside. The letter is the minimal mark of the other who has received and replied to it. If the letters allow them to take part in a circuit of lover and beloved, it is ultimately the circuit that counts to them, a circulation that, as “une manière de respirer un nouvel oxygène”, brings fresh air through the confines of the home (*AF* 67). The narrator speculates that the French soldiers, too, indulged in an imaginary, impossible seduction, wondering whether their writing “Leur permet-il de savourer la gloire du séducteur, le vertige du violeur?” But if the cloistered girls express and experience desire in letters, the French officers’ writing is ultimately about representability as conquest, as the culmination of their desire which took the form of “une entreprise de rapine”, not a “découverte de l’autre”. The word is both the weapon and the prize of this plunder: “Le mot lui-même, ornement pour les officiers qui le brandissent comme ils porteraient un œillet à la boutonnière, le mot deviendra l’arme par excellence” (*AF* 67). Insofar as the French attempted to establish a front line on the terrain of representation, the archive attests to their success in converting the word — and painting, engraving, panoramas, and so on — into effective weapons.

The novel emphasizes that the French armed forces arrived on the coast of Algiers with a full complement of painters, drawers, and engravers, not to mention the dozens of officers who will write with “l’épée au côté”, like the Captain Amable Matterer, and others, like the theater director J.T. Merle, who is eager to set up a printing press and publish the first French-language newspaper in Algeria (*AF* 17, 27, 45-46). On their heels are opportunistic businessmen, writers,

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Séguier, 2001), 11.

scientists, and academics, who all imagine a new terrain before them for the taking.[128] Djebar counts thirty-seven eyewitness accounts of the capture of Algiers alone, most of them European, but a few Ottoman and Algerian. Her concern, though, is not to restore a balance of perspective by re-reading European texts from an Algerian point of view, given the great disparity in written documentary evidence on either side.[129] She instead renders the disparity itself as a meaningful trace of the nature of the conflict for either side. The narrator approaches French self-representation as if it were a kind of self-portraiture. If their texts are a kind of mirror they hold up for themselves and for their compatriots, the narrator positions herself as a spectator behind or beyond that mirror.[130] In this sense, the novel observes the scene from the vantage point of the medium of theatricality itself. As such, its narration brings out the theatrical aspect of this feverish production.

At stake in French self-representation is the possibility of appearing as masculine conquerors of a land gendered female. Nowhere is this more evident than in the private letters of two French officers to their families in the metropole, which were later collected and published posthumously. If the initial scriptorial effervescence cooled somewhat after the 1830s, another outbreak of writer's fever accompanied the resumption of hostilities in the following decade. In Oran in 1840, French forces were on the defensive, hemmed in by the Emir Abdelkader and his

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[128] Djebar figures the novel as a mere vanguard of this second invasion: “l'armée précédant les marchands, suivis de leurs employés en opération; leurs machines de liquidation et d'exécution sont déjà mises en place [….] Des cohortes d'interprètes, géographes, ethnographes, linguistes, botanistes, docteurs divers et écrivains de profession s'abattront sur la nouvelle proie.” (*AF* 67)

[129] Of these thirty-seven, three may be said to come from the Algerian side (including the account of a German captive). Two come from relatively neutral positions, at least in terms of European political alignments: one by the English consul in Algiers, the other by an Austrian prince accompanying the French army as an observer. That leaves thirty-two written accounts in French by French participants in the invasion. (*AF* 66)

[130] In Jacques Derrida's analysis, the spectator of a self-portrait stands in the place of the artist's mirror. From this vantage point, one sees the subject looking at itself, without being seen. This forms a constitutive blind spot in self-depiction. Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle: l'autoportrait et autres*

allies. A young general named Lamoricière is posted there and plans an offensive in order to boost morale and shift the balance of the conflict. *Amour* portrays him embracing a guerilla raiding strategy particularly adapted to the Algerian landscape. Punitive raids had been part of French military practice in Algeria since 1830, but this is the first that the novel calls by the name "razzia," a word that French borrows from Algerian Arabic. The novel emphasizes Lamoricière's use of intelligence services and topographical maps to understand the local terrain. These technical means allow him to manage the risks of an aggressive maneuver through careful planning, which sets the stage for the drama to follow.

The officers, Captain Joseph Bosquet and Captain François Montagnac, each recount the raid in their letters. This heightened affectivity of the theater, which amplifies signs and gestures such that even the most insignificant detail becomes capable of taking on new, potent significance, renders the French accounts' prolixity, their excessive disclosure, productive for novelistic rewriting.[131] On Lamoricière's stage, the "ballet de la conquête" plays out through Bosquet's letters, which tell of the dance he has just taken part in. Out of his "relations fiévreuses, des scories surnagent:" — *scories*, this highly evocative and enigmatic word, meaning the slag leftover from smelting, rocks formed from a volcanic eruption, and excess or error in a text; it is, in short, something leftover but unwanted, particularly after an incineration — "ainsi ce pied de femme que quelqu'un a tranché pour s'emparer du bracelet d'or ou d'argent ornant la cheville. Bosquet signale ce 'détail' comme négligemment. Ainsi ces sept cadavres de femme […] devenues, malgré l'auteur du récit, comme des scrofules de son style" (*AF* 82). A

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ruines (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990), 64.

[131] Notably, the theater is a space intentionally cleared for performance, just as the theater of war in Algeria clears the terrain for French governance. As Djebar emphasizes, technologies of writing serve a particular function in this undertaking, linking the theater of war to the theater of the stage: "Ecrire sur la guerre d'Afrique — comme autrefois César dont l'élégance du style anesthésiait *a posteriori* la brutalité

dismembered foot, a stolen bracelet, seven women's bodies: the writer's careful, studied style is marred, or marked, or marks itself, by an imperfection. Its well-formed body bears an aberrant growth, the traces of the brutality that he would have his style attenuate as he records it. The dead women, killed for having hurled insults at General Lamoricière in the heat of the battle, are an absurdity in the archive, bodies grimacing, without looking, at reader and writer. The disembodied foot makes for the most perverse ballet, echoed as it is by the return of Bosquet and his fellow letter-writer Montagnac to their camps: "Quels fantômes se lèvent derrière l'épaule de ces officiers qui, une fois leurs bottes enlevées et jetées dans la chambrée, continuent leur correspondance quotidienne?" (*AF* 76). As they remove their boots, the dismembered foot haunts the barefoot officers, just as the battle haunts their writing. The bodies in battle occasion the writing that will render them dancers in a ballet and, later, quite unexpectedly, *Amour* identifies the bodies, or what is left of them, as unexcisable growths on the text.

Intoxicated as they are with this dance, the novel reports, neither Bosquet nor Montagnac will marry. Yet their spectacle of seduction can never actually take place on the battlefield: "Impossible d'étreindre l'ennemi dans la bataille. Restent ces échappées: par femmes mutilées, par bœufs et troupeaux dénombrés ou par l'éclat de l'or pillé" (*AF* 82).[132] What remains after the battle are women's mutilated bodies, the spoils of war, and pages and pages of writing. These letters form a second skin for the officers who write them, through which they will relive the pleasure in danger they experience on the battlefield: "nul besoin d'épouse, nulle aspiration à une vie rangée quand le plaisir guerrier se ravive, taraudé par les mots. Revivre, par réminiscences, le halètement du danger; les phrases harmonieuses des épîtres conservent cette âcreté" (*AF* 82). But

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de chef —, est-ce prétendre repeupler un théâtre déserte?" (*AF* 83)

[132] Women, livestock, and valuables recur as the remnants of battle throughout the novel, since they are

so, too, do they inadvertently carry the remnant of the dismembered bodies they inscribe. These bodies have not been spared violence by the intercession of a second skin, but hang onto it like fleshy protuberances or unnatural growths. The dismembered foot stands in the place of the witness to the violence that produced it, speaking of its own impossibility to witness.

Seduction, Representation, and the Algeria-Woman

What is the significance of the fact that the two officers never marry? The novel seems to indicate they are already involved in an intimate, if not sexual, encounter with Algerian bodies and territory. *Amour* explores a perverse obverse side of conquest: that of its fascination, the sexually-charged encounter between bodies. As the novel activates the asymmetry of the archive of conquest by identifying the French writing as remnants of Algerian bodies and, from the silence in which they are inscribed, uttering a speculative testimony of their experience, it asks whether the Algerian side was not also captivated by its own particular fascination with the other, with the tantalizing possibility of a bodily encounter with difference. For both sides, then, the bloody encounter would be a kind of spectacle, albeit a violent and unequal one, a kind of doubly perverse seduction. When French officers imagine their relationship to Algeria and Algerians, their writing serves "[s]e convaincre que l'Autre glisse, se dérobe, fuit" (*AF* 82), projecting a dance of seduction onto the battlefield. This mode of colonial seduction operates by making the object of seduction feel itself to be the desiring subject, inducing it to forget the role of its seducer, or rather to seduce it into placing itself in the position of the seducer even as it is the seduced. In so doing, it opens a space for the colonized to imagine themselves as actually

what retain exchange value after conquest. See (*AF* 126, 134)

being the dominant pair, of being the seducer of their foreign invaders.[133] As *Amour* re-engages the battle for domination through representation, it enters into a zone of ambiguity where it risks falling into to the very trap of colonial seduction that it attempts to lay bare. The fundamental oscillation toward and away from the realist, autobiographical mode of national history is always in danger of collapsing onto the nation, forgetting its fragmentary form.

Something different is at stake in *Amour*'s investigation of representation. In the place of a seductive dialectic of recognition between colonizer and colonized modeled on Hegel's master and slave, it finds an aporia at the core of recognition itself. It is the contiguity but non-coincidence of desires inscribed in these texts. Rereading letters of conquest in alongside the narrator's cousins' love letters, a deep-seated ambiguity emerges beneath the calcified surface of the accounts written by "envahisseurs qui croient prendre la Ville Imprenable, mais qui tournoient dans le buissonnement de leur mal d'être" (*AF* 67-68). The French invaders believe themselves to have deflowered the impenetrable city at long last. They portray themselves as agents of seduction finally brought to its accomplishment. Their missives that project this

[133] See "The Irresistible Lure of Recognition" (37-61) and "The Dismantling *I*: Al-'Aṭṭār's Antihistory of the French in Egypt, 1798-1799" (62-91) in Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), especially 37-38, 58, and 72-73. Tageldin argues that the French, who arrived in Egypt under Napoleon's aegis armed with printed proclamations that declared the French to be Muslims themselves, claimed a resemblance to Egyptians that also allowed them to impose their difference to them. This claim that the conqueror is just like the conquered, but is nevertheless their ruler, co-opts the energy of resistance, by forcing the conquered to liberate themselves, to become themselves again, by becoming like their conquerors. This dynamic of autocolonization, Tageldin argues, is not just an overdetermined interpellation of the colonized by the colonizer, but a process that both participate in, albeit to different political ends. This asymmetrical economy of desire between conqueror and conquered ultimately favors the domination of the former, but not without making them reliant on the latter for recognition.
From the perspective of the colonized intellectual, Egyptology and Orientalism center the colonized's culture and knowledge as the objects of desire, and therefore as seductive, seducing Europeans; and yet, they produce discourses that ultimately dominate the colonized. As Tageldin puts it, the French master Arabic and translate it into French, but French does not become Arabic, nor do Egyptians translate French texts (at least, that is, in the initial period of French rule, until Mehmed Ali's "modernization" program and al-Ṭahṭāwī's translation school, which Tageldin discusses later, but is beyond the scope of this chapter).

seduction perhaps betray an unease at the violence that they filter but that also filters back through. This, however, is not the root cause of their uneasy being, which seems to derive precisely from their need for self-representation. In both kinds of letters, the text has an addressee merely as a pretext for the true aim of this writing: "se dévisager dans l'obscurité de l'émoi…" (*AF* 84). The resemblance here, as Djebar affirms, is analogical, not identical. There are in fact two different modes of self-projection at work in love letters and war letters. Both enter into circulation, but for the former, that projection into and across space is exactly the letter's function. The girls inscribe desire into their letters as a literary practice, whereas the officers desire representation. They make their letters circulate like a conqueror's self-portrait, figuring as the agent of "ce divertissement viril: faire corps avec l'Afrique rebelle" (*AF* 82). Thus, the officers' letters "prétendent s'inquiéter de leurs problèmes d'intendance et de carrière," but "parlent, dans le fond, d'une Algérie impossible à apprivoiser. Fantasme d'une Algérie domptée: chaque combat éloigne encore plus l'épuisement de la révolte" (*AF* 84). This fantasy of war as seduction is a powerful machine that anticipates the resistance it generates and recasts it as veiled desire for the conqueror. It justifies violence as the means to seize the personified territory of Algeria, Algeria as a woman playing hard to get.

The figure of Algeria-Woman first emerges as a French fantasy. Facing it, but without reflecting or resembling it, are the many bodies of women that remain after battle, dismembered or captured, that do not participate in the allegory in which the French depict themselves in their letters. Even the prisoners make themselves into remnants, partial objects that do not return the seducer's solipsistic gaze because they themselves have no gaze. Another officer, the comte de Castellane, writes in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of prisoners captured in razzias that "ces Algériennes s'enduisent le visage de boue et d'excréments, quand on les conduit dans le cortège

du vainqueur" (*AF* 83). These women render themselves blind and unrecognizable, approximating the dismemberment of their murdered compatriots, so that what remains after the battle cannot be made meaningful. Recognition becomes impossible in either direction: the conquered do not recognize their vanquisher's victory, nor can the conqueror recognize his prize as the female body of the land he so desires.[134]

Even as French accounts of Algeria affirm the imperial capacity to capture the Algerian other in both battle and in word, they also become entangled in the politics of their metropolitan public, from the foment of revolution in the first days of the July Monarchy to the 1848 revolution and subsequent coup that launched the Second Empire and dispatched political prisoners to Algeria. Sometimes, Algeria itself would become a central topic of public concern, rather than an instrumental one. The remnants of conquest identified in Bosquet's and Montagnac's letters about the razzia from Oran return again in the chapter entitled "Femmes, enfants, bœufs," but this time they entered into broader public discourse in their own time, rather than having to await *Amour*'s novelistic rewriting. The reason for this was the scandal caused in France by Colonel Pélissier's 1845 report on the mass asphyxiation of a rebellious tribe in a mountain cave where they had sought refuge from French forces. In a novel full of violent encounters, this episode nevertheless stands out for its brutality. In turn, it illuminates the operations of the narrative violence that accompanies bodily conflict. In Pélissier's report, the boundaries between the individual and the collective warp and transform in counterpoint to the imagination of the inside and outside of Algerian communal space in the young girl protagonist's

[134] A different bodily performance to similar effect occurs in the narrator's adolescence, when she spent days with other women visiting shrines or other secluded areas. Young boys would keep a lookout for passing men, so that the women might don their veils if necessary. But if the passerby was French, his gaze did not touch the women, who therefore did not try to cover themselves at his approach. (*AF* 179-180)

initiation to letters at school and with her cousins.

Pélissier receives the order from his superior: bring the Ouled Riah tribe to submission at any cost. Should they hide in their network of caves in Nacmaria, "enfumez-les tous comme des renards!" (*AF* 102). After failing to convince the Ouled Riah, who could hold out underground much longer than the French army surrounding them, of his good faith in accepting their surrender, Pélissier carried out his orders. He had his men build enormous bonfires at each cave mouth. As a shift in the wind directs the heat and smoke into the caverns, the soldiers are dazzled by the giant columns of flame reaching toward the sky. At dawn, a few survivors stumble out to die in the open air, indicating what may remain inside. These near-survivors reveal a liminal space around the tribal collective. Emerging from the cave, they almost arrive as individuals bearing witness to the fate of their kin, distinguishing themselves by their escape. Their testimony, however, is abortive, since they, too, soon meet with death. Perhaps a few dozen yards separate their end from that of their families. Thus, while they do give a sign to the French army of what may have transpired, they are more an index of collective fate than individual witnesses. Pélissier sends some of his men into the cave to investigate, who confirm to him that the entire tribe of 1,500 persons, along with their livestock, have all been killed. Somehow incredulous, Pélissier visits the cave himself and issues an order of his own: "Sortez-les au soleil! Comptez-les!" (*AF* 107). Some six hundred bodies are laid out, without distinction of gender, status, or class. The rest are unrecoverable, dismembered and disfigured, reduced to a fleshy magma lining the floor of the cave. The colonel's attempt to individuate the victims is muddled. His only method is a basic count, which both neglects the social divisions that would have been relevant among individuals within the tribal collective and fails in the face of the new collective body formed out of human remains. These fused fragments defy the colonial understanding of

Algerian society, based on tribal units, and Pélissier's attempt to restore individuality through a body count. It is both collective and singular, inhuman and human. Strictly speaking, it is not silent, since speech is not a relevant property of such an entity. It does, however, articulate itself with Pélissier's world in such a way as to exert various kinds of forces that would be unimaginable for an individual witness.

One such force the mass exerts is olfactory. As Pélissier moves the bodies from the cave, he is forced to move his camp away from them because of the stench. In turn, he translates this alien body into a more familiar grid of intelligibility. He continues his impossible count by carrying along the bodies as words: "Les mots voyagent. Mots, entre autres, du rapport trop long de Pélissier; parvenus à Paris, et lus en séance parlementaire, ils déclenchent la polémique" (*AF* 109). If the narrator, her cousins, and her mother had to modulate their exposure as senders or recipients of letters to manage the opportunities and risks of circulation, Pélissier's has made bodies too legible in his report, in this second skin meant to justify his actions (although it occasions political polemics, it does earn Pélissier a promotion), but which also reconstitutes the remnants of his victims. One of his colleagues estimates that Pélissier wrote too well and too realistically: "comme il écrivait fort bien et qu'il le savait, il fit dans son rapport une description éloquente et réaliste, beaucoup trop réaliste, des souffrances des Arabes…" (*AF* 109-100). There is a tension in this appraisal, however, between eloquence and realism. It is as though Pélissier only succeeds in producing a realist account through a supplement of literarity. His skillful eloquence both enables and exceeds realism.

Femmes, enfants, bœufs: conquest and its remnant are gendered, as the female and the nonhuman/neuter are what remain among the conquered, while the male conqueror inscribes these survivors to reaffirm his own capture of the untamable Algeria-Woman. But this same

gesture that writes it into a history unleashes its neutral excess, its undomesticability. Its aberrance is the super-effect of realism, that is always too real, going too far beyond reality. The counterpart to Pélissier's sur-realism is its repetition by Colonel Saint-Arnaud who, a few weeks later, destroyed the Sbéah tribe by the same means. To the difference of his predecessor and model Pélissier (who himself, it turns out, was only imitating Cavaignac, under orders from Bugeaud, *AF* 96), Saint-Arnaud makes his report "sans poésie terrible, ni images" and delivers it in secret to his superior, who has it destroyed in Algiers before it can make its way to Paris (*AF* 110-111). Saint-Arnaud, it seems, is the real realist, eschewing poetry and imagery. Yet *Amour* shows realism as a mode of writing that always exceeds itself. Its claims to grounded referentiality in an exterior world are made through its eloquence, which produces in the text precisely literary "excesses" it sought to exclude. At the same time, realist description does not exhaust the event, no matter how effective (or super-effective) it may be. Instead, it marks the site of a palimpsest that is at least triple: Pélissier's report and Djebar's rewriting of it, but also the marks of the bodies on the mountain itself: "cette écriture est devenue graphie de fer et d'acier inscrite contre les falaises de Nacmaria" (*AF* 110). This is not a trace that can be read historically, but only reconstituted by a literary supplement that takes it up as a remnant.

Other eyewitness accounts emphasize the indescribable qualities of this *enfumade*: "On ne saurait décrire la violence du feu" (*AF* 102); writing fails before the enormity of the scene: "Quelle plume saurait rendre ce tableau?" (*AF* 103). And yet, words do enter into exchange with the bodies in the cave and under the sun, just as plunder changes hands among soldiers: "Les objets du butin, vendus des uns aux autres, circulent. Ensuite les mots s'échangent: ceux des témoins, qui ont pénétré dans les souterrains, décrivent les corps qu'on n'a pu sortir, et qui sont confondus en tourbe" (*AF* 108). Pélissier's realism occupies precisely this gap between

indescribable and its description, the unsayable and its enunciation. The narrator grasps his "sinistre" hand, which "me tend son rapport" that she takes up "pour y inscrire à mon tour la passion calcinée des ancêtres" (*AF* 115). Recall how the novel transformed the despondent rhetorical question "Comment dire 'je'?" from the tragic expression of women's position in Algerian society to a pragmatic inquiry into how the "I" appears and disappears (*AF* 223). In the same way, *Amour* recasts the rhetorical question of "quelle plume…?" as a practical one: which pen, which language, which practice of writing is adequate to the task of writing this history that is not historical, of transmitting a testimony that cannot be spoken? What can fiction account for beyond a nation-oriented realism?

The Dismembered Hand

The last hand in the novel (although it is hardly final) is also dismembered, yet it remains a link in the sequence of exchanges that the novel traces: the father's hand guiding his daughter to school or tearing up the letter she receives; the love letters her cousins write to project their desires beyond the confines of the home and the war letters the razzia captains write to portray themselves as seducers; the postcard that exposes intimate expression between husband and wife and the military report that displays victims of a massacre. From that first tableau of the young protagonist walking to school in the Sahel hand-in-hand with her father, *Amour* reaches another painterly scene in the Sahara, recorded by the French Orientalist painter Eugène Fromentin in his journal while traveling throughout Algeria in the 1850s. In the novel's penultimate page, the narrator evokes the "détail sinistre" that Fromentin notes in July 1853 after visiting the oasis town of Laghouat (al-Aghwāṭ), captured by the French in a brutal siege six months earlier: "Fromentin ramasse, dans la poussière, une main coupée d'Algérienne anonyme. Il la jette

ensuite sur son chemin. / Plus tard, je me sais de cette main vivante, main de la mutilation et du souvenir et je tente de lui faire porter le 'qalam'" (*AF* 313). This is probably the most well-known and widely-studied passage in the novel. Most commentators have read it as a moment of restoring speech to a violently silenced female body, as though the narrator enabled the hand to speak by making it hold a pen (*qalam* is an Arabic word for pen, originally denoting a reed stylus). The danger in such an attempt to recover women's bodies and restore their speech would be to ultimately repeat the colonial allegory of woman as territory, allowing her only to circulate in French, and that at the moment of her death. Regarding the rewriting of Fromentin's journal, Shaden Tageldin argues that the novel "can only write Algeria and its women back into historical voicing by scavenging a French colonial painter's failed scene of representation [….] by using a prosthetic hand that bespeaks colonial amputation and gendered violence".[135] For Tageldin, this closing gesture of the novel is final. It is the terminus of the chain of outstretched hands and thus, in a sense, its ground. Yet there is little finality in this passage's narration, either in its verbal tense and aspect or its action. The question remains, how, exactly, does Djebar grasp this mutilated hand?

This passage expresses a peculiar temporality through its tense and aspect, recalling the a-temporality, the suspended aspect of the present participle "allant" in the novel's opening sentence. First, Fromentin, a shadowy double of the narrator's father, appears in the particular ambiguity of preterite and present perfect that is the French *passé composé*: he is "le peintre qui,

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[135] Shaden M. Tageldin, "Which Qalam for Algeria? Colonialism, Liberation, and Language in Djebar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia* and Mustaghānimī's *Dhākirat Al-Jasad*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 46, no. 3 (2009): 480. Tageldin contrasts Djebar's repetition of Fromentin's gesture to Aḥlām Mustaghānimī's novel *Dhākirat al-jasad* (Beirut: Dār al-adab, 1993), published in English as Ahlam Mosteghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh*, trans. Baria Ahmar Sreih and Peter Clark (Cairo: American University Press, 2003). According to Tageldin, Mustaghānimī undoes the colonial binary between French as language of the body and Arabic as language of the sacred and thus "ends a colonial past in which Algerian women were defended

tout au long de mon vagabondage, *m'a accompagnée* en seconde silhouette paternelle" (*AF* 313, emphasis added). He oscillates undecidably at the boundary between past and present, in the semantic collapse of perfect and simple aspect. Whether he *accompanied* or *has accompanied* the narrator (and whether her "wandering" has come to an end or not), he appears, liminally but nonetheless *present*, to hold out a hand, his own and another: "Fromentin me tend une main inattendue, celle d'une inconnue qu'il n'a jamais pu dessiner" (*AF* 313). In a sense, the "main inattendue" could be Fromentin's own. His presence in a rewriting of Algerian history is not strictly speaking arbitrary, but nothing about him determines his appearance in Djebar's novel, either. Why should he, rather than anyone else (or no one at all), come to shadow the narrator's own father, in his place but not quite? Fromentin may seem to play an outsize role in *Amour*, as though he were the symptom of the novel's own secret fall into a trap of colonial seduction, where the colonized's resistance is constantly routed through colonial representations. Here, however, the novel interpellates Fromentin as a "fatherly shadow" in order to configure his text to fit its narrative structure, not out of its inherently paternal (or paternalistic) qualities. Like the young girl's father, Fromentin offers something in exchange for an interdiction: the former enables education in French, but forbids the exchange of letters in that language; the latter offers a document, but imposes his own perspective. The key, then, is in the way that the novel decomposes and reorganizes Fromentin's text, just as the young girl pieced together the fragmented letter that her father had torn to pieces.

Indeed, the unexpected hand that Fromentin holds out does not just offer up the polished form of his journals as they were published, but the remnants of bodies and stories from which it is composed. The extended hand is not, or is not just, Fromentin's own. It is much stranger than

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as the last bastion against French conquest." Tageldin, "Which 'Qalam,'" 494.

that. It is a dismembered hand that doubles both Fromentin's and the narrator's. It is not a phantom limb or some other phantasm, but a human hand, a remnant of the siege of Laghouat in the winter of 1852-3. The verb used for Fromentin's action of picking up the hand, *ramasser*, is noteworthy since it connotes that the painter is adding this dismembered hand to a mass of objects, physical or otherwise, that he has already collected throughout his journey. In fact, the novel has already reported several other episodes from Fromentin's journal about collecting objects, including one about coat button that he received from an army lieutenant upon first arriving in Laghouat. This officer tells Fromentin a story from the siege: he and a fellow soldier had secretly visited two women in a brothel in Laghouat some time before the attack. When they invaded the streets to seize the town, he suddenly realized he was near the house and went in to protect the women, Fatma and Mériem, only to see soldiers leaving, arms loaded with valuables, their bayonets bloodied. Too late, the officer finds Fatma dead and Mériem dying; her last gesture is to hand him a button that she had ripped from the coat of the soldier who killed her. Taken from her hand, the officer gives the button to Fromentin, where the narrator finds it again: "La main de Mériem agonisante tend encore le bouton d'uniforme: à l'amant, à l'ami de l'amant qui ne peut plus qu'écrire. Et le temps s'annihile" (*AF* 237). Even at the end of the novel, having arrived at the apparently final hand in the disaster, we are handed off again, backward, and through a whole series of exchanges that undo the linear, historical passage of time. The last hand is only ever penultimate, referring backward through the text to its own recursive iteration.

This call back to other exchanges is itself part of another hand-off, where Fromentin passes the dismembered hand along to the narrator. This exchange, however, is properly speaking, a missed encounter. In the journal, Fromentin reports that he discards the hand along the way. Fromentin repeats the hand's dismemberment: already entirely apart from any other

body, a mere bit of flesh, he carries it with him some unspecified distance (a few steps? a few kilometers?), only to throw it aside again. In a sense, he has hidden it from Djebar. How could her narrator ever know where to find this hand that Fromentin offers up only by leaving it in the shifting, grinding sand and rock of the desert? How could she know how to calibrate the at least three simultaneous verbal presents in which the painter "me tend une main", in which "il évoque alors un détail", or in which he "ramasse, dans la poussière, une main" (or again, when "[i]l la jette")? The French present tense does not distinguish between simple and continuous aspect. It relies on adverbs, prepositions, and other syntactical features to determine chronologically prior, posterior, and simultaneous actions. This passage, however, lacks such distinguishing features. Even its basic sequencing does not yield a satisfactory means of parsing its various times. Instead, many possible times overlap undecidably in these repeated simple present tense phrases, never culminating in a temporal endpoint.

The temporal peculiarities of the passage take a further turn when the narrator declares, "*Plus tard*, je me saisis de cette main vivante, main de la mutilation et du souvenir et je tente de lui faire porter le 'qalam'" (emphasis added). With this "Plus tard", the narrator locates herself in a present indefinitely *after*, but after what? Which of the other presents that occupy this passage (with no other verbal tenses in between) does she follow? Only when the present participle returns does the situation become clearer (paradoxically, by becoming less defined): The narrator wonders, "Quel rivage s'annonce pour moi, rêveuse qui m'avance, *retrouvant* la main de la mutilation que le peintre a jetée?" (*AF* 314, emphasis added). The narrator's outstretched hands are always *finding* but have never *found* the hand. The novel moves by *allant* across the proximity of words and bodies, rather than the accomplishment of history. The narrator, like Fromentin, can only ever *ramasser*, forming an assemblage. There is no whole body to be found

or to be recovered, just something discarded that now disappears in ink, back and forth. The "plus tard" inscribes the deferral of closure, the return that is never final. There is always and forever an attempt to make the dismembered hand write, but never a final text where it could speak as Algeria-Woman.

If there is no Algeria-Woman here, however, a suspicious question lingers: why is there "une main d'Algérienne anonyme"? How does the narrator know that it is a woman's hand? For all its anonymity, why is the remnant gendered? In the novel, the hand emerges from the sand alone, dismembered and detached from any human setting. This inexplicable meaning derived from an absence requires reference to the text that it rewrites. According to Fromentin's original account in *Un Eté dans le Sahara*, he removes the hand from one of three women's bodies that had been hastily buried in the aftermath of the battle six months earlier and recently disinterred by wild dogs. The hand dangles from the dried, skeletal body by a mere strip (*lambeau*) of flesh:

> Une main se détachait de l'un des cadavres et ne tenait plus au bras que par un lambeau déchiré, sec, dur et noir comme de la peau de chagrin. Elle était à demi fermée, crispée comme dans une dernière lutte avec la mort. Je la pris et l'accrochai à l'arçon de ma selle; c'était une relique funèbre à rapporter du triste ossuaire d'El-Aghouat. Je me rappelai le corps du zouave découvert du côté de l'est le jour de mon entrée, et je trouvai la symétrie de ces rencontres assez fatale [….] La main se balançait à côté de la mienne; c'était une petite main alongée, étroite, aux ongles blancs, qui peut-être n'avait pas été sans grâce, qui peut-être était jeune: il y avait quelque chose de vivant encore dans le geste effrayant de ces doigts contractés; je finis par en avoir peur, et je la déposai en passant dans le cimitière arabe (*sic*).[136]

AF's rewriting of Fromentin's journal transforms and erases certain aspects of it. In *Un Eté,* Fromentin invests his gesture with a tragic pathos. He explicitly links the discovery of the women's bodies to his arrival in Laghouat, when his French army host showed him the recently-uncovered body of a *zouave*, warning Fromentin that he may still perceive the fetid smell of

[136] Eugène Fromentin, *Un Eté dans le Sahara* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1857), 288.

poorly-buried corpses that wild animals dig up.[137] This French soldier and the three Algerian women mirror each other, forming the narrative architecture of Fromentin's account. The novel does away with Fromentin's fatal symmetry by stripping it of its narrative structure and context, rejecting the equivalence of male soldiers' and female civilians' bodies. Exchangeability is not equivalency here.

AF focuses instead on a different doubling that takes place in Fromentin's account. As if driven by a desire for narrative closure, Fromentin himself dismembers the woman's body, removing her hand to hang it as a relic from his saddle, marking the end of his time in Laghouat by re-marking its beginning. Yet his artfully constructed symmetry does not hold up under the weight of the overdetermined sign that is the hand-made-relic. It takes on a kind of after-life, hauntingly shadowing the painter's own hand as he rides, defiantly maintaining some indeterminate gesture. It is this "quelque chose de vivant" that the narrator seizes upon and transforms in the novel. Recasting Fromentin's *passé simple* into a present tense laden with participles, she activates the hand's after-life, not as the haunting specter of past violence, but as the possibility of writing, of witnessing. The half-closed fist's haunting gesture is that of carrying a pen; it is the pose of a hand that cannot write, and yet, that does write, speaking of what cannot be rendered in words.

If one were to ask in what language such a hand and such a pen would write, there would be no answer. The question of writing is not *which* language (Classical Arabic, *dārija*, French, Tamazight, or otherwise), but *what kind of language*.[138] This is the question that *Amour* poses:

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[137] Fromentin, 112–13.

[138] Tageldin argues that Mustaghānimī reappropriates Arabic as a language of women's expression, but does acknowledge that she ignores Tamazight in constructing a binary Arabic-French conflict in Algerian cultural production. Tageldin, "Which 'Qalam,'" 489–90. Djebar evokes Tamazight as a potential maternal language, since it was her mother's first language, but she did not pass it on to her daughter. The grand-

how to write history in a language that is not historical, to bear witness in a language that is not autobiographical.

Conclusion: Writing the Cry

The language that *L'Amour, la fantasia* aspires to is not French at all. All its francophone prose is an attempt to approximate the impossible language of the cry. It approaches the massive archive, "[t]oute une pyramide d'écrits amoncelés en apophyse superfétatoire" amassed within a novelistic exchange, to distinguish the asignifying cry within it: what remains that cannot be made meaningful, the moment of witness of what it means to remain that cannot be communicated. Emanating from within the walls of an Algerian home, it may be taken as the sign that the gendered space within the community that guarantees its preservation remains safe. French soldiers hear this cry as the voice of the Algeria-Woman enraptured by their seductive dance. In either case, this figure exerts a powerful gravitational force on the narrative. In so doing, it creates a significant risk that the anonymous multiplicity of bodies of the battling armies get pulled into its orbit and become allegories for an indigenous Algeria to defend against foreign invaders that subject it to sexualized violence.

At the end of her account of the razzia from Oran based on Bosquet's and Montagnac's letters, the narrator admits that these French writers "me deviennent, au milieu des cris que leur style élégant ne peut atténuer, les amants funèbres de mon Algérie. Le viol ou la souffrance des anonymes ainsi rallumés devraient m'émouvoir en premier; mais je suis étrangement hantée par l'émoi même des tueurs, par leur trouble obsessionnel" (*AF* 84). Immersed in the letters' stylized

mother tongue complicates the question of the mother-tongue, so to speak. Djebar and Gauvin, "Territoires et langues," 84–85. Djebar''s novel after *Amour*, *Vaste est la prison*, engages the history of Tamazight and, in particular, of its ancient *tifinagh* alphabet. See Djebar, *Vaste*, 121-166.

affectivity, the narrator experiments with putting herself into relation with the figure of Algeria-Woman, constituted metaphorically by French violence to individual bodies. She thus risks subsuming the anonymous women who actually suffered rape and dismemberment to it, leaving them mere accessories to the drama of the imperial order. They are merely appended to the figure of "her Algeria" and their cries are reattributed to a territorial body: "Ce monde étranger, qu'ils [les Français] pénétraient quasiment sur le mode sexuel, ce monde hurla continûment vingt ou vingt-cinq années durant, après la prise de la Ville Imprenable… Et ces officiers […] se repaissent de cette épaisseur sonore. Y pénètrent comme en une défloraison. L'Afrique est prise malgré le refus qu'elle ne peut étouffer" (*AF* 84-5). The cry loses its polyphonous, multiplicitous anonymity when it is heard by those who would take it to be the voice of a strange world and revel in its cries as though they responded to their penetration.

In the same moment, the Algeria-Woman returns to the French world it comes from, the very "monde étranger" that they constitute in their texts. The bestial cries that the officers perceive, indeed "revel in" (*se repaître*), overlap with but are not identical to the anonymous cries of each body, for the enemy is not speaking the same language as the invader. This is the obverse side of French war letters, their exposed rearguard where "l'ennemi revient sur l'arrière. Sa guerre à lui apparaît muette, sans écriture, sans temps de l'écriture. Les femmes, par leur hululement funèbre, improvise en direction de l'autre sexe, comme une étrange parlerie de la guerre. Inhumanité certes de ces cris, stridulation du chant qui lancine, hiéroglyphes de la voix collective et sauvage: nos écrivains sont hantés par cette rumeur" (*AF* 82-3). Their cries are no longer those of love ("l'amour, ses cris") or of the colonial scene of seduction, nor are they in any genitive relation at all. The shifter *ces* detaches the cry from a body, whether individual or national, producing something inhuman that relates to the human body and to human language

only through non-relation. It is the bare possibility of language.[139] In the “guerre muette”, which appears mute to the French because it is inaccessible to them in writing, but also because it speaks in an asignifying cry, *Amour* finds the possibility of inscribing this inseparable division in writing.

So many bodies could be made to speak allegorically for or as the Algeria-Woman, but over and over again the novel dissects this figure, leaving only remnants that can only appear as such in this supplementary exchange created by the novel. What remains is the writing of a hand that cannot write and the anticipatory presence of dismemberment, “l’instant où le coup de sabot à la face renversera toute femme dressée libre [….] j’entends déjà, avant même qu’il s’élève et transperce le ciel dur, j’entends le cri de la mort dans la fantasia” (*AF* 314). The last line returns back to the opening epigraph from Fromentin, recounting the death of a woman named Haoua at the hands of her spurned lover, who tramples her with his horse during a cavalcade. The novel closes by reopening the possibility of testimony, of Haoua’s crushed frame or of dismembered bodies outside Oran or Laghouat bearing witness. Thus, *Amour*’s narration aspires to inscribe what is unspeakable within the history of the colonial and postcolonial Maghreb, rather than to report and repeat that established history. In the networks of bodies, letters, and power that the novel traces, the asignifying cry emanates from the place of the remnant or the second skin. It bespeaks both the inevitable violence of power and its own irreducibility to the terms of that encounter.

[139] It “bears witness to the taking place of a potentiality of speaking through an impotentiality alone [….] between the outside and the inside of language.” Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 158.

Chapter Two: Between Futures Past and Present

> Ceci n'est pas un livre d'histoire, mais un roman. *S'il prend source dans l'Histoire, il y entre surtout l'imagination galopante de l'auteur, qui me ressemble comme un frère. En conséquence, toute ressemblance de quelque nature que ce soit avec des événements historiques ne serait que pure coïncidence, une heureuse rencontre.*
> (*MP* 11)

> *Qui donc écrit l'histoire de la terre, le Maître ou les historiens?*
> (*RN* 131)

Introduction

If Maghrebi literary modernity emerges from the early nineteenth century to the present in the wake of political, financial, and cultural entanglements of European empires and Islamicate polities from Morocco to Iraq by way of Istanbul, Euro-American historiography tends to assume that it was French imperial rule that endowed the Maghreb with its coherence as a literary and political territory. From other African, Mediterranean, or Middle Eastern perspectives, this also becomes reified as what demarcates the Maghreb's difference from other formations for which it might otherwise have strong affinities. Yet the long century of European dominance and specifically French rule in the Maghreb is but one relatively recent chapter in region's history. Its political, social, and textual features are embedded in millennial historical strata that offer a series of deeper historical frames, oriented on different geopolitical and spatiotemporal axes. Thus, in one direction, the history of the contemporary Maghreb that takes European invasions as its point of departure is also part of the history of Western imperialism in general. But it also partakes of the history of Islam and its political expansion, from the Umayyad caliphate's conquests of North Africa and Iberia across the seventh and eighth centuries to the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the beginnings of direct European rule in the

Maghreb. (Other frames could be added, moving further back in time to the Roman empire, or to Phoenician seafaring and colonization, and so on.)

This chapter turns to novels that take up these more distant Maghrebi pasts as something heterogeneous to the nationalist-novelist paradigm of the postcolonial Maghrebi present. In the previous chapter, I showed how Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* reconfigures from within this nationalist-novelist historicization and the realist aesthetics of emergency that often accompanies it in the postcolonial context. This novel rewrites the linear chronology of French cultural influence and the diffusion of linguistic and literary forms from metropole to colony that characterized Maghrebi literary modernity in favor of a history of a seduction, capture, and contestation of new writing forms and practices among a transhistorical community constituted by imperial violence. Here, I take up other narratives of historical conflict and conflicting histories in lesser known works by another canonical Maghrebi writer, the Moroccan Driss Chraïbi, and an almost unknown novel by the Algerian writer and scholar Jamel Eddine Bencheikh. Bencheikh, like Djebar, resided in Algeria in the decades immediately after independence, but relocated abroad more or less permanently as the political situation worsened in the 1980s. Chraïbi, for his part, lived almost exclusively outside Morocco from his days studying chemistry at university in Paris. Despite the fact that they all lived and published in this world literary capital, their writing remains primarily identified with their Maghrebi origins (and this over the particularly vociferous protestations of Driss Chraïbi).[140]

[140] In numerous interviews, Chraïbi expressed his desire to simply be considered a writer. In the first of a series of interviews with Rachel Assouline for France Culture in 1992, he asserted, "Considérez-moi comme un simple écrivain, et non pas écrivain maghrébin d'expression française [….] Je suis un écrivain français à partir du moment où j'ai adopté la langue. Et à partir du moment où la langue française m'a adopté, je suis, disons, écrivain français de la périphérie. Et là, quand on dit, et on le dit depuis très longtemps, 'les écrivains maghrébins de langue française', je me retrouve dans une espèce de ghetto dont, d'où dès le départ j'ai voulu sortir." In the second episode, Assouline pushes on the question of the

The works under study here, Chraïbi's *La Mère du Printemps (L'Oum-er-Bia)*[141] and *Naissance à l'aube*[142] and Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum*,[143] have seemed to some commentators to represent a turning point, or perhaps a point of return, in the both these writers' careers and in the trajectory of Maghrebi literature. In Chraïbi's case, these novels seem to mark the writer's return from dalliances with non-Maghrebi settings and characters to his Arab, Amazigh, and Islamic origins, by way of an epic recounting of the Islamic conquest of northern Africa and the Iberian peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries. Bencheikh's virtually unknown novel takes us even further afield to a ninth century slave revolt in the marshes around Basra in southern Abbasid Iraq. It is this turn away from the Maghreb in *Rose noire sans parfum* that motivates my pairing it with *La Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube* here. On a broad scale, the events of all three novels are connected by the history of Islamic empires. The greater distance taken in *Rose noire sans parfum*, however, has the virtue of highlighting the latent difference between past and present that is also activated in Chraïbi's texts. While the latter seem to simply narrate more explicitly a directly Maghrebi history, despite its age, the latter suggests that this relation contains within itself a gap.

All three texts expose an intimate relation between territorialization and history-writing by displacing themselves temporally from the territory of Maghrebi literary modernity. They call

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specificity of his literary practice. When Chraïbi continues to resist, she asks, "Pourquoi ça vous agace dès qu'on parle de spécificité?" He replies; "Peut-être à tort, je sens un certain paternalisme." See the October 12 and 13 episodes of Rachel Assouline, "Driss Chraïbi," Interview, *A voix nue: grands entretiens d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: France Culture, October 12-16, 1992), http://inatheque.ina.fr/doc/TV-RADIO/RD_1900486.001/driss-chraibi-1ere-emission?rang=10, Institut national de l'audiovisuel. These interviews are available on line at https://www.franceculture.fr/litterature/driss-chraibi-briseur-de-tabou-social.

[141] Driss Chraïbi, *La Mère du printemps (L'Oum-er-Bia)* (Paris: Seuil, 1982). Hereafter abbreviated *MP*. Further citations given parenthetically.

[142] Driss Chraïbi, *Naissance à l'aube* (Paris: Seuil, 1986). Hereafter abbreviated *NA*. Further citations given parenthetically.

[143] Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, *Rose noire sans parfum* (Paris: Stock, 1998). Hereafter abbreviated *RN*.

into question the historical continuity and territorial contiguity of the Maghreb with the early Islamic caliphates over the *longue durée* by putting different written, oral, and chthonic forms of history to play against one another. In the fictional space of the novel, the objective veneer of history writing gives way to a comparative investigation of the political tensions and potentialities that emerge among various forms of history as they give account of the conquest and assimilation of territories and peoples. Putting historical accounts into proximity with novelistic fiction allows reveals pasts whose future does not coincide with the Maghrebi present to which they are ascribed. If the past and present are connected at all in these novels, it is more through the failure of the past to produce the future it had imagined, than in building the reader's present.

Consequently, claiming the past as belonging to a particular place and time relies on a repetition of the violence that crushed a past vision of the future. By focusing on ruination resulting from failed or short-circuited resistance in the face of conflict as the constitutive force of history, these texts bring out and the politics of occupying, contesting, and modifying the territories that emerge from those conflicts. At stake in history writing, if not in writing and language in general, is the risk of naturalizing the particular historical forms and the violence and ruination they inscribe as part of the pure flow of time. If such is the case, then writing and even language itself become mortal ventures, wherein one always risks repeating and naturalizing violence. Chraïbi's and Bencheikh's characters are constantly exposed to violence by means of their interpellation or inscription in language. Yet alongside this threat of violence by way of language there also remains promise. At every point when the difference of the past is at risk of reappropriation to the self-identity of the present, its difference must be repeated and reappears

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Further citations given parenthetically.

as what must disappear, fracturing the smooth, homogeneous surface of time that passes with the heterogeneity of time that accumulates.

This chapter begins with the central problem taken up by these novels, which is that of looking at time. I read the opening of *Naissance à l'aube* as an exploration of this question that demonstrates both how violence and ruination get naturalized in progressive narratives of history and how to look beyond the surface of this seemingly transparent and orderly vision. I then show how naturalizing history by "leaving time to time" reproduces the same global inequalities between Western and non-Western cultures that characterize the developmental narrative of Maghrebi literary modernity and undergird the territorialization of writing in world literature systems. The second part of the chapter focuses on close readings of the novels themselves. I analyze the confrontations between different forms of history (earthen or chthonic, oral, scriptural and chronicle writing) that seek to transmit cultural, social, and political specificities in times of violent conflict. In this context of simultaneous transmission and change, the risks as well as the possibilities attendant to language come to the fore. Ultimately, the failures, misfires, and detours of transmission reveal the discontinuities of the present's claim to the past and the past's imagination of the future. Bringing ruination to light counters its own naturalization in the course of history, showing the latter to rather be the accumulation of the wreckage and debris produced by its violence and occluded in its writing.

How to Look at Time

Each of these novels begins with a prefatory section that narratively and structurally illustrates conceptual problems in the forms of history they engage. In Bencheikh's *Rose noire*, it is a prelude impossibly narrated in the collective voice of the illiterate slaves who waged a

revolution against their Abbasid masters. Although *Mère* and *Naissance* rewrite in novelistic form the history of Islam's spread across northern Africa and Andalusia, each opens with an epilogue set in Morocco in the 1980s. By beginning with the ending, these novels signal a particular engagement with time in their structure from the outset. To be even more precise, one should say that they begin after the ending, since an epilogue comes after the story proper has concluded. Epilogues supplement the text with something that was not accounted for in it. In this case, Morocco's contemporary history appears first as an afterthought to the distant past (albeit an inescapable one), rather than as its accomplishment. The epic historical narrative of the arrival Islam in the Maghreb and the Iberian peninsula does not culminate in the present, even if it does end up there. By opening in the postcolonial present to introduce the past, the novels transform the present from the ultimate endpoint of history into the penultimate moment in a narrative sequence. This logic of deferral will, over the course of the novel, allow the difference of the past from the present to appear.

Chraïbi's introductory epilogues center on Raho Aït Yafelman, a character who first appeared in the novel *Une Enquête au pays* (which is sometimes counted as the first of a "Berber trilogy" that continues with *Mère* and *Naissance*) and returns several times across Chraïbi's fiction.[144] While Raho's identity as a Berber villager remains consistent, he plays a variety of roles in each text. Raho's peregrinations throughout Chraïbi's oeuvre trace an intertextual

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[144] See Driss Chraïbi, *Une Enquête au pays* (Paris: Seuil, 1981). This grouping has become widespread, but I have been unable to identify its origin. Curiously, the back cover of the original 1985 printing of *Naissance* identifies it as the "deuxième volet d'une vaste fresque romanesque" beginning with *Mère*, rather than the final volume of a trilogy. Ziad Bentahar has suggested to me that Chraïbi originally intended for *L'Homme du Livre* (Casablanca: Eddif, 1994) to be the third part of the trilogy, but that he set the book aside for several years and reworked it because of the controversy that surrounded Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1988-9 (personal communication, May 2018). This might explain why the English translations of *Enquête*, *Mère*, and *Naissance* identify them as part of a tetralogy, except that they predate *L'Homme du Livre* by several years. Michael A. Toler, "The Ethics of Cultural Representation: The Maghribi Novel in English Translation," *Journal of North African Studies* 6, no. 3 (2001): 55.

fictional universe that must be considered as a frame for the ostensibly-historical contents of novels like *Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube*. In the latter, Raho reveals what is at stake in such an act of framing: a novelistic mode of looking at time. There, Raho and his grandson Bourguine are doing informal work at the train station in Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya, a town in north-central Morocco. Raho serves water to passengers during the midday summer heat, while his grandson transfers bags of mail from train to train. One day during their long walk from into town from their village, Bourguine remarks on the restoration of the town's precolonial name after Moroccan independence:

> La ville est redevenue la ville [….] Avant, elle s'appelait Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya, du nom du saint qui y avait vécu. Et puis, les Nazaréens sont venus, je n'étais pas encore né. Ils ont pacifié les tribus et ils ont perdu un *captine* [….] Alors, forcément, ils ont appelé la ville Petitjean, du nom de ce vieux cadavre. Maintenant qu'ils sont partis, puisque tout est pacifié, en ordre et comme il faut, eh bien! la ville est redevenue Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya, comme autrefois. (*NA* 31-2)

The palindrome-like form of Bourguine's reflections on the changes that he has observed in the social landscape in his lifetime mirror his perception that the restoration of the town's name matches the restoration of the country's self-identity to point in its pre-colonial history. Bourguine articulates the return of the town's identity in almost tautological form: the town is the town. However, the verb *redevenir* belies the equivalence that he establishes through the town's pre- and postcolonial name. The means by which the town has become itself again are quite different from the forces that shaped its identity in the first place. In Bourguine's formulation, the agent of that restoration is the same one that disrupted Morocco's putative self-identity in the first place: the colonial French Protectorate regime, which renamed the town to commemorate the violence that the French army suffered for the sake of "pacifying" Morocco. Only once the French have restored order — the very order that they upset — can the town

return to what it once was, or, more precisely, what it was meant to have been, after the fact. In other words, the town's self-identity is simply that it has come to resemble the image of its history that it projects for itself. Born after the establishment of the Protectorate, Bourguine fails to see the traces of the colonial encounter etched into the earth that he observes. He reduces the violent French military and governmental intervention to an epiphenomenal process of instating order in society and thus the restoration of order and identity appears as the natural outcome course of history.

As Bourguine attempts to reckon with the changes in the social landscape that he has observed in his lifetime, his grandfather, Raho, instructs him to direct his gaze elsewhere, beyond the appearance of identity: "Fils, tu ne vois pas plus loin que là où porte ton regard. Il faut regarder le temps" (*NA* 32). For Raho, observing the visible landscape only affords a superficial reading of history whose self-identity (the town is the town, its name is its name) is merely a surface effect. Raho reconfigures the image of the surrounding landscape to reveal something different to his grandson:

> Je ne connais pas cette ville. Ni de ce nom-ci ni de ce nom-là. Tout ça… (Il pivota lentement sur ses talons, le bras tendu. Il désigna tous les horizons, les deux levants, les deux couchants, toute la terre circulaire)... ici, et ici, et là, et là, et puis là-bas, tout appartient à la tribu des Cherarda, nos frères et nos cousins. Bien sûr, ils n'ont que les chardons et les cailloux, mais ceci est leur territoire depuis la création et jusqu'à la fin des siècles. (*NA* 32)

Raho shows Bourguine how to look at time in this embodied narrative performance. With his outstretched hand, Raho draws a kind of bodily map across the land, following a temporal axis otherwise obscured. Unlike a paper map, which gives names to its features, Raho claims not to know the nearby town by any name. Gesture and deixis alone, a wave of the hand and a demonstrative "here" or "there", suffice to designate place. Raho's is a map that recasts the

traces of history visible in the landscape in a narrative that only one who looks at time could tell and only one listening could see. This all-encompassing gesture wipes away the privileged role of the visible (the appearance of order) and the written (the town's name) in territorializing the landscape. In its stead, Raho posits a potentiality of that land itself to bear the marks of time and produce a different form of history. The rocks and thistles that remain the Cherarda's only claim to the land speak to the violence of territorialization that subtends Bourguine's glimpse of order and identity.

To look at time in this way, Raho and Bourguine have to see beyond the surface effects of colonial and postcolonial property regimes that have naturalized the appropriation of this territory from the Cherarda. As they walk through a degraded landscape on the route to Sidi Kacem, they pass by verdant oases enclosed by hedges and barbed war: "elles étaient la propriété *privée* des autres — autant dire qu'elles ne faisaient pas partie du paysage [....] C'est pourquoi Raho et son petit-fils niaient le témoignage de leurs propres yeux. C'était un autre monde. Pour eux, il n'existait pas" (*NA* 31). Raho's injunction to "look at time" demands a particular attitude toward the landscape that rejects the givenness of visible evidence. The earth is not the earth as they see it. Adopting this stance toward their surroundings allows Raho and Bourguine see the enclosure of fertile oases as private property within an otherwise-degraded landscape in a different light. The territorial order they stand for also represents the destruction of other modes of relating to the landscape. Within the appearance of progress lurks the accumulating wreckage of history.[145]

[145] I adapt this image from Walter Benjamin's famous "angel of history". Facing the past but inescapably propelled to the future by a windstorm, the angel sees the past as "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage", rather than a continuous chain of events. With this image, Benjamin recasts the notion of historical progress in terms of ruination. Benjamin was seeking to caution historians against historicism's structural dependence on the victors, conquerors, and rulers. They fill the archive on

Ruination emerges as a central component of territorialization, as integral as the restoration of order and identity in (post)colonial property relations. ruins are the traces of processes of ruination, their primary characteristic is their persistence, not disappearance (even as they mark destruction). Ruination is about the production of a particular object or set of relations at the expense of others. At the same time, as the presence of what is absent, ruins suggest the possibility of a past different from the present. At a minimum, they produce the pure effect of the past that occasions investigation into the possible cracks in the totality that is the present's claim on history. This is Raho's lesson to Bourguine and what he shows him with his sweeping gesture that retraces the territory of the Cherarda. Looking at time opens a gap in the apparent identity of Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya before and after the Protectorate. The town comes to represent an ongoing dispossession, rather than a restoration of identity. Raho's way of looking at time beyond the visible is a contestatory practice specific to particular environmental, property, and labor regimes. It directly addresses only one site of violent appropriation of territory, naturalized in a (post)colonial landscape and history. At the same time, however, he makes this claim through an excessive gesture that takes the horizon as its only limit, thus potentially expanding infinitely. For this reason, the force of his intervention does not derive so much from Cherarda's eternal claim to the land as from the potentiality of deterritorialization. It is the very possibility of other times unaccounted for in the history of the present that denaturalizes the appearance of the present as both the culmination and the vouchsafe of history.

La Mère du Printemps and *Naissance à l'aube* recount dispossession by revealing the gaps in the identities through which received history presents itself. Each novel deals with what

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which history writing relies to do its work. As a result, practitioners of Benjamin's historical materialism must be vigilant to the violence that founds the archive: "There is no document of civilization which is not

are ostensibly core elements of Moroccan national history, such as the Islamic conquest of North Africa and Andalusia, French colonization, and local resistance. Both novels focus on the disjunction between the postcolonial national territory and the past territorial formations that the nation wants to claim as its history. They open this gap by narrating forgotten futures past, showing how the future as conceived in the past misaligns with the present. In this way, the landscape that Raho and Bourguine cross on their way to work is doubly haunted by the specter of dispossession: both the foundational violence of appropriating land from the Cherarda tribe and history's failure to account for that appropriation.

The Domain of Time

At stake in the question of how to look at time, then, is the danger of naturalizing dispossession and ruination in the name of a form of history that arbitrarily justifies its violence in the name of its own progression. In such a naturalization, humans merely record history, they do not make it. History falls under the sovereign domain of time, whose constant passage guarantees the order and identity of human existence. Looking at time denaturalizes it, calling into question the language of historical discourse: is there a language up to the task of accounting for the past as history without naturalizing the form of its discourse as that of history itself?

Driss Chraïbi poses this question at the intersection of language, history, and power. For most writers, it is a rare occasion that they hear their words echoed in the mouths of those in authority. Yet Chraïbi had just that honor accorded to him by the French President François Mitterand who, it seems, was fond of saying "il faut laisser le temps au temps." Leave time to time. In a 1992 interview with Rachel Assouline, Chraïbi staked his claim to this expression,

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at the same time a document of barbarism." Benjamin, "Theses," 256–58.

declaring that the phrase "n'est pas une invention de notre président, Monsieur Mitterrand, elle est de moi. Dans un bouquin qui s'appelle *Une Enquête au pays*, [...] c'est écrit trois fois. Je lui avais envoyé ce livre et il m'avait écrit, à l'époque. Je crois qu'il l'a lu. Bien. Mais quelque temps après, je retrouve cette phrase dans ses discours et dans la bouche de certains ministres." If the president had indeed gleaned the phrase from the copy of Chraïbi's 1981 novel *Une Enquête au pays* sent to him by the author, the latter had to admit that he, too, was really only its transmitter.[146] In the interview, Chraïbi immediately clarifies, "En fait, elle n'est pas de moi [....] C'est une expression courante, 'khal al-waqt li-l waqt', en marocain."[147] With this detail, Chraïbi changes the stakes. Not only has the president borrowed a turn of phrase from a French-language writer who happens to be from Morocco, he has borrowed a colloquial Arabic phrase in the Moroccan writer's translation. In the image cultural hierarchies established by the colonial and postcolonial relationship between France and Morocco, French high culture exerts a strong influence on the Maghreb, whereas Maghrebi vernacular culture remains limited to its popular origins. And yet, Chraïbi's anecdote seems to claim, things can and do circulate beyond their presumptive territories in this structure.

Chraïbi was not the only person who had noted Mitterrand's phraseology, although he was alone in attributing himself, in the guise of the transmitter of a colloquial Moroccan proverb. Decades later, the columnist and essayist François Brune published a short online piece detailing his quest since the 1980s to both confirm that "leave time to time" was indeed a pet phrase of Mitterrand's and, if so, to determine its origin.[148] Brune makes no mention of Chraïbi or his claim to the saying. Instead, he grants it a more illustrious lineage, tracing it to none other than

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[146] I have been unable to locate the phrase in this work.
[147] See the October 13, 1992 episode of Assouline, "Driss Chraïbi."

Miguel de Cervantes (by way of a false lead about a Pope) with the help of a Spanish colleague who adds that it is also a common saying throughout Andalusia. Given enough time to time, as Cervantes himself would have it (he uses the phrase as "dar tiempo al tiempo"),[149] the Spaniard retakes his rightful place over the Moroccan usurper and a Latin tongue replaces a Semitic one. What could Chraïbi say against this pedigree?

Such would seem to be the natural course of things, when time is left to its own devices. A spurious historical claim automatically becomes suspect for its vernacular origins and must yield to a well-founded one, which will necessarily have better-established cultural credentials. And yet, an uncertainty remains. No sooner has the specter of Arabic lurking within French been warded off than it reappears shadowing the Spanish that has taken its place. The comment that Brune's colleague makes about the Andalusian provenance of the saying is telling, for Cervantes claims in *Don Quixote* that the tale is a translation of a manuscript by an Arab historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli, rescued from the hands of a silk merchant on Mercers' Road in Toledo.[150] The location is not a coincidence, according to Abdelfattah Kilito, who notes that Cervantes had a favorite expression for talking about writing: "tisser sa toile," to spin one's cloth.[151] In *Don Quixote*, the protagonist describes translation as akin to looking at the backside of a tapestry.[152] A different image there appears, one that shows the warp and weave specific to a language that amounts to so much semantic excess that stubbornly remains untranslatable. Cervantes's masterpiece, then, figures itself as the strangely distorted reverse of an Arabic tapestry, featuring

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[148] François Brune, "Laisser (donner) du temps au temps?," *Les Jeudis du songeur* (blog), March 23, 2014, http://www.editionsdebeaugies.org/jeudi10.php?l=-5.
[149] Miguel de Cervantes, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Barcelona: Real Academia Española, 2015), 353, 397, 1086.
[150] Cervantes, 86. This is all the more striking since Cervantes's prologue debates the quality and style of works that have frequent recourse to citations from the Bible or Greek and Latin authors.
[151] Kilito, *Je parle*, 79:

a Spanish noble imitating Amadís de Gaula and other French knights of chivalric romances,[153] themselves translated into Spanish.[154]

Thus, Brune's discovery of the source of Mitterrand's catch-phrase defers textual authority to the past, in the form of the hyper-canonical figure of Cervantes over Chraïbi's vernacular origin in the recent colonial and contemporary postcolonial history. This gesture mirrors Cervantes's own deferral of authority the *Quixote* to the imagined Arab historian Cide Hamete Benengeli. As it does so, however, Brune's account finds itself once again doubled by the Arabic genealogy that Chraïbi posits. While the status of Cervantes as a European *littérateur* par excellence would seem to authorize Brune's account, Cervantes avows himself to be only a penultimate authority, deferring responsibility at once to his predecessors, in the form of Benengeli or Amadís de Gaula, and to his successors, in the figure of Chraïbi. Whereas Brune would give time to time, letting it take its seemingly-natural course from the mouth of a contemporary powerful figure to a suitably illustrious historical source, Chraïbi shows the real sense of leaving time to time: the naturalization of hierarchies that arbitrarily prefer certain genealogies to others and will transform them as needed in order to make them stand as milestones along the progressive flow of historical time.

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[152] Cervantes, 1032.

[153] The titular hero of the *Amadís de Gaula* cycle of chivalric romances (which also employs the "found text" trope, as did many such texts of the period) receives the epithet "Amadís sin tempo" from his mother because she bore him outside of marriage and believed she would have to abandon him, most likely to his death. See *Amadis de Gaula: Historia de este invencible caballero, en la cual se tratan de sus altos hechos de armas y caballerías*. Barcelona: Juan Oliveres, 1847, 1:22.

[154] A literary historical analysis of *Don Quixote*'s sources also leads back to North Africa by way of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, also called *The Golden Ass*, generally recognized as the only surviving Latin novel and a forerunner of the picaresque genre. Born in the second century C.E. in Madauros (modern-day M'Daourouch, Algeria), Apuleius (or Afulay) was a Numidian (which is to say Amazigh) subject of the Roman Empire who wrote a number of works in Latin. See E. C. Graf, *Cervantes and Modernity: Four Essays on* Don Quijote (Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 65–86. Gabriel Audisio cited Apuleius in his 1946 *Algérie littéraire* as one of the foremost figures of the "époque latine" in Algerian literary history. Audisio, *Algérie*, 66–69.

The attempt to locate the origin of utterances (like Mitterand's "Laisser le temps au temps") in discrete languages or language groups is haunted here by an irreducible plurality within language. This undercuts the hierarchy of languages essential or incidental to history and, in the same way, the territorialization of literatures onto historical formations of Western and non-Western/Global South/Third World, French and francophone, metropolitan and postcolonial, national and world — in short, original and derivative — that posit their discourse on literature as the nature of writing itself. Thus, in one version, leaving time to time naturalizes time's autonomy over its own domain: time will pass, things will happen, history will progress. Given enough time, Mitterand's French phrase will be restored to its Latinate etymology and European ascendance, in place of an unacceptable Arabic and Maghrebi one. In another version, however, the irreducibly plural linguistic origins of Mitterand's phrase do not allow this linguistic and territorial hierarchy to coalesce into a given substrate. It must always appear as a form of history among others, albeit one with totalizing ambitions.

Denaturalizing the Debris of Time

Chraïbi's and Bencheikh's novels test different forms in which language attempts to give account of the past as history. Putting these different forms of written, oral, and chthonic history to play against one another in novelistic space reveals both the plurality within the language of historical discourse and the gaps within it that bespeak the violence and ruination that, by their very destruction, exclusion, and erasure, accumulate like so much wreckage in the archive. Both novels endeavor to look at time by taking it as something that accumulates, rather than as something that passes or as the medium of history's taking place, as papers pile up in the archive

and ruins stand atop one another in the landscape.[155] They identify the thresholds from which time accumulates into history, whether it is in a geographic, documentary, or other archives, and show how language may reveal or obscure those thresholds, rendering the past visible or invisible. The ambiguous promise and threat of language is at play in the different forms of written, oral, and chthonic history that each novel takes up in various aspects.[156] Written forms of history span the chronicle, the poetic, and the fictional; oral forms include both reported and silenced speech, utterances both recorded and forgotten; the chthonic comprises the physical landscape and mobility or rootedness in it, as well as contrasting human and geological time scales.

As the introductory epilogue of *Naissance* indicates, Chraïbi's novels focus particularly on how and where time accumulates in landscapes, in tension with scriptural and oral modes of recounting history. *Mère and Naissance* take on the naturalization of Islamic history's progression from East to West, following the course of the sun and guaranteed by the textual authority of the Qur'ān. They read this form of history against a chthonic form of history among the indigenous peoples of the Maghreb assimilated into Islam and a utopian future past that arose and collapsed from the encounter with Islam. Bencheikh's novel engages with the accumulation

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[155] In these diverse material archives, "Time does not pass, it accumulates", as the historian Ian Baucom has written in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Ian Baucom, "Specters of the Atlantic," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 80. Baucom is, in turn, drawing on Edouard Glissant, who speaks of the past's persistence in the present as an "accumulation de sédiments" Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 45. The sedimented vestiges, traces, and remnants of the past that persist make it possible to narrate relations between the past and the present.

[156] This is what Jacques Derrida identifies the structural condition of speech, prior to any particular content: that speaking engages a relation, not unlike that of hospitality, that implicates subjects in an event before they can know what it will be. Language as such promises, or threatens, to mean something as of yet undecided: "Une structure immanente de promesse ou de désir, une attente sans horizon d'attente informe toute parole. Dès que je parle, avant même de formuler une promesse, une attente ou un désir, comme tels, et là où je ne sais pas encore ce qui m'arrivera ou ce qui m'attend au bout d'une phrase, ni qui, ni ce qui attend qui ou quoi, je suis dans cette promesse ou dans cette menace — qui rassemble dès lors la langue, la langue promise ou menacée, prometteuse jusque dans la menace et

of time in the written documents of the historical archive. *Rose noire sans parfum* critiques the naturalized social hierarchy of a slaveholding society and uncovers the violence at the core of every chronicle written by the victors of history. It identifies the gaps and omissions in official records from which the silenced subjects of history may utter a speculative narration. The juxtaposition of different forms of history fragments any conception of the present as the culmination of a continuous historical chain of events. Instead, multiplying histories allows futures past to resurface.[157] These aspirations to a future never realized, that fails to correspond to the present that claims the past, rupture the seemingly contiguous, causal relation between present and past. Thus, despite being set in crucial periods of what might seem to be the long history of the Maghreb, these novels do not stage this history in order to appropriate it to the present. Instead, they insist on the *inassimilability* of the past to the present, showing history to proceed by rupture and disconnection rather than by orderly inheritance of a prior legacy to a present period.

A Turning Point in Maghrebi Literature?

The interventions these novels make in the recounting of history also reconfigures the received historical narrative of Maghreb literary modernity and its nationalist-novelist paradigm.

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vice versa, ainsi rassemblée dans sa dissémination même." Jacques Derrida, *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, la prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 42–43.

[157] See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. |Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). The concept has been useful for historians of colonialism like David Scott in his analysis of romance in anticolonial narrative or Gary Wilder in his reinterpretation of departmentalist politics in Martinique. Neither of these strategies fully realized the ends they imagined for themselves, but they nevertheless now offer what Wilder describes as "futures that were once imagined, but never came to be, alternatives that might have been used and whose unrealized emancipatory potential may now be recognized and reawakened as durable and vital legacies" (16). I would add that the mere existence of futures past, whether inherently emancipatory or not in and of themselves, pierces the present's totalizing grasp on the past, making it possible to think beyond the presentist limitations that often weigh disproportionately on postcolonial studies. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time:*

Read against the background of the realist aesthetics of emergency demanded by the *années du plomb* in Morocco, as the decades of repressive rule under King Hassan II are known, or the civil war in Algeria, this turn "backward" may appear to be a natural extension of the national project, from an anticolonial stance to an integrative approach to its longer history. In the previous chapter, I showed how Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* reckoned with the realist aesthetics of emergency that arose from the failure of the nationalist-novelist paradigm's failure to live up to the image it projected of itself in the postcolonial nation-state. Here, Chraïbi's and Bencheikh's texts represent a turn, both in content and critical reception, from earlier patterns in Maghrebi literature, away from the contemporary nation-state at the heart of a periodization that spans the colonization, independence, and nation-building.[158]

Indeed, when *La Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube* were first published, several reviewers identified these novels as marking a turning point in Chraïbi's career, in content, theme, and style.[159] This turn quickly became linked to Chraïbi's belated return to Morocco shortly after the publication of *Mère*.[160] Thus, the turn to history by a writer who had previously

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Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
[158] The difference in reception between *L'Amour* and Chraïbi's roughly contemporary novels *Mère* and *Naissance* most likely results from numerous factors, gender foremost among them, insofar as women and, by extension, women writers are always at risk of being made to stand for the nation and thus responsible for writing about its politics in a particular way (See the discussion of gender and nationalism in Chapter 1, 86-8, 114-6). Since biographical criticism has also strongly influenced prior reception of Chraïbi's and Djebar's works, the differences in their career trajectories no doubt plays a part as well. Whereas Djebar's profile grew during the time she spent in Algeria after independence, especially through the short stories in *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* and the two films she directed during this period, Chraïbi's reputation had crystallized decades earlier during the controversy surrounding his first novel, *Le Passé simple*. Between these two canonical figures of different aspects of Maghrebi literature, Bencheikh is something of an outlier in the lack of attention he has received. Nevertheless, this will prove useful in shedding off some of the critical baggage that tends to get dragged into readings of writers like Chraïbi or Djebar.
[159] The historical scope and specific topic of Islamization of Amazigh peoples stood out in particular. Aida A. Bamia, "Review of *Mother Spring* by Driss Chraïbi and Translated by Hugh Harter," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 337–38.
[160] One review directly interprets what it sees as a new style in these texts as the presage to the author's return visit to Morocco. See Danielle Marx-Scouras, "Review of *Mother Spring* by Driss Chraïbi and

focused on contemporary issues in his best-known novels appeared to mark a return to his origins and, thus, to his true subject matter, having written a number of less-celebrated texts that did not deal with Morocco or the Maghreb at all.[161] To be sure, these works departed from the Chraïbi described in Albert Memmi's *Anthologie des écrivains maghrébins d'expression française* as part of a transitional generation, ill at ease in both the Maghreb and Europe.[162] Nevertheless, even as Jacqueline Arnaud, one of the anthology's collaborators, wrote that the time had come to consider Maghrebi literature in its *littérarité,* beyond nation-building periodization she had helped consecrate, Chraïbi still seemed to be an influential "commenceur" whose work was increasingly distant, if not entirely divergent from the project of Maghrebi literature.[163]

By this time, a certain image of Chraïbi as the writer of "la révolte contre le père", to reprise the title of the chapter that Jean Déjeux dedicates to his work, had already congealed.[164] Indeed, Chraïbi had been a controversial figure in Maghrebi literature since the publication of his first novel, *Le Passé simple*, which told the story of Driss Ferdi, a young Moroccan man who rebels against his bourgeois tea merchant father's authoritarian rule over the family in the name

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Translated by Hugh Harter," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 3 (August 1991): 465–67.

[161] Reviews frequently took these novels to be part of a personal identity quest through the history of the author's people (although Chraïbi himself is not Amazigh). One reviewer compared the novel to Alex Haley's *roots*. J. D. Gauthier, "Review of *La Mère du Printemps (L'Oum-er-Bia)* by Driss Chraïbi," *World Literature Today* 57, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 503. Another suggests that it is an attempt to reinvigorate a people that has forgotten its history Mildred Mortimer, "Review of *Naissance à l'aube* by Driss Chraïbi," *World Literature Today* 61, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 339. A third abstracts this personal quest into a resistance handbook for minority peoples. Keith Q. Warner, "Review of *La Mère Du Printemps* by Driss Chraïbi," *The French Review* 58, no. 1 (October 1984): 154.

[162] Memmi et al., *Ecrivains maghrébins*, 63.

[163] Arnaud's call reprises one made by Jamel Eddine Bencheikh more than a decade earlier when he asked scholars to study Maghrebi literature in its literarity at a 1973 conference in Villetaneuse. From her perspective, however, this injunction came too soon, in a sense, relative to the development of the field and her own career trajectory. Jacqueline Arnaud, *La Littérature maghrébine de langue française*, 2 vols., Espaces méditerranéens (Paris: Publisud, 1986), 1:17-8, 249.

[164] Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine*, 276–300.

of a hypocritical religious piety.[165] The novel caused a sensation in the Maghreb and in Europe. Its unsparing portrayal of a hypocritical, autocratic, and patriarchal Moroccan bourgeoisie, flourishing opportunistically under colonial tutelage, appealed to right-wing, pro-colonial circles in the metropole and angered the burgeoning Moroccan nationalist movement, which had consolidated and strengthened since the Second World War.[166] Consequently, he was duly charged as an "assassin de l'espérance" by the official publication of the Moroccan *Parti de l'istiqlal*. The indictment was trenchant: "Objectivement votre Passé simple a servi les thèses impérialistes. Objectivement vous avez rendu service à nos ennemis."[167] Dismayed by accusations that his novel supported the colonial cause in a time of intense nationalism preceding independence in Morocco, Chraïbi publicly apologized and disowned the novel.[168] Although the likes of Abdelkebir Khatibi and Abdellatif Laâbi would write in defense of Chraïbi,[169] he

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[165] Chraïbi, *Passé*.

[166] In Danielle Marx-Scouras's reading, "this imputative text was aimed as much at Moroccan, patriarchal society as at French colonial rule. The author's compatriots accused him of having betrayed his country at a time when it was seeking independence from France, whereas French critics and journalists cited *Le Passé simple* to justify the preservation of the French Protectorate in Morocco." Danielle Marx-Scouras, "A Literature of Departure: The Cross-Cultural Writing of Driss Chraïbi," *Research in African Literatures* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 131.

[167] *Démocratie*, February 11, 1957. Cited in Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine*, 280.

[168] Various scholars have given in-depth accounts of *Passé simple*'s reception and the published exchanges between Chraïbi and his critics. See Arnaud, *Littérature maghrébine*, 255–57; Kacem Basfao, "Trajets: lecture/écriture et structures du texte et du récit dans l'œuvre romanesque de Driss Chraïbi" (PhD dissertation, Université Aix-Marseille 1, 1981); Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine*, 279–81; Houriya Kadra-Hadjadji, *Contestation et révolte dans l'œuvre de Driss Chraïbi* (Paris: Publisud, 1986), 53–63.

[169] Khatibi defends Chraïbi's critique of Moroccan bourgeois society as one of the forces that is hampering the revolutionary potential of political independence, but argues that Chraïbi's writing is personal and psychological, based on his own "déracinement" rather than an "analyse objective de la situation historique" (27). This has misled critics to "nationalize" Chraïbi's characters and over-extrapolate them as representative of society as a whole (80). While reproaching Chraïbi, who has elected to live in France, that "le combat reste à l'intérieur du pays", Khatibi nevertheless "demande justice pour Chraïbi. A ceux qui l'attaquent à tort et à travers, je réponds que ce n'est pas parce qu'on reste dans son pays qu'on évite de se vendre et de trahir le combat de l'écrivain" (27). Khatibi, *Roman maghrébin*, 26-27, 77-80. Laâbi, for his part, leaves open the question of Chraïbi's political (im)maturity to emphasize the untimely intervention that *Passé simple* effected as the beginning of modernity in Moroccan, if not Maghrebi literature. Abdellatif Laâbi, "Défense du *Passé simple*," *Souffles* 5 (1967): 18–21. The same issue included an interview with Chraïbi and another defense of his work by Mostafa Dziri. See Driss Chraïbi and Abdellatif Laâbi, "Questionnaire établie," Souffles 5 (1967): 5-10; Mostafa Dziri, "Celui par qui le

nevertheless began to bear the reputation of an individualist, if not autobiographical, writer with largely negative politics whose affiliation to the political cause of the Maghreb and the project of Maghrebi literature remained uncertain.[170] When some of his later novels did not outwardly deal with Morocco at all, critics both in North Africa and beyond wondered whether he could still be considered a Maghrebi writer, reifying the literature's territorialization on the geopolitical boundaries of the Maghreb and equating universality with anything not explicitly Maghrebi.[171]

A decade later, further literary transgressions led to Chraïbi's untimely death. His 1967 novel *Un Ami viendra vous voir* had nothing to do with Morocco or the Maghreb. It was about the oppression of women by Western consumerism and commodification.[172] The novel dealt a fatal blow, leading directly to the announcement of "La mort de Driss Chraïbi" as declared by the journalist and literary critic Salim Jay that same year. Jay informs us that Chraïbi could have

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scandale arrive," *Souffles*, 5 (1967): 11–17.

[170] From the outset, critics have received Chraïbi's work (as well as much francophone Maghrebi literature in general) as fundamentally biographical in inspiration. Georges Joyaux contends that the North African writer draws primarily on "first-hand acquaintance" and begin by composing "an autobiography wherein he reveals his double allegiance to two worlds, and his anguish at his inability to find a home in either." Joyaux, "Driss Chraïbi," 32-34. Even as Chraïbi turns to the distant past in *Mère* and *Naissance*, critics continue to interpret his works though constructions of biography. See, for example, Arnaud, *Littérature maghrébine*, 291, 299, 304; Kadra-Hadjadji, *Contestation*, 20; Abdalaoui, "Moroccan Novel," 9. As recently as 2006, one critic could write "Toutes ces étapes de sa vie se retrouvent dans son œuvre. Les lieux, les gens sont parfois déguisés, parfois à peine masqués [….] C'est peut-être l'un des points qui différencie la littérature maghrébine de ces années-là de la littérature occidentale, qui, elle, se nourrit beaucoup d'intertextualité." Anne-Marie Gans-Guinoune, *Driss Chraïbi et l'impuissance de l'enfance à la revanche par l'écriture* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 20. For his own part, Chraïbi seems to have been keenly aware of the tendency to read his work in this way. According to Kacem Basfao, Chraïbi "a de tout temps mêlé réel et imaginaire [……] qu''il prenait plaisir à faire accroire à son interlocuteur ou à son lecteur". Kacem Basfao, "Postface," in *Une vie sans concessions*, by Driss Chraïbi and Abdeslam Kadiri (Léchelle, France: Zellige, 2009), 70.

[171] Joan Monego contends that after *Mort au Canada* (Paris: Denoël, 1975), "Chraïbi again passes into the orbit of French writers. He is no longer a 'Moroccan francophone author,' he is simply 'a writer'". Joan Monego, *Maghrebian Literature in French* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), 122. Jacqueline Arnaud finds Chraïbi's "non-Maghreb" novels to be less interesting, less "enracinés". Arnaud, *Littérature maghrébine*, 19. Khatibi keenly notes that this ostensibly free-floating, unrooted, neutral "universality" is in fact "universalisme vu à travers une optique spécifique, celle de la culture française." The universal is the unmarked hegemony of French literary culture, to which Maghrebi literature would be subordinate. Khatibi, *Roman maghrébin*, 38.

[172] Driss Chraïbi, *Un Ami viendra vous voir* (Paris: Denoël, 1967).

avoided this fate, should he have written about the psychological and physical plight of Moroccan women. Yet instead, he turned his back on them, preferring Western exposure to nationalist commitment. For this reason,"Les réactions du public marocain à la lecture d'*Un ami…* indiquent clairement que, dans son pays, pour son pays, IL EST MORT." With him also died the very idea of Maghrebi literature in French; a bastard child abandoned by its father, Jay could only imagine a future for Maghrebi literature in Arabic.[173]

Thus, for Chraïbi to count as a Maghrebi writer, readers expected his writing to produce a transparent representation of the Maghreb and to embrace a particular politics that affirmed independent nationalism within that territory. Even as Chraïbi's work took a new turn in *Mère* and *Naissance*, many critics and scholars maintained an image of the author and his oeuvre that had emerged from the reception of his first novel. They assessed these two novels as though they were historical, in the most banal sense. Unsurprisingly, they produced reductive critiques that misapprehend the novels' depictions of Berbers[174] or judge its (mis)uses of the Qur'ān on the basis of Islamic orthodoxy.[175] Maghrebi literature remains subordinate to history and biography,

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[173] For Jay, the Chraïbi case proved that "il ne pourra y avoir de littérature maghrébine d' 'expression maghrébine' qu'en arabe." Jay, "Mort," 39.

[174] Only a superficial reading supports the claim made by Kaye and Zoubir that *Mère* and *Naissance* "represent the Berbers as something straight out of Rousseau". Jacqueline Kaye and Abdelhamid Zoubir, *The Ambiguous Compromise: Language, Literature, and National Identity in Algeria and Morocco* (London: Routledge, 1990), 56–58, Ambiguous Compromise. Instead, the novels examine how the form of a people changes even as it constructs and maintains a cultural genealogy across the centuries, under Islamic and French conquest. Rather than flatten the categories of conquest and resistance mapped onto foreign invaders and Rousseauian natives, Chraïbi dwells in a nuanced way on the cultures that result from them.

[175] Kadra-Hadjadji dedicates a chapter of her book to an Islamic legal scholar's evaluation of Chraïbi's references to Islamic texts, which concludes that the novelist's Islam is one reconstructed by his imagination from an inaccurate memory, rather than from the source texts themselves: "Les citations partiellement ou totalement inexactes (du Coran, traduit en français) […] sont dues à l'insuffisance du bagage coranique de Driss Chraïbi. Il aurait été pourtant facile de remédier à ces lacunes en utilisant des textes ou des traductions du Livre saint; mais l'écrivain s'est fié à sa mémoire qui, parfois défaillante, a laissé le champ libre à son imagination. Celle-ci lui a inspiré de beaux 'versets' poétiques mais qui n'ont rien de coranique". See Kadra-Hadjadji, *Contestation*, 219–28. The premise that these are simply mistakes that could have been easily rectified fails to consider the literary effects that might have

discourses against which fictional texts may be measured and judged.

Negative politics

Rather than representing failures or oversights, negative judgments of the (mis)use of historical or religious discourse in fiction make possible a negative politics that casts Chraïbi's refusal to choose between a colonial power and a corrupt bourgeoisie in the *Passé simple* affair in a new light. With *Mère* and *Naissance*, one may begin to see Chraïbi as interrogating history in a particular way, rendering his apparently negative politics a productive element of an investigation into how history could have been otherwise. Jamel Eddine Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum* also turns to the past to call into question the way it has been handed down to the present. Like Chraïbi, Bencheikh deploys a politics of deferral, refusing to decide on false choices or unresolvable contradictions.[176] Their novels put off the inevitable "way things are" of the present in favor of a novelistic reworking of the past. This politics of deferral refuses to accept the possibilities offered by the present as the limits of action. Instead, it says no to all options, preferring to defer judgment.[177] Here, Chraïbi and Cervantes meet again in certain Quixotism: an unending, impossible quest that one can believe in but never bring to term, but

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motivated Chraïbi to rely on his memory or to consult source texts but to deploy them in his own form.
[176] Bencheikh's 1993 essay in *Qantara*, "Etre arabe à vingt ans…", echoes Chraïbi's politics of refusal: when all choices are bad, it is a more powerful, if not the only ethical stance, to say no to the way things are. Bencheikh, *Ecrits*, 196–301.
[177] Stéphanie Delayre re-reads the polemical politics of Chraïbi's *Passé simple* as a refusal to choose among options that themselves only pose limitations, rather than possibilities. The choice between nationalist engagement or European literary exoticism is a false one, since each party demands the writer choose it in order to gain recognition as an author. Thus, Chraïbi's "dénonciation des comportements fermés et des pensées étroites […] s'est accompagnée très rapidement d'un refus tout aussi résolu de prendre parti et, en conséquence, d'un refus de choisir." His writing then reflects "le refus de l'enfermement dans une thématique proprement franco-marocaine ou même franco-maghrébine." Stéphanie Delayre, *Driss Chraïbi, une écriture de traverse* (Pessac: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2006), 47, 55.

that nevertheless serves as an ultimate ethic of writing.[178]

Rose noire sans parfum, Bencheikh's only novel, has received little attention and does not bear the same critical burdens that Chraïbi's novels do. Nevertheless, it partakes of the same turn as *Mère* and *Naissance* because of its intervention in historical archives. The novel explores the way that historical chronicles encode physical violence, reiterating it in a written violence. The risk of reinscribing this violence in every retelling and rewriting is one of the principle concerns that shapes the novel's narration. Christiane Chaulet Achour, virtually the only scholar to have written about *Rose noire*, highlights this danger, noting that slaves are the emblematic subject of representation, since they are almost always *donnés à penser* in the historical archive, rather than allowed to speak for themselves. The novel grapples with this question of voice, shifting narrative positions and frequently slipping between diegetic and extradiegetic perspectives.[179] These narrative slippages allow the text to carry out a transhistorical critique of history writing from the gaps in the archive where slaves and other subaltern subjects have been denied the ability to speak. Consequently, the novel's horizon of critique extends beyond its ninth-century setting and the issue of violence in Arab history alone.[180] Rather, it proves capable of addressing even the contemporary West through the ideal of freedom it posits against dominant forces that have had the privilege of composing history for themselves at their

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[178] Basfao, "Postface," 82.

[179] Achour does not find this solution satisfying, as it abdicates the possibility of speaking for the enslaved in the name of a common humanity. Christiane Chaulet Achour, ed., *Esclavages et littératures représentations francophones* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), 7-8, 47, 54-55.

[180] Achour strongly links the violence evoked in *Rose noire* with the specificity of Arab history. She describes the novel as "la conjonction heureuse de l'érudition, de la poésie et de la dénonciation des travers criminels du monde arabe [….] qui n'est entr[é] dans le concert de l'universel qu'en exhibant les 'fruits' les moins productifs de son héritage, ceux de la violence, de l'exploitation et de l'oppression." Christiane Chaulet Achour, "Jamel Eddine Bencheikh et Jean Sénac: L'Algérie comme lieu commun," in *Itinéraires intellectuels entre la France et les rives suds de la Méditerranée*, ed. Christiane Chaulet Achour (Paris: Karthala, 2010), 11–12.

leisure.[181] This takes the form of both the violent liberation of slaves who wish to take the place of their masters and the narrative taking of liberties through leaps of free association across the historical record, from one violence to another, that makes its transhistorical critique possible.

Thus, if these novels suggest a "turn" in Maghrebi literature by their "return" to the region's Islamic history, they do so, in turn, by dispersing that history. They disrupt the presumed causal relations between past and present, showing how channeling time into a periodizing structure with its own narrative drive — in other words, making time into the history of the nation — ruptures itself by the force of its own violence. Reactivating gaps between holy scriptures, embodied experience, official chronicles, and oral narratives, they explore non-national forms of affiliation and their histories as heterogeneous elements within the homogeneity of historical discourse.

Histories of Conflict and Conflicting Histories

All three novels explore cultural, social, and political change in a time of violent conflict. In Chraïbi's *Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube*, the Berber people face outside forces unlike any they have seen before.[182] In their prefatory epilogues, it is the government introducing identity cards and *livrets de famille* in Raho's village (*MP*) and a Moroccan administrator who replaces a Frenchman at the train station where Raho works (*NA*). Then, each novel jumps more than a thousand years back in time and follows Raho's ancestor Azwaw, leader of a fictional

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[181] Waciny Laredj gestures toward the novel's expansive horizon of critique, writing that the turbulent period of an "Orient déchiqueté" in *Rose noire* is "semblable curieusement, dans son idéal de liberté, à un Occident déjà métamorphosé par l'histoire et par les hommes." Waciny Laredj, "Preface," in *Jamel Eddine Bencheikh: Une parole vive*, ed. Christiane Chaulet Achour (Montpellier: Chèvre-feuille étoilée, 2006), 21.
[182] I use the term "Berber" when discussing the novel because it is the word that Chraïbi employs. In other contexts, I use the demonym Amazigh or collective noun Imazighen. The exact etymology of the name "Berber" remains contested, but it is most likely a term used almost exclusively by foreigners — Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Europeans, and so on — for the indigenous peoples of northern Africa. These peoples

pagan Berber tribe called the Aït Yafelman living at the mouth of the Oum-er-Bia [*Umm al-rabīʿ*] river, near modern-day Azemmour, some fifty miles southwest of Casablanca along the Atlantic coast.[183] In *Mère*, a Muslim army lead by General Oqba ibn Nafi is extending the seventh century Umayyad caliphate westward across the territory today known as the Maghreb, from Kairouan in Tunisia to the Atlantic. Azwaw cleverly navigates his peoples' survival and integration to the society of these new conquerors, adopting Islam but infusing it with Berber practices from within. *Naissance* is set during the ensuing eight century expansion of Islamdom into the Iberian peninsula, where Azwaw wanders as an itinerant wise man and semi-legendary ancestor figure of the converted Berbers.

In Bencheikh's *Rose noire*, a silenced, subaltern population coheres into a group with political claims made through armed revolution. The novel retells the history of the ninth century revolt of the Zandj, Black enslaved agricultural laborers in the marshes around Basra in southern Iraq, led by one 'Alî bin Muhammad against the Baghdad-based Abbasid caliphate and its wealthy landholders.[184] Bencheikh himself referred to the novel as a historical chronicle, since it employs archival sources on *thawrat al-zanj* (the Black Rebellion or Revolution) and other wars

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refer to themselves by a variety of names depending on their location and language, but many use the terms Amazigh/Imazighen and their languages may collectively be called Tamazight.

[183] Here and throughout when discussing the novel, I refer to characters, places, or other words transliterated from Arabic or Tamazight as they are written in the original text, rather than imposing conventional English translations. I do not assume that Chraïbi's characters are meant to correspond to historical persons or peoples. The Aït Yafelman tribe does exist, but is located in Morocco's eastern High Atlas mountains, far from the Atlantic coast. In his memoirs, Chraïbi locates the family home in Casablanca at the corn of the rue d'Angora and rue Aut Yafelman (*sic*). Additionally, while describing his childhood universe in the streets around his home (the theater where he saw his first Westerns, the shop where he bought his first detective novels, and so on), he notes the card players that were called "maîtres de la main", a title he will attribute to Azwaw in *Naissance* as "Le Maître de la Main". Driss Chraïbi, *Vu, lu, entendu: mémoires* (Paris: Denoël, 1998), 42, 45.

[184] I retain the novel's transcription of Arabic words to distinguish the fictional text from the historical records it draws on.

to tell its story and borrows elements of the chronicle form.[185] Thus, *Rose noire* divides its narrative into a series of discrete events, like particular battles, speeches, or omens, both good and bad. It follows the course of the rebellion from the personal history of its leader, ’Alî, to its inception, greatest extent, and eventual defeat, over a number of years.

In each case, the violence of Islamic conquest or a slave revolt is doubled by conflict among the forms of history that violence may take. *Mère* and *Naissance* ask whether an earthen, chthonic Berber history may persist within the domain of Islam’s textual history. *Rose noire* shows exactly how written forms of history silence and erase oral and earthen ones, but also undertakes to re-narrate those silences and erasures from within the archive itself. The former poses the question of transmission, of how people inherit and receive history in different forms. It explores the vicissitudes of inheritance by genealogy, religion, and territory. The latter seeks to reactivate subjugated forms of history in their non-transmission. It asks what may be inherited in the absence of descendants. In both cases, language is both what transmits and omits; it is both a promise and a threat to a people and its history. Consequently, these novels stage the risk inherent to language in speech or writing, whose stakes are often mortal in times of violence. Not only is the individual transmitter exposed to violence, if the message is not well received, but the transmission itself may warp over time, indelibly transforming both its senders and receivers. Thus, always at stake is possibility of discontinuity between past and present: that the past may be inappropriable to the present, even as the present defines itself through its claim to the past; or, that the future imagined in the past may have failed to realize itself. The past may not be what the present thinks it is, nor the present what the past thought it would be.

[185] Jamel Eddine Bencheikh and Christiane Chaulet Achour, “Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, aîné vigilant et solidaire,” *La Page des libraires*, October 2003, 18–19.

I begin my reading with the different forms of history at stake in these novels. I show first how the texts correlate violent conflict with conflict between written, oral, and earthen histories, focusing on how the Berbers and the Zandj define themselves in relation to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to their antagonists, who rely on sacred texts and historical chronicles. I then examine the dangers inherent in the transmission of these forms of history in language, whether by saying more or less than was intended. These short-circuited or misfired transmissions can lead to violent fates for the novels' protagonists, Azwaw and 'Alî, and the peoples they lead, but can also generate new, unexpected relations, reconfiguring notions of belonging by enabling inheritance through discontinuity and transhistorical thinking across ostensibly-discrete timelines. Thus, Azwaw's effort to transmit an idea of Berber persistence down the generations gets deferred and re-routed through wayward descendants and accidents of history, never fully realizing itself. Similarly, the defeat of 'Alî's vision of an inverted world where slaves have become masters makes possible a reflection on the erasure of mass violence that characterizes existing power relations in the contemporary West as much as it did in the Abbasid caliphate. Finally, I close on the unrealized futures past imagined by Azwaw, Oqba ibn Nafi, and Tariq bnou Ziyyad in *Mère* and *Naissance* and 'Alî in *Rose noire*. These invite a reflection on the critical relation between nation, history, and literature, showing how it is interrupted by the failure of past visions of the future to realize themselves, creating pasts that cannot be assimilated to the present via a historical continuity culminating in the form of the nation in the present.

Forms of History: Chthonic, Oral, Written

All three novels open by contrasting the technologies of writing employed by

antagonistic forces from the outside to their bond to the territory they inhabit. Both the Berber and Zandj communities claim specificity through a relation to a particular environment and face conflict with a community founded on a sacred history set down in writing. In the violence of these encounters, their earthy territorializations will be absorbed into the territory of Islamdom and its history. Yet this violence itself will rupture the historicization of that territory, either through the excessive materiality of Berber earthen history, which will subsist within and beyond Islam's sacred History and its political formations, or the void left by the utter defeat of the Zandj and their necessary absence from the historical archive.

Forms of history 1: Geological Time and Sacred Time

In *La Mère du Printemps*, the conflict emerges as one between written, sacred History, both in Islam and administrative bureaucracy, and the earthen history of the "Fils de la Terre," the Sons of the Earth, as the novels refer to the Berbers. Azwaw, leader of the Aït Yafelman as they face the Arab invasion, contrasts this earthen lineage to written history when he encounters Azoulay, a blind wise man from a neighboring Jewish tribe, in a vision. Azoulay draws on his knowledge of the past through Jewish scriptures and scholarship to recount for Azwaw the history of both Berbers and Jews as one of dispersal from Palestine. The Berbers, he says, were forced to emigrate when their king "Jalout" (the Arabic name for the Biblical Goliath), was defeated by David and the Hebrews. Azoulay historicizes the Berbers by invoking the Jewish use of written narrative as a guarantee of historical identity. Azwaw responds, "Tu racontes l'Histoire à ta façon. Nous, on la relate différemment, *de l'autre côté*: la Terre. C'est son histoire qui importe" (*MP* 170) Azwaw both disdains and distinguishes written, sacred history by speaking it with a capital "H", as it were, even as he inverts it to tell instead an unwritten, earthen

history. Notably, the opposition here is not between written and oral history, but rather between a scriptural history, whether related orally by Azoulay or in the holy texts that record it, and a chthonic, earthen history that does not partake of language, at least not in the same fashion. As Azwaw shifts the terms of the conversation, Azoulay tries to bring the Earth back into the realm of the sacred by invoking Palestine as an earthly Paradise, like the Garden of Eden, but Azwaw retorts, “Mon paradis à moi, c’est l’Oum-er-Bia, les vergers et les champs qu’elle baigne à son embouchure. Ici et maintenant, durant ma vie à moi. Je ne vais pas remonter le cimetière de ton temps pour m’intéresser à ce Jalout dont tu me parles” (*MP* 170). The vision of the past that Azoulay offers is nothing but a cemetery to Azwaw, who prefers the living environment around him to the story of a lost paradise, whether it is told in scripture or otherwise. Implicitly, Azwaw’s rejection of written sacred History in favor of a conception of the Berbers as Sons of the Earth contests the Islamic notion of ahl al-kitāb, or People of the Book, which refers to all members of the textually-revealed monotheistic religions. Azwaw insists on an earthen dimension of historical time that cannot be captured by an Islamicate practice of history.

Nevertheless, Azoulay succeeds in convincing Azwaw of the power of that written history may exercise over people. This informs the strategy that Azwaw formulates in the face of the overwhelming power, not just of ibn Nafi’s invading force, but of the new Islamic religion and its textual foundation. Realizing that the Berbers will not be able to hold the Arab invaders back, Azwaw plans for his own descendance and the survival of his people by reconceptualizing their survival on a geological timescale. The Berbers will draw on their earthen, chthonic history to resist Islam’s Historical time from within, at the speed of the earth on which it stands:

> C’est simple. Nous aurons le temps du temps. Rien, ni misère ni opulence, ne nous fera perdre de vue ce que nous nous proposons: leur survivre. Et nous leur survivrons parce que, fatalement, notre sang finira par submerger le leur. Quant à notre terre [….] Elle leur

> sert de cimetière. Un jour, bientôt, dans quelques siècles, les Arabes l'engraisseront de leurs cadavres et du cadavre de leur islam. (*MP* 14)

Azwaw uses the same cemetery image again that he employed to reject a lost paradise recorded in written history in favor of a vibrant one in the present. Here, he invokes the inevitable future death of sacred History, which both posits an eschatological end for itself and, from the Berber perspective, has an earthly end in the death of its believers. Earthen history, on the other hand, never runs out of time. It will thus inevitably serve as the cemetery for all erstwhile conquerors. Just as the decomposition of their bodies will fertilize the land (*engraisser*), the Berbers will flourish through the inevitable collapse of their regimes. As individuals, Azwaw and his contemporaries will die, too, and be buried alongside the Arab invaders, of course, but Azwaw sees survival as the power of a people whose identity is rooted in the earth, rather than an individual feat.

The opening epilogue of *Mère* would seem to confirm this. There, the French Protectorate and the independent Moroccan government will successively try to reconquer the Berbers with writing, like the Arab invaders who will occupy the proceeding chapters. The government (in the guise of "Monsieur Léta…") attempts to establish *livrets de famille* and identity cards among Raho Aït Yafelman's tribe in a small village called Tselfat. Yet the tribal order and sense of relations among its members is untranslatable to the nuclear family model on which these official documents rely: they are all Aït Yafelman, needing no other surname; many have the same given names ("Mohand"), or bear descriptive names based on their personalities, or changeable names used for the function they fulfill at the time (making cheese, weaving cloth, telling stories): "Ils étaient une seule et même tribu depuis la création du monde [...] et ils le resteraient jusqu'à la fin du temps. On ne pouvait pas les séparer, même sur du papier du

gouvernement" (*MP* 31). Yet the tribe is clever, too, and understands that these papers have value to the government. So, they play along, and carefully conserve the *livrets de famille* in a well, as the rulers' "*amana*", which Chraïbi translates as "dépôt sacré", a sacred deposit of words converted into an object, "une espèce de brique en papier" (*MP* 26-7). Its value can never be informational — it fundamentally misapprehends the Aït Yafelman — but merely mystical. In other words, they suffer the government its superstitions. For their history is not one that can be written from the archives of *livrets* and *cartes d'identité*: as Raho reflects, "les mots n'étaient que les mots […] ils finiraient bien par s'effacer de toute mémoire. Tous. Resteraient les montagnes, le désert et les plaines dont les civilisations de tous mots n'avaient gratté que la croûte. Resteraient la terre et son peuple, comme très autrefois" (*MP* 16). What the written word cannot capture, and what stands as the guarantee of the tribe's history, is the land itself. The word itself can only endure on this earthen timescale when it ceases to be a word written on a surface and transforms into a sacred object, whose value is in its interior depths rather than its superficial markings.

Even as the Berbers survive, however, they do not simply remain the same as they were. Like the town Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya, which appears to have regained its original state but in fact has been transformed by French colonial intervention, the Aït Yafelman descendants live in a different world than Azwaw. The social transformations underway at his time with the arrival of Islam have had untold ramifications. As *Mère* and *Naissance* will show, new political orders have risen and fallen in its wake, each imagining a different future for itself and its people, which will lead more often than not to some unexpected outcome, rather than the end in mind. That the Aït Yafelman survive these changes does not meant that they always turn back into what they once were, but that they may turn into something else as needed.

Forms of History 2: A Lexical Quagmire for Palace Chroniclers

Rose noire also begins with a distinct preface, one both temporally and narratively out of joint with the rest of the novel. The prologue is narrated collectively in the first-person plural by the enslaved people known in Arabic chronicles as the Zandj, who rise up against their Abbasid overlords under the leadership of ’Alî bin Muhammad. Like Chraïbi’s Berbers, the Zandj have a special relation to their land beyond the scope of written history. Enslaved from an unknown source in sub-Saharan Africa and lacking any social or historical identity within Abbasid society, the Zandj identify themselves with the very land that they work. The first lines of the book are not even a full sentence, but a set of geographical coordinates that delimit the otherwise-unnamable space where the Zandj dwell — unnamable because it is outside history, beyond the purview of the urban elite from whose ranks the official chroniclers of history issue forth.[186] This swampy mire is uncharted and those who work and live in it are undocumented in history. They share this constitutive absence of identity: “nous sommes cette terre, elle et nous indissolubles, depuis notre conception au bord d’un canal, à l’accouchement dans les roseaux, à notre mort dans la vase” (*RN* 15). Birth and death mark moments of continuity with the earth that defines the Zandj, rather than the beginning and end of individual life.

Yet unlike the Chraïbi’s Aït Yafelman, who have survived up to the contemporary moment on which the novel opens where they are just as subject to misapprehension by

[186] Foucault’s description of the chronicle form matches Bencheikh’s concern in *Rose noire*: “la fonction traditionnelle de l’histoire […] a été de dire le droit du pouvoir et d’en intensifier l’éclat. Double rôle: d’une part, en racontant l’histoire, l’histoire des rois, des puissants, des souverains et de leurs victoires (ou, éventuellement, de leurs provisoires défaites), il s’agit de lier juridiquement les hommes au pouvoir par la continuité de la loi, qu’on fait apparaître à l’intérieur de ce pouvoir et dans son fonctionnement; de lier donc juridiquement les hommes à la continuité du pouvoir et par la continuité du pouvoir. D’autre part, il s’agit aussi de les fasciner par l’intensité, à peine soutenable, de la gloire, de ses exemples, et de ses exploits.” Michel Foucault, *“Il faut défendre la société.” Cours au Collège de France, 1975-1976* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 1997), 58.

governmental personal status regulations as they were to the written sacred History of Islam, the Zandj persist only as an absence in the historical archives. In the present, their voice can only be heard in the written records' inability to account for them. The first paragraph of the novel establishes both the nature of this void and the conditional past tense that alone can accommodate its temporal situation from the perspective of the present: "Qui donc, en ces temps-là, aurait voulu décrire nos marais, de vos chroniqueurs plus érudits en traditions qu'en vérités, ou de vos poètes califaux vautrés dans la soie des palais? Nous sommes en un lieu que votre histoire ignore et que votre poésie prostituée ne soupçonne pas" (*RN* 16). This is not merely a question of poets and chroniclers preferring luxury and comfort to the muck and mire of the Zandj's territory. Rather, it begins to indicate that historical and poetic language are always situated in a particular domain. Here, they pertain to an entirely different environment than swampy universe of slave labor beyond the confines of the city. Those who write history and literature are so distant from the Zandj's territory, both literally and figuratively, in social and intellectual ways, that they cannot even conceive of it. Even if they could, the narrator continues, they would be unable to describe it: "Vous n'avez même pas les mots qu'il faut pour désigner nos repaires. Sauriez-vous dire autre chose que marécages, marigots, fourrés, taillis, fange, vase? Nous, nous nous y reconnaissons et y avons établi notre destin" (*RN* 16). Were there a desire to record these places, the words lack. Nor could they be invented, for the Zandj's relation to this territory is not linguistic, but bodily and affective. Their collective voice, shaped in relation to their territory, is emphasized by the triple repetition of the pronoun nous, first as a tonic pronoun, then as a subject pronoun, then as a reflexive pronoun. They alone can navigate it, knowing "les chemins secrets faits de branchages jetés sur la boue pour passer les fondrières. Nous seuls avons appris la carte trompeuse, tigrée de tailles de joncs, le dédale des îlots fourrés de maquis où la

massette se marie aux lianes et aux ronces. Nous seuls savons choisir, de nos talons crevassés, entre la fermeté du sol et l'enfoncement bourbeux" (*RN* 14). Walking becomes a kind of embodied writing or mapping. Entering the swamps, or even describing them, would have been a mortal affair for any writer guided merely by the pen, were it for the land alone, and all the more so once the rebellion breaks out. The question for the novel, then, is whether this effaced earthen history is recoverable from the negative spaces in the historical record. Can historical language be unseated from its palatial residence and made to walk the bogs without losing its way or its life?

Language between Promise and Threat

The Berbers and the Zandj, whose history is that of the earth they inhabit, are in danger of misapprehension by the scriptures and chronicles of their antagonists, as well as readers of the novels. The conflicts between peoples and between forms of history will lead to different ends for each of these two communities. The Berbers outlast their conquest, whereas the Zandj are obliterated. They therefore pose two different questions: how may chthonic history persist within the domain of the scriptural, and on the other, what traces do rebellious slave bodies buried in swamps leave in chronicles? In both cases, writing reveals itself to be much more than a technical means of preservation, a medium for archiving history. At stake is writing's potential to be an apparatus of capture, generating specific forms of sacred and bureaucratic history, or to transform history into a space of contestation through excesses and absences. As chthonic, scriptural, and chronicle forms of history circulate in language across space and time, they may mutate, taking on new readers and new objects. Content metamorphoses, evolving and involving. At issue, then, is the promise and threat that is the very condition of language: beyond binary

oppositions between written and unwritten history, writing and orality, or the sayable and the unspeakable, language brings with itself the possibility of being understood not at all, or all too well. In either case, as we shall see later, the consequences may be fatal.

Danger 1: Killing the Messenger

At the end of *Mère*, Azwaw puts his plan of resistance into action. The lesson he takes from Azoulay is that because sacred History has an end that impels its own recounting, it can be inhabited from within by another history that speaks in its voice. So, Azwaw learns the Qur'ān and becomes a muezzin, who calls the faithful to prayer five times a day. Even as he announces only the prescribed formulae, his voice says more than his words: "Il suffit de lancer l'appel en premier dans telle direction convenue à l'avance pour que les frères soient prévenus du danger qui les menace. Le temps que j'y mets, le ton de conviction que j'emploie leur indiquent clairement, de vive voix, le jour et l'importance de ce danger" (*MP* 213). Sending coded messages of resistance to his fellow Berbers, Azwaw's voice tells more than it says, carrying an excess of significance in its vibrations and modulations. Azwaw does not simply say one thing mean another, either. There is a multiplicity in his speech. It is simultaneously in Arabic and some other secret language, carrying a religious and a military message. It speaks to a people transformed by their encounter with Islam and to something that persists within them, without resolving this plurality into an opposition between Arab and Berber.[187] At the end of the novel, Azwaw, climbing the steps to announce the call to prayer, wonders to himself, "Qui arrivera en

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[187] In this, I agree with Christina Civantos's assessment that one "cannot return to a pure Islam because syncretism was there from the start", but I diverge from her reading of *Naissance* that posits an anti-Arab, pro-Amazigh theme in Chraïbi's close association of Islam with Amazigh culture. I argue that Chraïbi's interest in the adoption of Islam among non-Arab peoples is in demonstrating the fundamental plurality of Islam and Muslims, rather than in accentuating identitarian differences among them. Christina Civantos, *The Afterlife of Al-Andalus: Muslim Iberia in Contemporary Arab and Hispanic Narratives* (Albany: State

haut le premier? Le croyant ou le païen? L'appel à la prière, nous le lancerons tous deux avec la même foi." His voice is not divided, but undecidably double: it is not either the Berber or the Muslim in him who will speak, but either "Moi ou moi" (*MP* 212).

The punishment for meaning more than one says, naturally, is to have your tongue cut out. The novel concludes with Azwaw suffering exactly this punishment when his deceit is discovered. Paradoxically, however, this will not stop him from speaking. His silenced voice will become the embodied site of earthen history's persistence within the Historical time of Islamdom. In *Naissance*, Azwaw is an aged man wandering among the newly-conquered lands of al-Andalus, as General Tariq bnou Ziyyad's Berber Muslim armies advance inland and new Islamicate polities arise in their wake. Azwaw has become a kind of mythical ancestor of all Maghrebi Berbers, incarnating their pre-Islamic past and their particular inhabitation, and ultimately survival, of Islam in the future. He appears before Ziyyad's palace in Cordoba, where the general's aid, Boutr, recognizes him. Azwaw "speaks" in silence and Boutr reads his lips, interpreting Azwaw's words for Tariq. Azwaw begins by reciting the first verses of *Surat al-'Alaq*, supposed to be the first verses revealed to Muḥammad, which begin with the injunction "Read!" or "Recite!" (Qur'ān 96:1-2). Azwaw then shifts into his own syncretic discourse, offering to tell Tariq what he will face in the future. Tariq accepts, but Boutr gradually stops interpreting and refuses to go on. Tariq presses him, but Boutr says Tariq would execute him if he kept translating. The aid instead bites out his own tongue and jumps to his death. A few days later, Tariq is arrested and hauled off to Damascus, due to political machinations in the caliphate. Knowing what has befallen Azwaw, Boutr anticipates the judicial remedy his words — or rather, Azwaw's words in his mouth — would have merited by cutting off his own voice. Like

University of New York Press, 2017), 132–35.

Muḥammad receiving divine revelation, Boutr is struck by the burden of the message that Azwaw delivers through him, but unlike the Prophet's protestations of illiteracy, which were easily overcome, the aide-de-camp is all too literate. He cannot claim not to understand, so he must instead silence the transmission.

Danger 2: The Message That Kills

If Chraïbi's Berbers risk silence and death in trying to transmit their chthonic history in language, *Rose noire*'s attempt to speak from the archive's silences risks erasing the Zandj's bodily, earthen history a second time. Even the denunciation of writing's capacity to capture the Zandj's existence must give itself in writing to reach the heirs to palace-dweller's chronicles. The very medium that captures them in defeat is their only recourse to speak from the silence that enshrines their destruction in the archive. The opening section that purports to offer the Zandj's first person plural perspective is an impossible narration, insofar as the slaves, who lacked a literary language, are made to speak in a novel written in French on the basis of historical documents in Arabic, which themselves do not record anything about the slaves' origins or culture. However, in the second part of the prelude, a new narrative "I" intervenes, revealing the words of the Zandj to be an invention, a "faux discours prêté à des hommes que rien ni personne ne pourra faire parler, dont je ne puis approcher la réalité même par approximations successives" (*RN* 21). Even the writer who seeks to give voice to the void in the archive must admit their fabrication and come full circle in the paradox of silent speech. The unresolvable contradictions in this narrative arrangement create a kind of short-circuit, requiring other voices to intervene.

The new narrator must step in at this point because there is a growing danger in

continuing the opening chapter's project. The problem is one of the ambiguity of language, of its despecification, or worse of its respecification (reterritorialization) on the present: "Les mots révolte d'esclaves font naître comme un brûlot qui pourrait se transmettre de pays en pays, de siècle en siècle, jusqu'aux éclatements d'aujourd'hui. Il ne s'agirait plus que de quelque terrible vérification du présent" (*RN* 21). The danger in approaching the past as it ruptures itself in its own violence is to cancel its difference from the present, to approach it as if it were already contained in the present rather than presenting the possibility of something other, something unaccounted for in the present. The author is left with a conundrum that will not be answered, but rather quite literally worked out in the forms the novel's narration and the deformations of the narrative "I": "Comment parler de ces hommes qui ne se parlaient guère entre eux? Que je m'empare d'eux et les fasse agir à mon gré, voilà le vice mortel de l'écriture" (*RN* 21). Enunciating from the position of silence, the narrator risks making slaves once again of those whose rebellion was already violently crushed twice over, once in the flesh and a second time in the archive.

Narrating an Inappropriable Past

The novel must therefore engage with problems of silent voices that resound aloud and speech that shrouds itself in silence. It does so by developing a complex, multiplicitous narrative voice that shifts between multiple, at times indiscernible, perspectives, including that of the author-as-narrator, of the rebel leader 'Alî, the general al-Muwaffaq charged with putting down the revolt, and the people of Basra. This hybrid narrative voice enunciates its self-proclaimed prophetic speech, in opposition to the written register of history. Prophetic speech names another form of history that navigates the negative spaces of the archive. This narrative voice incarnates

the inappropriability of the past to the present and the novel to the world.

The first-person narrative "I" that takes over for the Zandj is split into two constituent persons. As with Azwaw's call to prayer, a fundamental plurality appears within language. Unlike the "moi et moi" of Azwaw's doubled Berber and Muslim self, however, *Rose noire*'s split narrators are in an antagonistic relationship. On one side is "Moi", the commentator who, in performing the constant re-writing that is commentary, seeks to make "Lui", the counterpart, speak: "Je m'engouffrais dans ses silences pour déverser en lui mes exigences" (*RN* 24). Whenever Lui does not speak, Moi invests that silence with its own discourses. In this, the Moi half of the narrator takes up the archive, in both the positive and negative aspects of its content, and occupies its gaps, reclaiming archival silences as opportunities for speech. Moi scrutinizes history with a skeptic's gaze, seeking out weaknesses and lapses. The Lui half is the incarnation of the archive in its intransigent repetition of "This happened" and in its irrevocable and irreducible silences. These give the past a kind of legendary status, making it inscrutable to anyone who cannot claim to have witnessed it hand. Thus, in one sense, the archive tends to work like a memorial or a landmark designating the site of some past event. As the only element that evokes such an event, it exerts total control of what will be shown or what may be known and what will not. It embodies how configurations of knowledge of the past inevitably construe, by their very form, both what is accessible and what is unrecoverable: "Lui: la défense d'un temps lointain, le témoignage d'une légende où il rejoint la mort, raidi dans le mauvais rôle de statue" (*RN* 24). A statue, even as it commemorates, is mute for all time. The form of the historical figure or event silences the past because of the very form by which it enunciates it as history.

Moi and Lui are bound together in a narrative Je by a struggle for mastery. This

comprises both narrative mastery and the character of the master, "le Maître", in the narrative. Which of these falls to Moi and which to Lui is not as evident as it might seem. The narrator asks, "Le Je ici qui va se dire, qui est-il? Que tient serré cette gerbe de deux lettres toujours prête à se défaire? Est-ce une forme qui sans cesse se modèle, un espace offert au labour?" (*RN* 22). The rest of the novel does precisely this work of constant fashioning and re-fashioning of the bond between the two halves of its "Je." The text becomes an exploration of the question of who narrates, not just in the text at hand but in writing in general. Even as the narrator explains its own division into its Moi and Lui aspects, it is linguistically impossible to determine which speaks at any given moment. When the narrator says, "En un sens, il semblerait que j'en sois le maître. Maître de ces mille et un jeux autour d'un personnage lui aussi Maître, mais dans l'Histoire, du moins dans les livres où je l'ai rencontré un soir que je me cherchais, moi, écartelé par des courants dont les uns m'emportaient, les autres me ramenaient, chacun détruisant ou reconstruisant de moi ce qu'il pouvait" (*RN* 22), the solidity of the apparent domination of Je by Moi is undermined by its discovery of Lui in seeking itself, a self that is at the same time in doubt, tossed in currents that pull it apart and reassemble it in unending configurations of a twentieth-century scholar and novelist perusing works of history and a name that surges forth from those pages: 'Alî, son of Yahyâ, leader of a slave uprising that splits the Abbasid caliphate in half: "Chef d'une révolte, silencieux à jamais et qu'un Je"—but which?—"va faire parler: première faille où je m'engouffre, pousse, m'acharne à passer, m'agrippant à ce corps sans vie. Qui reconnaîtra le mien du sien?" (*RN* 22). In this image, the authorial Je (perhaps different from that other one, "un Je") holds fast to the silent, lifeless corpse of 'Alî. Their bodies become indistinguishable as they fall into the void of a historical fracture that opens between the name of 'Alî, son of Yahyâ that appears on a page of a book on a desk somewhere and the silent and

silenced historical body that once bore that name. The novel takes on its shifting narrative perspectives in an attempt at this impossible task of narrating the story of le Maître, "lui qui n'a pu écrire ce texte et le confie à notre mémoire", and of the Zandj, who can neither write nor confide anything to us (*RN* 78).

What claim does the narrator actually make about this indeterminacy between his body and that of his subject? In one sense, his asking who could tell them apart is more out of defiance than erudition. The narrator asserts that his tale will be historically accurate, so to speak: "Tout du détail sera exact. Rien d'apparent qui puisse être suspecté: ce qui doit être vérifié pourra l'être. Je défie l'érudition. Sans risque. L'imposture sera donc profonde" (*RN* 22-3). The "profound imposture" here is not that the novel misrepresents the facts, but that it can be entirely factual while defying the appearance of factuality, behind which lurks the narrator's own indistinguishable presence, undoing any presumed necessary relation of the novel to actuality, of fact and fiction as mutually exclusive. The act of making 'Alî speak, then, is not a way of revivifying his quiet corpse, as suggested by his patronym, "fils de Yahyâ", whose verbal root means to be alive and, in one form, to resurrect or reanimate. Instead, it inflicts a second death, a murder of sorts: "Je tue cet homme, proprement, par le dedans" (*RN* 23), the narrator declares, establishing a narrative economy where the risk of speaking is not in the message one transmits, but in bearing one at all. Indeed, here the message-bearer is exposed to murder as the condition of speech. Writing, whether in an archive or in a novel, implies a vulnerability to violence.

This literary crime is always in excess of history, wrenching away the factual from the actual. The historical 'Alî must die in order for the novelistic 'Alî to become part of the hybrid narrator. Even if 'Alî's resurrection were possible, through literary or other means, the narrator asserts that the historical 'Alî would have little of interest to say: "Avec des dates et des lieux,

des noms et des images, il donnerait une version de son aventure que je fermerais à son nez comme une porte de palais. Il me livrerait un objet fini, une forme close [….] Sa vérité ne comblerait aucun vide" (*RN* 23), unable to fill the breach in history. Having access to 'Ali's own words would not add anything to the story because the novel is not so much interested in discovering the facts of history as it is in understanding establishing historical fact always produces exclusions and omissions. This means that one cannot simply restore the wholeness of the past by correcting errors in the historical record. Thus, the novel deploys the fragmentary character of the archive against itself in order to lay bare the violence on which the archive is founded. Its gaps and silences are what make the novel's narrative possible, rather than factors that limit retelling. It is for precisely this reason that the Zandj are not made to narrate their own story: it would never be their story. Thus, the Moi/Lui, author/'Alî narrator assumes the risk, rather than expose the Zandj to a second textual destruction and erasure. It is not enough to merely rediscover the facts, as if they had only been distorted. It is the form of their transmission itself that the novel interrogates.

This is the shape of the impossible task that the novel sets for itself: retelling a story that has only persisted in a form that silenced it. Toward the end of the novel, as the defeat approaches for the Zandj rebellion, al-Muwaffaq, regent of the Abbasid Empire charged with quelling the uprising, commands that the events of his final siege be scrupulously recorded: "J'ordonne qu'on note les événements de cette journée afin qu'on les lise à travers tout le pays, qu'on sache les choses, que même le nom de ce petit faux prophète s'efface des mémoires" (*RN* 223). Al-Muwaffaq understands the role of the chronicle as the unceasing narration of power. Paradoxically, inscribing 'Alî's name in history and transmitting his story across the land will ultimately erase all memory of him (let alone of the slaves who rose up under his command,

whom the historical figure of 'Alî entirely obscures). The empire's enemies may come and go, but the empire itself lives on. The record of its victories, with its litany of vanquished foes, bears witness to the persistence of imperial power and the ephemerality of opposition. Bencheikh's novel lays bare the kinds of violence that the chronicle simultaneously inscribes and obscures. Rather than rediscover the kernel of truth in an otherwise biased account, *Rose noire* deploys competing discourses of truth production in prophetic speech and historical writing. It pushes both to their limits in order to reveal their lapses and excesses, both of which enable a transhistorical comparative mode of narration.

Between Past and Present: Prophetic Speech and the Transhistorical Imaginary

The undecidably hybrid narrator of *Rose noire sans parfum* confronts the reader in the form of a simple "Je," the first word of the story after the prelude. This "Je" begins by telling the reader only, and at length, who he is not (Persian, Shi'ite, a general Bihbûdh, a rebel in Transoxiana, Syria, or elsewhere). Even as he gives some information on his family genealogy, he denies more: "Vous n'en saurez pas plus [....] Qui l'a dit et qui le saura? Vos livres d'histoire s'embrouillent. Il ne suffit pas de substituer l'écrit à la parole pour garder la vérité, encore moins la trouver. La vérité, c'est ce que je vous dis" (*RN* 30). The narrator frustrates the reader's desire to find truth in the archive, contending that the written word does not guarantee the veracity of its content. Instead, he claims authority over truth for his own speech, which he qualifies as prophetic, in contrast to the supposedly factual character of historical discourse: "Je prends la plume de l'historien mais de ma bouche ne s'écoule qu'un verbe prophétique" (*RN* 117). The prophetic verb offers a different form of history, one that does not need to establish facts or justify its claims. The fact of its utterance is the only justification it requires. But the scene of

pronouncing prophetic speech is more complicated than this: the narrator takes up the historian's pen at the same time as he announces prophecy. This simultaneity indicates that the tension between the spoken and the written word is a constant oscillation rather than a strict opposition. Moving incessantly, indistinguishably between one and the other, the narrator reveals the violence embedded in the historical archive. Prophetic speech imposes the contradictions out of which historical discourse would distill facts. It conjures up the dead bodies that the chronicle would subsume in a statistic. And it leaps from archives in Basra and Baghdad back across centuries to Carthage and Rome or ahead to Paris and Berlin.

The narrator observes that committing his words to writing inevitably leads to encounters with other written records. He concedes the importance of a particular year marked by the chronicles, "une date à laquelle s'accrochent vos historiens et se cramponnent vos érudits [….] l'an 249 hégirien, soit 863 de votre ère chrétienne", when he leaves Samarra for Bahrain. This second-person address, a technique used at various points throughout the novel, beginning with the Zandj's collective indictment of the Abbasid chroniclers' ignorance of their lives and lands, simultaneously implicates those same chroniclers who would eventually write and transmit records of the Zandj rebellion and the later European Orientalists who played an outsize role in determining which sources would be used to study the history of the so-called "Muslim World" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[188] 'Alî frustrates their collective investment in this particular date by declining to explain the import of this year and its move: "Je ne dirai rien de

[188] Like the various first- and third-person narrators that come and go throughout the novel, second-person address takes various forms. Most often, however, it seems to interpellate the text's potential European readers. This is most explicit when a Jewish man joins 'Alî's contingent, believing him to be the promised Messiah, which the narrator notes is "votre Kristos" (*RN* 63). Similarly, when he connects the horrors of his war to those of twentieth-century European conflicts, he calls them "votre vingtième siècle" (*RN* 140-1). Later, though, such dates are evoked neutrally in the third person (see, for example, *Rose noire* 179, 182).

ma pré-histoire. Je ne me souviens plus: je nais avec mon récit" (*RN* 31). The narrator's character emerges by speaking as though he had a past when he allows that neither he, nor his past, exist before they are spoken of. The prophetic self does not resurrect the historical figure, but emerges with and in its own utterances. Like Azwaw's "Moi ou moi?" after he adopts Islam while maintaining surreptitious Berber resistance, this prophetic narrator is a product of the text it narrates. Its metamorphoses require no resolution or justification. When he invents a new lineage for himself in Bahrain as a direct sixth generation descendant of 'Alî, cousin of the Prophet, he forbids the reader from using his own words against him: "Et si j'écrivis autre chose, dans les pages que vous venez de lire, oubliez-le! Je ne l'ai jamais cru moi-même puisque enfin je trouve la vérité" (*RN* 41). He will continue to reinvent his descendance many times over throughout the text. Thus, the narrator declines to settle historical debates over his background, simultaneously refusing the confessional mode of novelistic subjectivity and denying the archive its position as the domain of historical truth. Instead, the narrator deploys the contradictory claims within the archive as a means to suspend historical judgment. He upends plausibility and coherence as criteria for credibility, contrasting his position to that of the reader: "Alors s'arrêta mon doute là où commence votre incrédulité" (*RN* 40). The narrator is transparent in his preference for opacity, privileging indeterminacy and unresolvable contradiction over the plain facts so prized by those readers whom he addresses as "petits rats sceptiques, historiens de bibliothèques" (*RN* 72).

If the violence of reducing contradictions into facts remains of a metaphorical sort, the chronicle's more literal connection to violent conflict comes through most clearly in the novel's scenes of battle. When the Zandj defeat the Abbasid general Mansûr, the latter's failed attempt to elude his adversaries by leaping his horse over a canal is recounted in great detail: "Jusqu'au saut

d'un cavalier désespéré dans l'eau vaseuse d'un canal. Minutie d'historien rapportant la mort d'un chef, officier obscur pourtant, mais chef"; by contrast, "les hommes venus s'entre-tuer tombent dans l'oubli: exactement six mots pour dire qu'un nombre important de soldats furent tués ces jours-là" (*RN* 133-4; see also 178-9). Even as the novel repeats the content of the historical archive, it takes it as the occasion for a meta-commentary that demonstrates the archive's limits: only a general's death would be recounted in such detail and with such pathos. The corresponding lapsus regarding the thousands of foot soldiers is the kind of gap that characterizes the archive. But it is a silence that the novel makes speak; the narrator deploys the ambiguity of those few brief words that stand in for innumerable casualties by relating them to other points in history: "Ah! Les deux cent cinquante mille de Verdun, dans chaque camp; les cent quarante-cinq mille des Dardanelles; les vingt-sept mille du Chemin des Dames! Les poubelles de l'histoire ne garderont même pas de manuscrits froissés où s'écrivent les noms des combattants de l'Euphrate [....] des partisans sans nom pendant que leurs chefs s'installent dans les livres" (*RN* 134). In a kind of excess of signification, the six words describing the dead of the Euphrates come to include the lives claimed by the mass conflicts of twentieth century Europe — with the difference that the latter have at least been counted and, in many cases named, whereas the Zandj were not recorded at all, even in manuscripts that were lost or thrown away. Over the following pages, the narrator carries on, as if he were perusing a pile of history books in front of him, evoking Srebrenica, and citing one after another an International Criminal Court deposition and Bartolomé de las Casa's sixteenth century indictment of Spanish colonialism. The novel's archive proliferates, as its constitutive violence generates transhistorical relations between the technologies of mass death that shaped European modernity in the twentieth century, the objects of so many memorials, and the Orientalist histories that built the archive that

Rose noire's narrator peruses to tell his tale.[189]

Thus, *Rose noire* activates the lapses and excesses of the archive to reveal this foundational violence. If the novel has undertaken a critique of history-writing as a conduit of power relations, it does so by rendering any opposition of writing to speech ambiguous. Such a dichotomy would naturalize the exclusion of illiterate historical subjects like the Zandj, born and buried in their swamps. Instead, the scene of narration, where the narrator takes up the historian's pen, but the words of a prophet spring forth from his mouth, is simultaneously a scene of writing that takes the form of prophetic speech and of prophetic utterance that occasions historical writing. Consequently, insofar as the novel carries investigates a dusty historical corner at the threshold of a particular Arabo-Islamic version of Maghrebi history, it makes possible a critique that does not take the same form as the archive it calls into question. Rather than substitute one set of facts for another, it stages the production of factuality as an inherently violent process. Rather than replacing one archive with another, it discovers what the archive transmitted in silence. The novel suggests two key questions to ask of history: "Est-ce ici le brouillon d'une histoire non-écrite, ou bien le palimpseste d'une autre qui le fut déjà?" (*RN* 184). In other words, do the lapses and excesses of the archive indicate erasure or the reprisal of politically ingrained mythico-historical narratives? Both call out the gap between the form of history and the past. Both serve to deterritorialize the present's claim on time and enable a transhistorical imagination.

Futures Past: Utopia and Ruination

Rose noire shows the past to be inappropriable to the present in the form of the historical

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[189] In a sense, this is the transformation of the domain of history into a field of contestation that Foucault identifies in the work of Boulainvilliers: "l'histoire est devenue un savoir de luttes qui se déploie lui-même et fonctionne dans un champ de luttes: combat politique et savoir historique sont désormais liés l'un avec l'autre. Foucault, *Il faut défendre*, 153.

chronicle because it occludes the very violence it purports to record, opening up to a transhistorical imagination that does not obey any genealogical law of inheritance. In this way, the past relates more to events seemingly completely disconnected from it than it does to any present that might lay claim to it as part of its history. Thus, “futures past” appear in the novel in their obscurity as inscrutable blank spaces in the archive, primarily in the novel’s refusal to render definitive historical judgment on the intentions and actions of ’Alî and his partisans. ’Alî declines to ever clarify his motivations or to offer alternative perspectives on the root causes of historical events as described in the chronicles written by his foes. His stance is oppositional, but not in that he seeks to “humanize” himself and his followers as victims of history. Rather, he lays bare the extent of their dehumanization in the archive, emphasizing the ellipses, erasures, and emendations that abound in any record of their existence. Against his Abbasid enemies, whose rule is backed by both sacred caliphal authority and profane historical continuity, he asserts “Mon royaume est d’ici-bas”, affirming that his revolt is based entirely on earthly, political concerns, rather than theological ones (*RN* 53). His vision for this earthly kingdom is not a more just version of Abbasid government, but its inverse. To his soldiers drawn from the enslaved Zandj, he promises riches, power, and even slaves of their own (*RN* 54-5). Thus, ’Alî’s aim is to reverse the order of things, not to destroy it. He wants to seize power, not eliminate it. He does not propose a radical political vision, but he does suggest that history’s manner of naturalizing inequality through its narration of events is contingent on someone else’s failure to seize power.

On the other hand, the characters of Chraïbi’s novels bear utopian images of a future that will never be realized by the reader’s present. These “futures past” disrupt the logic of inheritance by family lineage, as the characters’ descendants not only do not live in the world their ancestors imagined, but are unaware of that past vision of the future. If, in *Naissance*,

Lieutenant Boutr dies because he translated Azwaw for Tariq bnou Ziyyad, what message could be so terrible? The words remain only articulated silence to the reader, who is deprived of the text of the second half of the speech. Tariq seems to take it as a condemnation of the utopian vision he has for al-Andalus. In the novel, General Tariq bnou Ziyyad (who is himself a Moroccan Berber) sets out to conquer Andalusia not as an extension of the empire that brought Islam to the Maghreb, but as a new territory that will refashion the political, theological, and temporal boundaries of Islam. His utopian vision dis-Orients the extant cartography of power in Islamdom, denaturalizing its connection to the rising and setting sun in the terms *mashriq* and *maghrib*, which designate the place where the sun rises and sets, respectively. Following Oqba ibn Nafi's determined westward march to the ocean, Tariq turns Islam northward, not just to extend the wave of conquest and territorial assimilation, but to found a new kind of territory. He establishes as its borders the horizon of the future, in place of the determinations of the past. Addressing his soldiers who have just conquered Cordoba, Tariq asks them to turn their backs to the East, emphasizing the geographical opposition of Orient and Occident:

> l'Orient est en voie de mort. Il est derrière votre dos, avec ses Damas, ses Bagdad, et ses divisions sans fin qui ensanglantent la terre et dénaturent la parole de Dieu. Plus jamais vous n'y retournerez. Vous êtes ici à présent, en Occident, et c'est comme si vous veniez d'y naître. Parce que, moi, je vous dis que c'est ici, en Occident, que se lèvera désormais le soleil du monde! [....] Le passé est terminé. Il ne vous reste que l'avenir. (*NA* 55-6)

If the traditional Islamicate geographical designations *mashriq* and *maghrib* emphasize the span of Islamdom, centered on the Arabian peninsula, Tariq here underlines the opposition between the poles of East and West and the implicit historical trajectory naturalized in them: that Islam is born in the East, with the rising sun, and expands to the West, toward the setting sun — across the span of history, in other words. In so doing, the novel draws on an image important to Sūfī

conceptions regarding the renewal of religion, dating back at least to the great Andalusian mystic ibn ʻArabī.[190]

With Tariq, however, the mystical possibilities of religion seem to turn back into the domain of a renewed human existence. His speech figures the Maghreb as the site of a rebirth. Crossing the Strait of Gibraltar is not the sign of Islam's territorial maturation on its march to the end of History, but rather the birth of a new history in a new world, one which reverses the geographical flow of time, from West to East (this will engender an unexpected, unwarranted consequence in the twentieth century, as I will discuss below), and of a new people. Tariq calls them "l'humanité de demain" (*NA* 54), defining his followers by their orientation on the horizon of the future. As the temporal bounds of this territory shift from its past to the horizon of the future, the future itself changes from the expectation of the eschaton, from anticipating the eventual end of human time, to refiguring human time as eschatological, as already containing the possibility of paradise. When Tariq declares that at Cordoba "s'élèvera la capitale de l'Empire pour l'éternité!", he is not merely aggrandizing the earthly power of his new empire; rather, he is shifting the accomplishment of theological History into the political, incorporating sacred time into the earthly realm: "S'il est un paradis, je le veux maintenant et ici même, sur cette terre d'Al-Andalous où nous ont conduits nos pas!" (*NA* 54). Tariq, like Azwaw, reconfigures the claims that sacred History makes on the Berbers. Faced with the imminent arrival of Islam in the form of an overwhelming conquering force, Azwaw rejected Azoulay's claim, ostensibly from Jewish scripture and tradition, that the Berbers originated in an Edenic

[190] According to Gerald Elmore's study and translation of ibn ʻArabī's *Kitāb ʻanqā' mughrib fī maʻrifat khatm al-awliyā' wa-shams al-maghrib* (The Fabulous Gryphon on the Seal of the Saints and the Sun Rising in the West), an early work (ca. 1200 C.E. / 596 A.H.) where ibn ʻArabī developed the figure of the sun rising in the West as a type of the Mahdī, the Islamic messianic figure identified with Jesus returned at the end of time. See Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn Al-ʻArabī's* Book

paradise in Palestine. To Azwaw, this scriptural history was nothing more than dead time, in contrast to the living landscape of their territory in the Maghreb. Tariq, having embraced Islam and risen to the fore of its expansion into Iberia, now reckons with the way scripture rewrites the Berber's future. In place of Azoulay's lost paradise is a future one that may only be attained after death or after the end of the world. Because this paradise is by definition the abrogation of earthly time, it is beyond the pale of profane politics. But Tariq's territory is utopian both in regard to the profane and the sacred. He wants to build a polity that is capable of creating paradise on earth, no longer eternally deferred to the eschaton, but temporally deferred as the future horizon that motivates his followers' actions.

So long as this future remains on the horizon, it temporalizes the present as its past. The present becomes only ever the past of this utopian future, constituting itself as a remnant that recalls the deferred future to coming generations. Tariq demonstrates this logic through the problem of divine inspiration: "Dieu a été avec nous, Il est encore avec nous, mais Il ne le sera pas toujours. Pour Le mériter, il nous faut construire Sa paix, Son jardin, Son royaume, pour des siècles et des siècles et afin que les générations futures, si jamais elles étaient appelées à devenir sourdes et aveugles à l'Esprit, se souviennent de nous dans leur détresse et nous prennent à témoin" (*NA* 55). The present persists not just as the memory of a future whose arrival is uncertain, but as the only the guarantee of the possibility of arrival. This is the structure of deferral and expectation, which contrasts to the structure of identity and order exemplified in Raho's lesson to Bourguine about looking at time in the opening epilogue. Whereas the young Bourguine believes that their town, Sidi Kacem Bou Asriya, has become itself again after the interruption of colonial order, Tariq lives for a future time "dans un siècle ou deux, quand

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of the Fabulous Gryphon (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 54–56.

Cordoue sera Cordoue" (*NA* 136). This is what Tariq offers to Azwaw, a future where the latter may serve as a Qur'ān reader to the deaf and mute, since he himself has lost his tongue. Yet just as Bourguine's vision misapprehends the transformations of the Moroccan landscape as the restoration of order, naturalizing colonial and capitalist interventions, Tariq's future orientation is also prone to disruption.

Chraïbi's narrative explores the instability of this structure by juxtaposing it with the colonial and postcolonial future of the Maghreb, or even by showing how the horizon of the future exceeds that imagined and proclaimed by Tariq, as in the repeated references to "la future mosquée-cathédrale" at Cordoba. In Tariq's time, it would have still been both a church and a mosque. A later ruler transformed it into the Great Mosque and only centuries later did it become a cathedral in the Reconquista.[191] Dissonant bits of future time leak into the past, opening the gap between the future past of Tariq's utopia and the centuries that follow it, which will fail to bear out his vision. Indeed, Tariq's utopian al-Andalus ends just as it is beginning to take shape. This is where it differs from the utopian image of a tolerant, cosmopolitan, multi-confessional society of Muslim Andalusia, which has become a folkloric and literary commonplace in Arabic and European literature, but whose reality is the topic of much historical debate. As Bencheikh writes in an essay published just before *Rose noire*, "La nostalgie a ainsi dessiné un paradis perdu dont la qualité littéraire s'affirmait au fur et à mesure que s'estompait sa vérité historique."[192] *Naissance* suggests, however, that what is utopian in al-Andalus is not what it was, but what it could have been.

What causes the failure of Tariq's project? Coming as it does on the heels of Azwaw's

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[191] Civantos, *Afterlife of Al-Andalus*, 135–36.
[192] Bencheikh, *Ecrits*, 328. Originally published as "Chronique de mai" in *Ensemble* (1997): 328-31.

mute, prophetic message, it would seem that Azwaw's message re-locates Tariq's utopia in chthonic history. This is the conclusion that Tariq draws from Azwaw's words, as transmitted by and silenced in Boutr: in planning every detail of the future, he neglected to account for the past: "Oui, il avait rêvé, aimé, commencé à enfanter tout cela. Prévu l'avenir dans les moindres détails, hormis celui-ci: le passé" (*NA* 138). The complexities of this past resurface in the Qur'ān that Azwaw recites to Tariq via the aid Boutr. It is syncretic, recalling both the origins of Islam in the first verses revealed to Muḥammad, "*Lis au nom de Ton Seigneur qui a fait la création*", and the Berbers' chthonic history, appending a litany of environmental authorities to that of God, "*Lis au nom de l'arbre*", "*Lis au nom de l'eau*", followed by a repeated provocation, asking Tariq "*s'il se souvient encore de son père …. Le guide de l'Islam se souvient-il de ses aïeux? Ils n'étaient pas musulmans*" (*NA* 136-8). What Tariq begins by recognizing and welcoming as a "contre-Coran" that would incite his theologians to sharpen their arguments and maintain their vigilance soon leaves him pale with apprehension and ultimately sends his lieutenant Boutr to his death as Azwaw predicts the impending collapse of Tariq's rule. Azwaw implicates not the utopian nature of Tariq's project, but the failure of his earthly politics to account for what had already accumulated in earthen time.

Indeed, almost as soon as this vision of the future was deployed did its call begin to fade. The past catches up with Tariq in more than one way as the ongoing political machinations within the caliphate soon decide to reign in the overly strong-willed Tariq, whose political vision promised to rival, if not outdo the powers that be seated in the East. Shortly after Azwaw's fatal visit, Tariq is recalled by the Umayyad caliphate to Damascus. A new governor replaces him; in the novel, he is the fictional Qaïs Abou Imran, who has his own notions of what Cordoba's legacy should be. He, too, wants to build a worldly capital, but it is unclear whether it will be

paradise on earth, it will be a wonder of civilization: Qaïs declares, in a long speech to Azwaw, "l'imaginaire est plus vaste que le sensible. Je te dirai ceci: à cela il y aura une exception: Cordoue. Cette ville dépassera tout ce que l'on peut imaginer. Elle sera la capitale de la civilisation, Orient et Occident confondus" (151). Rather than Tariq's dream of "l'humanité de demain", this Cordoba will be home to Civilization with a capital "C", the exclusively profane correlate to sacred History with a capital "H". Whereas Tariq sought to integrate earthly and sacred time in a new politics, Qaïs is content to develop the urban expression of his authority over the secular realm to the greatest extent possible. In this shift, Tariq's utopian future becomes a future past, linked to following events by its failure to realize itself.

The conclusion of *Naissance* is particularly revealing of the ruptures that form the course of history, rather than its continuity. Azwaw is brought to Qaïs Abou Imran's palace in Cordoba by a general who recognized Azwaw as the "Maître de la Main", a legendary healer who could safely deliver the seventh pregnancy of the governor's wife (who turns out to be none other than Azwaw's daughter Yerma, captured by Arab conquerors in *Mère*), having lost all seven previous pregnancies. Azwaw successfully delivers the baby in what seems to be a climactic scene that realizes the prophecy he had delivered to Tariq: "j'ai entrepris cette marche pour une naissance et pour une mort" (*NA* 140). Yet the son, Mohamed Abou Imran, comes to nothing, living a decadent and historically insignificant life. He:

> fut un adolescent moyen au comportement plutôt négatif, puis un adulte robuste, mais quelconque, qui ne manifesta en rien la volonté de la vie ou la flamme du rêve. Pas un atome de ce qui avait fait la grandeur de son grand-père maternel, Azwaw Aït Yafelman. Pas un iota du gigantesque désir dont sa mère était morte. Rien qui ressemblât de près ou de loin à la vaste entreprise humaine que bâtissait son père, le gouverneur de Cordoue. (*NA* 174)

He is not up to the measure of his grandfather's myth, his mother's force of will, nor his father's

massive sensorial creation of Cordoba. His only importance, the novel insists, is to continue the family lineage, through a twist of fate that has him marry the daughter of General Tariq and his servant Oum-Hakim.

Yet the outcome of that lineage is never the kind of utopian future imagined by Tariq. It reaches its apex centuries later, in the person of Abdallah ibn Yassin, who founds the Almoravid dynasty, rulers of a sizable reformist Islamic empire across al-Andalus and the Maghreb. This genealogy is purely speculative, from a historical point of view. The novel activates history's silence on this question in rhizomatic fashion: "En des ramifications souterraines et innombrables dans l'espace et dans le temps, le souffle d'Azwaw Aït Yafelman renaquit. Et avec lui renaquit l'Islam des premiers temps, nu et étranger dans les fastes de la civilisation arabe à son apogée. C'était dans un village berbère de l'Atlas, au début du XIe siècle. Il avait nom Abdallah ibn Yassin" (*NA* 175). The novel paraphrases a well-known ḥadīth that also appears as an epigraph to *Mère*, where it reads: "L'Islam redeviendra l'étranger qu'il a commencé par être."[193] In the likes of Oqba ibn Nafi, Azwaw Aït Yafelman, Tariq bnou Ziyyad, or Abdallah ibn Yassin, Islam reappears as something strange to what it had become in the course of history. As figured in Chraïbi's novels, its return to strangeness is never a return to identity, but to a fundamental disruption of the course of history. Yet even if Tariq has a descendant who leaves his mark on history, it is hardly in the form of a utopian community. Instead, Tariq's future past has been re-routed into the desires of his descendants' own times. This continues, following the genealogical connections implicit in the opening sections of *Mère* and *Naissance*, which show members of the Aït Yafelman tribe across twentieth century Moroccan history, all the way to

[193] There are various versions in the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the first of which reads: "Bada'a al-islam gharīb wa-saya'ūd kamā bada'a gharīb fa-ṭūbā li-l-ghurabā'" (Book 1, Ḥadīth 279). My commentary is not meant to

Raho. Tariq's teleological vision is never achieved. Nor does the logic of succession and inheritance practiced by Azwaw and his descendants bring about any finality. It is always about deferral, about being as patient as the earth.

At the same time, patience and deferral do not preclude transformation. The ostensible continuity from Azwaw to Raho is belied not just by the future past of Tariq's failed utopia or the promise and disappointment of Qaïs's descendants, but by the changed form of the Aït Yafelman themselves. Although Azwaw plans carefully for the survival of his people through their assimilation into Islam, their adoption of this new religion is never merely a superficial pretense, even in Azwaw's case. His Muslim self may be doubled by a pagan self, but the two have become inseparably and undecidably who he is. This is all the more true for those of his descendants we encounter in the novels' opening epilogues. Not only that, but these latter-day Aït Yafelman have changed through other historical experiences. They have implicitly migrated at some point away from Azwaw's home at the mouth of the Oum-er-Bia river around Morocco. They inhabit a different society, one marked by the experience of a new kind of conquest in French imperialism, which has permanently altered the landscape in seemingly-irreparable ways.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the way Tariq's vision of a new world in the West must recall its own translation, already present at the beginning of *Mère*, to the contemporary political West. This leakage of future time into the past emphasizes their disjunction and the transformations that occur through these disruptions. The territory that constituted the "New World" for European expansion (as al-Andalus appears to Tariq's invading armies) is already present through its absence, its unattainability and unknowability, at the moment when General

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be theological in nature, nor do I argue that Chraïbi's is, either. I focus exclusively on the use of this saying in a fictional context.

Oqba ibn Nafi, head of the Islamicate forces that conquered the Maghreb from Tunis to the Atlantic, arrives at last at the ocean in *Mère*. He dismounts and wades into the waves, proclaiming aloud:

> ceci est la fin de la terre, gloire à Toi! Ton règne est redevenu ce qu'il était à l'origine. A nouveau il s'étend de l'Orient où tu m'as fait naître à l'Islam jusqu'à ce couchant où je proclame Ton nom sublime, gloire à Toi! Je ne suis que l'un de Tes serviteurs, mais je Te prends à témoin: il m'est impossible d'aller plus avant. Si je trouvais un passage à travers les eaux, je poursuivrais ma chevauchée afin de conquérir la mer. (*MP* 190-1)

Oqba reaffirms the East to West movement of Islam, its natural progression across the space of history, unaware that the "Couchant" will always remain just beyond his grasp, even if he could cross the ocean. Nevertheless, he anticipates a reversal in the flow of history, perhaps brought on by his own actions: in contrast to the ruling caliphs who sent him to the Maghreb but who "avaient les yeux tournés vers l'Orient", ibn Nafi "regardait vers le couchant, là où il pressentait qu'allait se lever l'avenir. Derrière l'autre horizon, il y avait l'autre moitié du monde dont on ne savait presque rien, sinon la barbarie" (*MP* 151). What he could not anticipate was what truly lay beyond that horizon, which would later come to be the dominant force in Maghrebi history, rather than Tariq's Andalusian utopia.

Thus, the completion of Oqba's quest will prove illusory, just as this penultimate scene in the novel must send us back to the introductory Epilogue, where that other "New World" across the sea makes its presence known. The Moroccan landscape, fertile and abundant when Oqba walked its lands, has been deforested and agriculture is suffering, yet in town rumor has it that "avec quelques engrais venus de *Lamirik* et des prières modernes [...] cette caillasse tintante et chauffée à blanc dès l'aurore redeviendrait ce qu'elle avait été à l'origine: une colline plantée d'arbres et d'autant de vies?" (*MP* 19). Formerly, Azwaw predicted that conquerors' bodies

would fertilize (*engraisser*) Berber land after their inevitable defeat by the geological timescale of chthonic history. In the epilogue, however, that landscape bears the scars of the exploitative property regime of the French Protectorate, which appropriated collective lands and deteriorated the landscape with aggressive agricultural development, all from a technocratic distance that did not allow for large-scale settler colonization whose ultimate collapse would have filled the territory as a cemetery yet again. Now, only imported fertilizers (*engrais*) make postcolonial lands fertile again. With the degradation of the Maghrebi landscape, the West has shifted, from the Maghreb to the United States, and from the divine to the mechanical. America, as the bearer of technological rather than religious modernity, can restore the Earth, whose own history has become a technical problem rather than an ontological one. Chraïbi's epilogues, which situate the present as a mere afterthought to the past, illustrate the ruination of the Moroccan landscape through the environmental degradation and unequal distribution of wealth that stymie the realization of futures both past and present.

Conclusion: Untimely Thinking and the Nation

As Bencheikh and Chraïbi turn to the past in novel form, away from the nationalized history of Maghrebi literature, they work through the question of literature's genealogical to the nation. In *Naissance*, Raho Aït Yafelman defines his relation to the nation in the opening epilogue, where he considers that "une patrie, c'est d'abord l'enfance; on peut renoncer à tout, sauf à l'enfance" (*NA* 29). Chraïbi would often cite this phrase in interviews when asked about his relation to Morocco, where he had not lived since coming to Paris for university.[194] If one

[194] For example, in a television segment entitled "Driss Chraïbi à l'Ile d'Yeu", he narrates over footage of his everyday life on a small island in the Atlantic of the coast of Vendée: "On ne quitte jamais son pays. Est-ce que c'est le Maroc réel que je décris dans mes livres, ou est-ce que c'est un Maroc imaginaire? On peut renoncer à tout, sauf à l'enfance." Yves André Hubert, "Ouvert le dimanche: émission du 19

were to stop there, the nation would be a genealogical relation that one is born into, as would be Maghrebi literature. It would suffice to have some kind of relation by birth to the Maghreb to be counted as a Maghrebi writer and subject to the restrictions and expectations that entails. Yet this is not exactly what Raho or Chraïbi says. This phrase invokes childhood, not birth. While children rarely have any more control over where they grow up than they the place and circumstances of their births, the childhood figure suggests the importance of formative experience in this relation over arbitrary attachment. It also gestures to the knowledge one lacks prior to such experience and how gaining it may lead to a change in perspective later.

Naissance has much more to say about this figure than Chraïbi would usually explain in interviews, beginning with the fact that its title links birth to time ("à l'aube", at dawn[195]) rather than place. In a sense, the novel is fundamentally about the difference between Raho's childhood concept of origins and the position of Badruddin ibn Zoubair, a scholarly emir in al-Andalus who brings Azwaw to Qaïs abou Imran in Cordoba. Badruddin has delegated all his administrative tasks so that he can spend all of his time in camp reading. Just before Azwaw appears, Badruddin is studying an ancient treatise, composed centuries before the birth of Islam. There, he reads, "*Si tu ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé avant ta naissance, tu resteras toujours un enfant*" (*NA* 74).[196] Although the text dates well into the of the *jāhiliyya*, Badruddin marvels that it seems to be Islamic *avant la lettre*. He wonders at this paradox, that someone could have written a work so

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septembre 1982," *Ouvert le dimanche* (Paris: France Régions 3, September 19, 1982), http://inatheque.ina.fr/doc/TV-RADIO/DA_CPC82052983/ouvert-le-dimanche-emission-du-19-septembre-1982?rang=2, Institut national de l'audiovisuel. In the October 12, 1992 episode of his France Culture interviews with Rachel Assouline, he says: "On peut renoncer à tout, sauf à l'enfance. Et l'enfance, c'est le pays natal, c'est la mère." Assouline, "Driss Chraïbi."

[195] In this, it makes a fortuitous connection to the opening chapters Assia Djebar's *Amour*, which I analyze in Chapter 1, 57-61.

[196] The same phrase appears in different contexts in two of Chraïbi's other novels: Driss Chraïbi, *L'Inspecteur Ali* (Paris: Denoël, 1991), 142; Driss Chraïbi, *L'Homme du livre*, 68.

instructive to Muslims and their reading of the Qur'ān, without having known the holy book itself. This untimeliness becomes essential to the scholar who wants to learn what has happened before his childhood in order to mature. If one cannot renounce the *patrie*, then, one cannot merely accept to remain a child there, either.

Although the novel does not explicitly say so, Badruddin's reading may well be Plato's *Timaeus*, which evokes the Athenian lawmaker Solon's journey to Egypt, where he encounters an Egyptian priest named Sonchis of Sais (unnamed in Plato's text, but later identified by Plutarch). Sonchis rebukes Solon, saying, "Solon, Solon, you Greeks never grow up. There isn't an old man among you" (20d-27a; 22b5). Sonchis then proceeds to tell Solon all the events of history that the Greeks do not recount because they lack knowledge of the past, promising to go over the written records kept in the temples with him later.[197] The *Timaeus* reference is particularly interesting because it could have reached Chraïbi in Morocco either through the medieval Arabic tradition that preserved Greek philosophy in translation (and extended it in ways that would only later enter European knowledge) or through the classics-based French colonial education system. It also offers numerous points of contrast and comparison: Solon's ruse to make Sonchis speak alongside Azwaw's plan for Berber survival, the claims of kinship between Egyptians and Greeks, compared to the Imazighen and Arabs in Islamdom, and their competing visions of history.

Rose noire is also about making possible such a transhistorical imaginary that traces relations between marginalized peoples like the Zandj, whose only historical language as silence: "Nous qui n'avons jamais su ecrire, nous n'existons que dans ces ecritures qui nous mutilent"

[197] Lines 21e to 25e in Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56–59. Sonchis is unnamed in Plato's text; but identified in Plutarch, *Lives*, trans.

(*RN* 17). These groups are connected by violence they experience and the way their experiences are encoded through erasure in archives. This suggests that the question of knowing what happened before you were born is not just an issue of linear time, but one of seeking out untimely ways of thinking within one's own time, wherever they might originate. Furthermore, by demonstrating that every construction of historical fact implies exclusion, the novel shows that simply expanding the archive will never be sufficient. Instead, it is even more important to understand what it is that cannot be known historically.

Bencheikh describes his own childhood experiences that enabled him to pursue such inquiries in particularly Maghrebi (rather than Algerian) terms: "Jeune Tlemcénien, né à Casablanca, poursuivant mes études d'arabe avec des amis tunisiens à la Sorbonne, aucune frontière ne s'opposait à mes espérances."[198] While the specific trajectory of Bencheikh's education is made possible by the geography of French imperial rule in the Maghreb, it also allowed him to think with the heterogeneous elements that composed the Maghreb at the time against the colonial (and later postcolonial) present. With *Rose noire*, Bencheikh takes readers to the limit, if not beyond, of what may be considered Maghrebi history. This journey outward never returns to the Maghreb, even as the historical order of the chronicle is restored in the final chapter narrated by the victorious General al-Muwaffaq, who has just defeated the Zandj. Instead, it turns outward, following the other lines of the transhistorical imaginary that it conjures, where no borders hamper its capacity to activate the silent violences of the archive against history as it claims to be. Thus, Bencheikh's novel is doubly untimely. First it interrogates the Arab chronicles of the Zandj Rebellion to show how much they are of their own

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Bernadotte Perrin, vol. 1, (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 477.

[198] Bencheikh, *Ecrits*, 7.

time, laying bare the violence that subtends the construction of historical time in their writing. Then, it makes that violence speak to other times.

Reading Chraïbi's novels alongside Bencheikh's, we may take Badruddin's study of the ancient treatise in *Naissance* to mark the importance of this effect of untimeliness to Maghrebi literature as it strives to think beyond the confines of its colonial and postcolonial history. With Badrudduin, *Naissance* is almost paraphrasing Nietzsche in thinking with the Greeks to act against its own time in favor of a time to come. But it is also thinking against the Greeks, insofar as they may stand for an ostensibly-continuous European intellectual and historical tradition, by emphasizing the Greeks' Arab doubles, without whom European visions of Antiquity would be unimaginable. Thus, Badruddin might say with Nietzsche, "it is only to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic, that though a child of the present time that I was able to acquire such untimely experiences."[199] In the context of *Naissance* this turn of phrase with Nietzsche is also a turn away from him, casting those same Greeks in a new light. The double genealogy of the *Timaeus* offers something irreducibly undecidable at the heart of Maghrebi literature and history.

Chraïbi and Bencheikh take Sonchis' enjoinder to Solon further. It is not just knowledge of the past that they explore, but knowledge of what is unknown in history and what could have happened. What matters is not connecting the past to the present, but understanding how they split apart. In this, Chraïbi and Bencheikh show a way of thinking the future — simply imagining the possibility of things being other than they appear — that passes through the past. In an interview, Chraïbi described this as constructing a counterfactual future past: "Je me demande souvent ce que je serais devenu si j'étais rentré au Maroc en tant qu'ingénieur chimiste, sans

avoir jamais écrit de *Passé simple*. Mystère. Un verset du Coran dit: 'Votre prophète ne peut pas prévoir l'avenir.' Nous ne pouvons le prévoir mais nous pouvons l'imaginer. Le véritable travail d'écriture se fait par cet imaginaire, bien plus vaste que le sensible ou l'intellect…"[200] Just as in *La Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube*, approaching the future is a matter of revisiting and reimagining the past, contemplating its unrealized potentialities, and seeking virtualities in our own histories. Similarly, Bencheikh wrote in the years after the Algerian revolution that the challenge for historiography in the new nation is "un problème de récréation [...] car il se situe moins au niveau de la matière historique qu'à celui de l'utilisation que nous en est proposé."[201] By the time of *Rose noire sans parfum*, Bencheikh has gone a step further, not just recreating the past for use in the present, but revealing what is at stake for past, present, and future, in such recreations.

[199] Bencheikh, 7.
[200] Driss Chraïbi and Abdeslam Kadiri, *Une Vie sans concessions* (Léchelle, France: Zellige, 2009), 23.
[201] Bencheikh, *Ecrits*, 62. Originally published in *Révolution africaine* 154 (January 8-14, 1966).

Part Two: Other Places of the Maghreb

Part Two studies the dislocation of Maghrebi literature to places ostensibly beyond the horizon of the Maghreb. Chapters Three and Four both take up Hubert Haddad's *Le Peintre d'éventail* (2013), a novel about the life of a reclusive gardener and fan painter in rural Japan, framed by two earthquakes. Chapter Three, "Modernism and Modernity in the Maghreb, France, and Japan," situates the novel in the history of aesthetic and political images of Japan in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and beyond from the nineteenth century to the present. Against this background, it shows how Haddad recalibrates European modernism's use of cultural difference to talk about the self. Chapter Four, "Writing Disaster Elsewhere," focuses on the novel's investigation of the relation between art and place, showing how the threat of disaster suspends representation and reference in writing. It thus becomes to talk about a Maghrebi novel that is not about the Maghreb. Through entangled modernist geography of the "Orient," *Peintre* activates circuits between the Maghreb and Japan not mediated by the French metropole, yielding multiple Easts.

Chapter Three: Modernism and Modernity in the Maghreb, France, and Japan

Ecrire sur, autour du Japon est, dans ma vie littéraire, un semblant de miracle.
Abdelkebir Khatibi, "Ombres japonaises"[202]

Introduction

An unspoken catastrophe haunts the opening pages of Hubert Haddad's *Le Peintre d'éventail* (2013).[203] Xu Hi-han, professor of Art History at the University of Tokyo, happens upon a photograph in a tabloid magazine of his former mentor, Matabei Reien, a masterful fan painter and gardener. The unexpected image's effect is instantaneous. Although they had fallen out years ago, Matabei's haggard, deathly look in the picture convinces Hi-han to travel the two hundred and thirty kilometers northeast from the capital to the fictional region of Atôra, between the Pacific coast and the mountains inland, where Matabei had lived in obscurity in a rural *pension de famille* (guesthouse or boarding house), home to solitary lodgers who have no family. By the time Hi-han arrives to find Matabei living in a cabin in foothills above the inn, it is clear that his former teacher is on the brink of death. Hi-han prepares tea and uses his phone to record Matabei's account of his life story.

The novel only makes explicit what unspoken disaster loomed over the opening chapters when it (re)turns to the catastrophe in its final third. Matabei has survived the March 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, left the refugee center where he was housed, and remained in the region after its evacuation, developing radiation sickness from exposure to the fallout from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. Hi-han's belated return to Atôra, whose fictional geography intermingles with readers' mediatized knowledge of the earthquake, provides a frame

[202] Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Ombres japonaises, précédé de Nuits blanches* (Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1988), 64.
[203] Hubert Haddad, *Le Peintre d'éventail* (Paris: Zulma, 2013). Hereafter abbreviated *PE*. Further citations

story, within which Matabei's narrative is divided into a tripartite structure that resembles the form of a haiku. In Matabei's account of his life story, a second, prior disaster emerges as its counterpoint, a kind of beginning that only appears as such in hindsight. This *incipit* is itself double: a few days prior to the Great Hanshin earthquake in 1995, Matabei fatally struck a young woman with his car outside of Kobe, where he formerly lived and worked as a successful and fashionable designer and abstract painter. *Peintre* is thus framed by catastrophe, both formally and diegetically. What Matabei recounts to Hi-han is not just a sequence of spectacular disasters, however. He articulates an integrated theory of painting, gardening, and writing in relation to the landscape of Atôra based on his experience working under inn's previous gardener and fan painter, Osaki Tanako. In addition to his biography and his aesthetics, Matabei passes on his entire *oeuvre*, which he had in turn inherited from Osaki, to Hi-han and designates him to carry on his work. Across these threads, the novel traces the development of relations between art and territory and of traditions that transmit and transform them.

Le Peintre d'éventail is thus a novel about the creation and interpretation of images in relation to the entangled landscape of the natural and social environment. The episodic narrative of Matabei's sixteen year stay at the guesthouse in Atôra traces his changing relation to images. In the first part, he arrives at the guesthouse on the heels of his fatal car accident and the Kobe earthquake. He lets time pass in a state of numbed drunkenness and insomnia, punctuated only by the sexual relationship he develops with the inn's proprietor, dame Hison, out of their mutual isolation. At the same time, he recovers his taste for painting while hiking in the countryside around the guesthouse and subsequently meets the gardener and fan painter, Osaki Tanako, who gradually takes Matabei under his wing. When Osaki dies, Matabei takes over his mentor's role,

given in the text.

marking the first line break in the novel's haiku-like structure. In the second section, Matabei dedicates himself to tending the garden and studying Osaki's fans to learn both the secrets they contain and the knowledge of their production, so that the disciple may prolong the master's oeuvre by his own hand. This section ends with a *kireji*, or cutting-word, an untranslatable syntactic particle that marks a turn or break in a haiku. This comes in the form of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami which utterly destroy the garden and fans alike. As in the first part, Matabei must once again recover the image, though this time by restoring and recreating the flooded and mud-incrusted fans. By juxtaposing these movements of creation and re-creation through destruction, the text suggests that disaster is not just something that disrupts the self-identity of the landscape or the image, but rather some fleeting quality that is always within them.

Drawing on *Peintre*'s study of the relation between art and place, this chapter proposes to read the novel as a displacement of the territory of Maghrebi literature. The preceding chapters have reworked Maghrebi history from within through Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* and reconfigured its temporal boundaries via Jamel Eddine Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum* and Driss Chraïbi's *La Mère du Printemps* and *Naissance à l'aube*. Haddad takes us to the other places of the Maghreb, displacing the France-Maghreb axis that tends to overdetermine Maghrebi literature by introducing a third pole in the form of Japan. Consequently, neither the novel nor these chapters simply celebrate displacement as such. It matters what exactly that third pole is, especially because it is Japan, which has been the object of many representations and misrepresentations among its westerly interlocutors. Following along with the novel's exploration of art and territory, this chapter and the next will examine the dynamics of territorial displacement and the specific role that Japan plays in it. If France and the Maghreb form a pair

of mutual constitutive selves and others in postcolonial literature, introducing Japan as the other of the other in this erstwhile-binary relationship situates the novel beyond the postcolonial axis, at the intersection of the literary and political projects of European avant-gardes, Ottoman politicians, Arab nationalists, and Islamic reformists alike from the nineteenth century onward. Reading *Peintre* as a dislocation of Maghrebi literature will require considering the elements of its figurative and textual landscape (heterogeneity, maintenance and entropy, visibility and opacity, disaster and restoration) as they engage with these prior traditions.

Still at stake is the fundamental question of how literature refers, is made to refer, or declines to refer to a particular territory. Previous western engagements with Japan often turned that proper name into a shifter, such that "Japan" could variously designate whatever place or model was needed to justify a political or artistic stance. My purpose, however, is not to critique the evacuation of "Japan" as a referent, nor is it to render judgment on the accuracy or authenticity of things "Japanese." The problem is not the evacuation of reference as such, but the evacuation of certain referents and the insistence on retaining others. By reading *Peintre* as a Maghrebi novel about Japan, I seek to identify a mode of reading that neither attempts to reduce Japan to a metaphor for the Maghreb by deciphering a coded allegory nor sets Japan up as absolutely other such that the journey outward ultimately returns to the deepest depths of the self. The question is, what would it say about the literary territory of the Maghreb, about the condition of the Maghrebi novel, if it were to include a novel about Japan?

Haddad's works are particularly suited to this investigation because of the liminal place they occupy between Maghrebi and French literature, marginal both in the attention they receive and the themes and settings they explore. Haddad himself was born in Tunisia to Amazigh Jewish and Algerian parents. The family emigrated to France when Hubert was only a few years

old. Having lived there most of his life, Haddad embodies the ambiguous division between French and Francophone literature. Practically speaking, all of his literary activities, including the frequent writing workshops that he conducts, take place in Europe. Discursively, however, Haddad frequently emphasizes his Jewish and Maghrebi origins. Critically, he is available to scholars who wish to interpellate him as a Maghrebi writer, even if he would not always figure in a list of Maghrebi authors, were it not motivated by a specific angle that would merit his inclusion. In both contexts, he remains a marginal writer. This is perhaps in part because he is a prolific writer who has authored dozens of works, including novels, poetry, and essays, all of a dizzying diversity. On the one hand, he has written novels about the Algerian war of independence and the Israel-Palestine conflict, perennial themes in superficial catalogues of Maghrebi literature.[204] On the other, Haddad's oeuvre is wide-ranging in setting and theme. His works have addressed Jewish communities in India, child refugees in Afghanistan, and full-body transplants, to cite but a few recent examples.[205] Japan stands out for having received sustained attention in a number of Haddad's texts in addition to *Peintre*. He also published a companion piece to that novel, *Les Haïkus du peintre d'éventail*, a collection of haiku whose metafictional prologue creates a self-referential universe among Haddad's "Japanese" oeuvre by presenting the poems as those of Matabei, the fan painter in *Peintre*.[206] Two years later, he returned to Japan in the novel *Mā,* which retells the life of the modern haiku poet Santōka Taneda (1882-1940)

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[204] See Hubert Haddad, *Les Derniers jours d'un homme heureux* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980) and *Palestine* (Paris: Zulma, 2007), respectively. The latter won the "Prix des cinq continents de la Francophonie", a clear sign that, despite Haddad's metropolitan location, he may always be taken as a francophone writer.

[205] Respectively, see Hubert Haddad, *Premières neiges sur Pondichéry* (Paris: Zulma, 2017), *Opium Poppy* (Paris: Zulma, 2011), *Corps desirable* (Paris: Zulma, 2015).

[206] Hubert Haddad, *Les Haïkus du peintre d'éventail* (Paris: Zulma, 2013). Hereafter abbreviated *HP*. Further citations given in the text.

through a fictional manuscript of his biography.[207] Japan also features in Haddad's non-fiction writing. His art book *Le Jardin des peintres* contains essays on gardens in painting from ancient Mesopotamia to European modernism, by way of medieval Japan and Mughal India.[208] *Le Nouveau magasin d'écriture*, a hefty compendium that catalogues experiences leading writing workshops, contains numerous reflections on haiku and writing exercises.[209]

The importance of these liminal positions, of an author between literatures and texts among many worlds, is much more than the mere recitation of ostensibly transnational litanies, *à la* "a Tunisian Jew raised in France writing about Japan." Beyond celebrating the appearance of transgressing boundaries, the question really is, how do literary boundaries form? How do they shape interpretations? How may texts interrogate and reshape those boundaries? *Peintre*, along with Haddad's other writings about Japan, enables us to approach these questions across multiple overlapping frames. Chief among them is European modernist *japonisme*, but it is ultimately only one in a sequence of comparative perspectives, which also includes a specifically Maghrebi and a more generally Arab, Islamicate, and Ottoman engagement with Japan, a metafictional frame among Haddad's works themselves, and finally a series of diegetic modes of seeing within the narrative of *Peintre* as well.

In the present chapter, I present the stakes of writing about elsewhere and specifically about Japan. I begin by describing *Peintre*'s reception as a "conte japonisant,' rather than a "roman maghrébin." This raises the issue of the ends to which literature invokes tropes of otherness. It is in light of this question that I unpack the frame of European avant-garde *japonisme* that critical and academic attention to *Peintre* has emphasized, from nineteenth

[207] Hubert Haddad, *Mā* (Paris: Zulma, 2015).
[208] Haddad, *Jardin des peintres*.

century beginnings in the decorative arts and painting to the emergence of the haiku as its literary avatar in the early twentieth century. I contrast French *japonisme* with Ottoman, Arab nationalist, and Islamic reformist images of Japan, showing how these and their European counterparts are often conceptually and historically entangled. Both invoke projects of artistic modernism and political modernization in threads converge that most directly in French colonial rule in the Maghreb and their subsequent postcolonial relations. I thus return to *Peintre* as a Maghrebi novel precisely insofar as it embodies this intersection. I examine how Haddad reframes these traditions of representing Japan and compare the globalization of the haiku and the aesthetics of the ordinary in his writing to that of the Moroccan postcolonial philosopher Abdelkebir Khatibi and the French late modernists Roland Barthes and Georges Perec, whose neo-*japonisme* spans not only Japan, but also the Maghreb. I conclude by showing how *Peintre* reconfigures the problem of metaphorically deploying otherness to talk about oneself by modulating categories of domestic and foreign, familiar and exotic, ordinary and extraordinary, and everyday and evenemential.

After this chapter that presents the critical, historical, and conceptual framing of *Peintre d'éventail*, the next is dedicated to close readings of the text. It focuses on the relations between the landscape, fans, and gardens and their transformation by disaster in the novel, which in turn transforms the traditions that the novel engages. I then examine the writing of disaster through Maurice Blanchot and sociohistorical studies of disaster, which again link geographies across the Mediterranean with Japan. Connecting *Peintre*'s mode of writing disaster to Edouard Glissant's "pensée du tremblement" reveals an irreducible plurality within the cartographies of "East" and "West' or "Occident" and "Orient" that encode power relations into cultural and political

[209] Hubert Haddad, *Le Nouveau magasin d'écriture* (Paris: Zulma, 2006).

difference. The conclusion argues that *Peintre* offers Maghrebi literature a different way of looking at itself and conceiving the relation of its corpus to its territory, linking the a-centric, asymmetrical novelistic territory of *Peintre*'s narrative to its transformation of traditions of writing about other places.

Imaginary Territories, Territories of the Imaginary: *Conte Japonisant*, *Roman Maghrébin*

Although *Le Peintre d'éventail* and its companions have received little scholarly attention to date, readers have generally located these texts in the historical frame of writing about or influenced by Japan and *japoniste* aesthetics in modern French art and literature from the nineteenth century to the present, identifying *Peintre* as a "conte japonisant." Haddad, for his part, is more ambivalent about his relation to Japan and the French *japoniste* tradition. Rather than locate himself in this or that geopolitical region (i.e., Japan or the Maghreb, France or *francophonie*), he claims the imaginary as the writer's territory. Discussing *Peintre* in a 2013 interview, he declares that "le romancier a plus de chance de recréer un monde grâce au travail de l'imaginaire, à ses pouvoirs quasi hallucinatoires, que dans une relation clinique d'observateur [….] je suis toujours allé dans les lieux de mes romans après les avoir décrits, tant l'évocation onirique prime [….] Un romancier est un reporter de l'imaginaire toujours en retard d'un voyage."[210] Haddad suggests that what a novelist can offer through the work of the imaginary is an image of *a* world, not necessarily *the* world. This is the difference that posits between hallucinatory recreation through the imaginary and clinical representation through observation: the former works by exposing the artifice of fiction, whereas the latter seeks to conceal it. By

[210] Hubert Haddad and Ariane Singer, "Le Manuel du parfait jardin. Entretien avec Hubert Haddad," *Transfuge*, 2013, http://www.zulma.fr/livre-numerique-le-peintre-d-eventail-572046.html. Elsewhere, Haddad states that visiting Haiti after its 2010 earthquake played a role in the novel's genesis. Auguste Trapenard, "Orient," Interview, *Le Carnet d'or* (France Culture, March 9, 2013),

invoking his belated travels to places he has already written about, Haddad disclaims an exoticizing pseudo-realism, where the figure of the traveling writer serves to guarantee the authenticity of their depictions of fantastical places and incredible sites. Haddad explicitly associates this mode of writing with Pierre Loti's books about Japan.[211] It will continue in various strains of French modernist *japonisme* with writers like Paul Claudel and Roland Barthes. Haddad also takes his distance from another modernist project that Barthes and Georges Perec each derived from *japoniste* aesthetics, albeit to different ends: the notion that the only "real" novel is one that the writer has lived, whether by seeking out the exotic or carefully observing the familiar.

Nevertheless, the settings of Haddad's novels generally coincide with places readers and critics recognize as real, which enables them to insist on connecting his writing to particular places. *Peintre* was distributed with a red paper band on top of its abstract black-and-white cover, which was emblazoned with bold, white letters reading "Sublime Japon." Frédérique Roussel's review in *Libération* identified the novel as a "conte japonisant," noting that "Hubert Haddad n'est jamais allé au Japon, et cela n'a aucune importance. L'auteur protéiforme a du goût

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https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/le-carnet-dor/page-73-orient.

[211] Haddad invokes Pierre Loti and the *Contes de pluie et de lune* as avatars of a certain *japonisme* that he wished to avoid at all costs. Hubert Haddad and Marie-Christine Blais, "Le Jardin extraordinaire d'Hubert Haddad. Interview.," *La Presse*, March 23, 2013, http://www.lapresse.ca/arts/livres/entrevues/201303/22/01-4633889-le-jardin-extraordinaire-dhubert-haddad.php. Pierre Loti, the pen name of Louis Marie Julien Viaud, was a French naval officer well-known for his travel narratives and exotic novels. He was posted to Japan on several tours of duty, including a few years before the Russo-Japanese War when the shifting political currents that lead to the conflict were already in motion. He wrote three books about Japan: Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887); Pierre Loti, *Japoneries d'automne* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1889); Pierre Loti, *La Troisième jeunesse de Madame Prune* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1905). For more on the historical context of the composition and publication of these works, see Catherine Masumi Miskow, "A Critical Annotation of Pierre Loti's *La Troisième jeunesse de Madame Prune*" (PhD dissertation, University of California-Davis, 2011). *Contes* is, curiously enough, a work of Japanese literature. Ueda Akinari's *Ugetsu Monogatari* was published in 1776 and not translated to English or French until the twentieth century. It is perhaps its supernatural elements, a milieu of ghosts and spirits, that Haddad wishes to avoid. See Uedna Akinari, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, trans. Anthony H. Chambers (New York:

pour les contrées inconnues comme pour tous les genres littéraires, et préfère pétrir la pâte de l'imaginaire, dans un mode hallucinatoire."[212] Yet the proteiform rarely lingers as such in the public eye. By the time Zulma published Haddad's novel *Mā* in 2015, the publisher's website was calling it a "roman japonais," reprising Roussel's classification and updating it with a more definitively referential adjective. Whereas the description *japonisant* located Haddad in a European literary genre with its own conventional images of Japan, *japonais* conflates Haddad's novels with the quality of things Japanese, as in the Japanese people, language, culture, nation, and so on. The territory of the imaginary had condensed into something dryly real.

This tension between imaginary and real referents is also present in Haddad's own discourse. Although *Peintre* does not, on the face of it, immediately invite a reading as Maghrebi literature because of its generally-accepted *japoniste* affinities, Haddad himself insists on the specificity of his Tunisian Jewish origins as it relates to his writing. In particular, he has evoked a sense of contingency and impermanence permeating everyday life in the Jewish diaspora that he also sees in Japan:

> J'ai toujours été fasciné à distance par le Japon, par l'insensé raffinement d'une civilisation qui a fondé sa réalité sensible sur l'espèce de qui-vive de l'impermanence entre deux cyclones ravageurs et dans l'attente soutenue du prochain séisme, par ce mélange d'aménité et de violence contenue aussi, l'espèce de sacralisation de la mémoire dans un environnement sans consistance, sur un sol instable, toujours en péril de disparition (ce qui à mon sens, rapproche quelque peu l'âme nippone de celle des juifs de la diaspora lesquels ne pouvaient préserver que cette merveille fragile du temps dans un monde qui fomentait leur destruction).[213]

Thus, the ease with which critics and readers have seen *Peintre* or *Mā as* "contes japonisants" should not preclude their consideration as "romans maghrébins," even if though the relationship

Columbia University Press, 2007).

[212] Frédérique Roussel, "Plants de salut: le refuge végétal d'un Japonais blessé," *Libération*, January 23, 2013, http://next.liberation.fr/livres/2013/01/23/plants-de-salut_876191.

of Haddad's writing to the Maghreb and Maghrebi literature has never been fully fleshed out. It is either ignored, assumed, or left in suspension, acknowledged and disclaimed at once because of a general sense of association between author, text, and place that nevertheless lacks a specific, recognizable engagement. This is true even in the case of a novel like *Palestine*, which has received the most critical attention of Haddad's novels and hews closer to his Jewish identity in its story of an amnesiac Israeli soldier taken in by a Palestinian family. Despite Olivia Harrison's recent argument for the importance of Palestine to Maghrebi political and aesthetic imaginaries, she reads *Palestine* as more of a reportage that lacks the historical background necessary to participate in this transcolonial imaginary.[214] Similarly, others have understood Haddad's interest in the Israel-Palestine conflict as a function of his Arab or Arab-Jewish origins (although Haddad's family is partially Amazigh), overlooking the diasporic aspects of both the Maghreb and Judaism.[215]

Missing to this point in the reception of Haddad's writing is a consideration of how novels that do not explicitly engage with the Maghreb may still offer a serious engagement with its literary territorialization. The question must still be asked: what does it mean for a Maghrebi novel (even if ambiguously so) to displace itself beyond the Maghreb, without any explicit

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[213] Haddad and Singer, "Manuel du parfait jardin."
[214] Olivia C. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 9–10. Even though I disagree with her assessment of Haddad's *Palestine*, which she compares to Yasmina Khadra's *L'Attentat*, dismissing both as presentist, Harrison's effort to shift Maghrebi studies from a North-South axis that exclusively privileges the region's relationship with France to include an East-West axis remains important
[215] Such readings tend to impose an overly-broad understanding of "Arab" identity, which obscure the specificity of the Maghreb in this configuration. Rachel Nisselson, "Exposing the Artificiality of Borders in Haddad's *Palestine*: Remembering That Which Binds Us," *The French Review* 86, no. 5 (April 2013): 936; Marilyn Matar, "'A la croisée des chemins, il peut y avoir l'autre.' Lecture croisée de *Littoral* de Wajdi Mouawad, *Les versets du pardon* de Myriam Antaki, et *Palestine* de Hubert Haddad," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 17, no. 5 (2013): 513. Some critics have gone further and explicitly disclaimed the possibility of comparing the colonial Maghreb and occupied Palestine. Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller, "'Neither Victims nor Executioners' in Hubert Haddad's *Palestine*," *South Central*

attachment back to its imputed territory of origin? In other words, the very fact that *Peintre* or *Palestine* do not invoke a historical or political relation to the Maghreb is at least as intriguing as if they had. Haddad's gesture of affiliation between Japan and the Jewish diaspora based on contingency and vulnerability suggests the possibility of alternative relations that established interpretative frameworks, like modernist *japonisme* or postcolonial Maghrebi literature, may obscure. Indeed, such links have historical as well as a literary basis, dating back at least to Russian Jewish support for Japan in the Russo-Japanese War.[216] This perceived affinity between communities founded by the experience of and exposure to disaster also resonates with European modernism's fascination with the ephemeral and the fleeting in *japoniste* aesthetics, which comes to animate its investment in the everyday in general. Furthermore, it recalls how some politicians, writers, and religious reformers in the Ottoman Levant, Arabia, Egypt, and beyond, saw Japan as an alternative pole of affiliation and a different model of modernity than Western Europe. In so doing, Haddad's dual insistence on the territory of the imaginary and its possible real referents raises the issue of the metaphorical deployment of geographies of cultural difference, the same problem that faces European avant-garde *japonisme* and other interests (or disinterest) in Japan on the other shores of the Mediterranean. The question, in other words, is, does one only talk about Japan (or "Japan") in order to ultimately talk about oneself?

Review 32, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 87, note 9.

[216] On Russian Jews and the Russo-Japanese War, see Gutwein, "Realpolitik"; Shillony, "Jewish Response." Later, a number of Jewish refugees made their way to Japan during World War II, ostensibly on their way to Curaçao. A most curious case is that of Isaiah Ben-Dasan's *Nihonjin to Yadayajin* (The Japanese and the Jews, 1970), a book which won a literary prize in Japan for its evocation of a Jew born and raised in Japan who spent WWII in the United States, fought in for Israel in the 1948 war, before ultimately settling in Terre Haute, Indiana (of all places!). It turned out, however, that the book's author was actually one Yamamoto Shichichei, a publisher whose company printed works on Judaism and Jewish history and the book says more about Japan through the "mirror" of the other than it does about Judaism. On these events and other more speculative (indeed, tenuous) links, see Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1991).

The Other of the Other

We must analyze in what ways Japan is operating a kind of "other of the other" (to adapt a turn of phrase from Jacques Lacan via Christopher Bush) in respect to both France and the Maghreb in these texts. If *Peintre* is important precisely because it de-centers the colonial and postcolonial axis of France-Maghreb relations that so often exclusively defines Maghrebi literature, it is essential to attend closely to the way that these texts engage with Japan and, through it, the France-Maghreb relation, both in their historical contexts and as they work to transform those contexts. In particular, I will attempt to locate the way that these texts navigate the tension in how tropes of otherness oscillate in modernist discourse between phenomenological and existential theories of otherness and actually existing cultural difference in the world.

In *japonisme* and other Orientalizing discourses within European modernism, an imagined or constructed vision of everyday life elsewhere joins together the exotic and the ordinary, offering the possibility of restoring a sense of wonderment to the disenchanted modern West. Such discourses often interpellate actual material culture and make its traces circulate alongside the discursive formations of artistic practice, academic study, and commercial exchange. Thus, despite the importance of Edward Said's careful analytical distinction between the objects constituted by Western Orientalism and actual cultural artifacts and practices in his seminal analysis of *Orientalism*, ideas about others and others' objects often encounter one another in the world.[217] In such exchanges, material traces and the distant places and others they signify, Bush shows, are often cast as a kind of other of otherness, a material remainder of others' cultural practices that is sometimes made to signify alterity *per se*. In some

historiographies of O/otherness in Western thought, cultural and postcolonial studies reclaim this remainder in a dialectical turn against so-called modernist Theory, forcing Western philosophy to address its repression of difference, particularly in the form of race.[218] Bush points out, however, that modernist discourses frequently invoke cultural difference, rather than repressing it outright. Instead, they mobilize it to figure an "internal otherness." Constructs like "the Orient", he argues, were not necessarily taken as authentic cultural referents, but were self-consciously used as a way of looking at the (Western) world otherwise. Thus, when Oscar Wilde quips in an 1889 dialogue, "The Decay of Lying", that "the whole of Japan is pure invention", he is speaking of European artists' rather inventive enthusiasm for things they designated as "Japanese" without regard for their actual origin, not the nation of Japan itself.[219] In this reading, "Japan" and "Japanese" become linguistic shifters, such that "[t]he signifier 'Orient,' then, floated not only between Kyoto and the Maghreb, but as far West as Piccadilly." Consequently, the problem is not so much the mistaken assumption of authentic representation as it is that "awareness of this imaginary status seldom went beyond an aesthetics of estrangement that refused the reality of the places these *topoi* once named."[220] This issue was not unique to European engagements with Japan. As much can be said for the images of Japan that circulated in Ottoman, Arab, and other Islamicate territories contemporaneously to the European avant-garde's aesthetic. To proceed, then, I will provide a summary of these two historical threads and point to some of their entanglements.

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[217] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3–5.
[218] This is Rey Chow's contention in *Ethics after Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
[219] Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying: An Observation* (New York: Sunflower, 1902), 66. Cited in Christopher Bush, "The Other of the Other? Cultural Studies, Theory, and the Location of the Modernist Signifier," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42, no. 2 (2005): 165.
[220] Bush, 166–67.

Images of Japan

What does it mean to call *Le Peintre d'éventail* a "conte japonisant"? In this section, I present a brief history of images of Japan that emerged in the late nineteenth century, when a politically and economically ascendant Japan became not only a frequent object of discussion, but also a recurrent rhetorical topos, especially for those formulating projects of artistic or political modernization. For many Europeans, Japan offered an alternative aesthetic system that could modernize both art and everyday living. Outside Europe, Japan more often stood for an alternative model of political modernization to the global order of European empires. Common to most of these engagements with Japan is its transformation into a rhetorical trope that may evoke whatever image a writer wishes to depict of their political and aesthetic aspirations, or a linguistic shifter, saying "Japan" but always signifying something different depending on the context.

European Japonisme

The term "japonisme" was coined in 1872 by the French art critic Philippe Burty, although he and other writers were already discussing Japanese art in critical reviews in French periodicals several years prior.[221] Burty was also a regular correspondent with *The Academy*, a

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[221] Philippe Burty, "Japonisme," *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* 1, no. 4 (May 18, 1872): 25–26. Among the writers of these early reviews, Gabriel Weisberg cites Zacharie Astruc and Ernest Chesneau. See, respectively, Zacharie Astruc in *L'Etendard*, "L'Empire du Soleil Levant," February 27 and March 23, 1867, and "Le Japon chez nous," May 26, 1868; and Ernest Chesneau in *Le Constitutionnel*, "L'Art japonais," January 14, 1868, 1-2, "L'Art japonais (3e article)," February 11, 1868, 1, "L'Art japonais: conférence faite à l'Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie," February 23, 1869, and its continuation on February 24, 1869, 1. I have identified an additional Chesneau article to add to that list: "L'Art japonais (2e article)," *Le Constitutionnel*, January 21, 1868, 1-2. Weisberg also mentions that Burty published reviews of Japanese art throughout 1869 in *Le Rappel* (a newspaper founded by Victor Hugo's sons, which also serialized Hugo novels) Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Aspects of Japonism," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 62, no. 4 (April 1975): 130n4. Burty signed his name to a number of articles in that paper, of which I have identified two that address Japanese art specifically, in the context of the third exhibition at the Palais de l'Industrie organized by the Union centrale, where European ceramicists

London review of literature and the arts, through which the term spread to England.[222] As Gabriel Weisberg reports, *japonisme* first developed as painters, printmakers, and decorative designers produced works that directly borrowed or quoted Japanese models drawn primarily from woodblock prints, whose aesthetic were particularly decisive for nascent Impressionism, then later "assimilated Japanese concepts thoroughly" and "created Japonisme environments without recourse to direct quotation."[223] In my reading, the gap between direct and indirect quotation, or between a copy and a simulacrum, is the aporia that defines *japonisme*, as socially and historically rooted practice is transposed to a new context and ultimately translated into a free-floating signifier.

This fundamental disjunction goes back to the origins of *japoniste* discourse. The article where Burty coins the term *japonisme* is only incidentally a work of art criticism. First and foremost, it is a speculative imagination of the cultural meanings of death through a work of Japanese art. Such attempts at identifying and locating cultural difference in the world will be appropriated by European modernists (among many others), who draw on them to express their dissatisfaction with the art of the age. Burty hints at as much in his English-language articles in *The Academy*, where he instills *japonisme* with a powerful pathos: its influence, to which he attributes the use of "a lighter and more harmonious scale of colour" in the decorative arts,

> is a practical remedy against gloomy notions. The idea of evil was in the history of the first human families associated with that of darkness [….] For my part, I never would allow my little girls or their nurses to be dressed in black. They have learnt to eat out of common china plates having a simple and agreeable design on a white ground. One of them, whose intelligence was adorably simple, and whom I had the intolerable pain of losing, amused herself from the first dawn of consciousness by looking at those flowers,

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exhibited Japanese-influenced work: Burty, "Union centrale. La céramique," August 25, 1869, 3, and its continuation on September 5, 1869, 3; "Le Musée oriental à l'Union centrale," November 4, 1869, 2-3.

[222] Philippe Burty, "Japonism," *The Academy. A Weekly Review of Literature, Science, and Art.* 8, no. 170 (August 7, 1875): 150–51.

[223] Weisberg, "Japonism," 120, 126.

> those birds, those houses painted by a workman—a better artist than many Academicians—with as much pleasure as we look upon a painting by Eugène Delacroix or an etching by Charles Méryon.[224]

For Burty, *japonisme* must become a part of the repertory of modern living. Its natural themes, light colors, and workman-like qualities make it a tool for better living. As both functionally and aesthetically useful objects, they respond to modern life in a way that Salon painting has failed to do.

Burty intimated that these aesthetic outcomes of Japanese and, by extension, *japoniste* arts resulted from a particular Japanese mode of being in relation to the natural environment. He writes in 1869, “Il n'existe pas au monde de peuple plus amoureux de la vie, de la nature, du paysage que les Japonais”, contrasting their deep connection to “leur pays si accidenté” with European inability to penetrate Japanese territory. Japan’s “rugged” (*accidenté*) terrain may have helped restrain European penetration for a time, but it did not prevent a certain image of Japan from circulating well beyond the country’s shores. The adjective that Burty uses, *accidenté*, refers here literally to the hilly, uneven, and rough Japanese countryside, but it also can designate casualties and victims. This speaks simultaneously to the constant exposure of Japan’s residents to earthquakes, tsunamis, and other disasters, and to the violence of Western appropriation and (mis)representation.

Appropriation was, in fact, swift, if not at work from the outset. Not only did *japoniste* painters and decorators rapidly move from copying Japanese models to creating self-sufficient *japoniste* simulacra, but the definition of *japonisme* quickly came to mean the self-reflexive, creative refashioning of Japanese materials for a French modernist context.[225] Like the

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[224] Burty, “Japonism.”

[225] I reprise, with a degree of liberty, Jan Hokenson’s argument. She contends that the French tradition of

woodblock print had done for French Impressionism, the haiku was emblematic of this appropriation in literature. When the *Nouvelle Revue Française* declared 1920 to be "l'année du haï-kaï" (using the word for haiku that was prevalent in French in the early twentieth century, one of three names for the form Japanese, *hokku* being the third), it did so fifteen years after Paul-Louis Couchoud, André Faure, and Albert Poncin launched the "mouvement haï-kaï" with their anonymous 1905 publication of French haiku, *Au Fil de l'eau*.[226] This movement reached a broader audience with Julien Vocance's "Cent visions de guerre", written on the war front in 1915 and published in 1916.[227] French haiku was, like so many other modernist genres, definitively transformed by the experiences of the Great War, which certainly played a formative role in rendering haiku "French" in its own right. As such, haiku acquired avant-garde associations with Cubism and Surrealism, art movements equally inflected by the experience of the war, serving to "reinvigorate" French poetry, rather than representing the original character of the Japanese tradition.[228]

Paul Claudel's *Cent phrases pour éventails* would, in some critics' estimations, do just

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japonisme was first and foremost about France and "in no way scholarly nor even particularly informed about France." Writers, she argues, "cared little, if at all, for learning about Japan". Instead, Artists and writers alike are motivated by new perspectives and forms that may transform and renew French arts. In this, *japonisme* is not really the same thing as Orientalism. The two may share in fundamentally misapprehending their ostensible objects, but *japonisme* is ultimately invested only its own simulacra, not a real Japan that it claims to represent. In this, Hokenson distinguishes *japonistes* from *japonisants*, where the latter only collect and study Japanese arts. Haddad might, in this sense, be more a *japonisant*, in the mode of Max Jacobs who "sometimes wrote as a japonisant, creating stories in Japanese settings and referring to haiku-like poems", than a *japoniste*. However, I am disregarding this distinction because it is not clear that it obtains in Haddad's case, since his writings do not fit neatly into either camp. While I am attempting to identify the specific character of Haddad's engagement with Japan, I am doing so in relation to the Maghreb, rather than just French *japoniste* and *japonisant* traditions. Jan Walsh Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2004), 19-21, 22-26, 29.

[226] Paul-Louis Couchoud, André Faure, and Albert Poncin, *Au Fil de l'eau* (Paris, 1905).

[227] Julien Vocance, "Cent visions de guerre," *La Grande Revue*, May 1, 1916, 424–35.

[228] Hokenson, *East-West Aesthetics*, 259-260, 264.

that.[229] Completed at the end of Claudel's term as French ambassador to Japan, *Cent phrases* creates a self-styled daring hybrid form that joins together three- and four-line French free verse poems, evocative of haiku aesthetics if not strictly adhering to Japanese haiku's formal properties, with Japanese kanji to form a sequence of "phrases." Special, limited-run editions were handwritten by Claudel and a Japanese artisan onto three sets of gouache paper that unfolded from right to left, contained in a grey ceramic box. This complex, ornate visual presentation underscores *Cent phrase*'s adaptation of haiku's 5-7-5 syllabic sequence and its *kireji*, or syntactic cutting-word, to a spatial disposition of word (and ideogram) on the page inspired by Mallarmé. In the fan to which these poems were ostensibly destined, Claudel sought a material support for the metaphysical, which he saw in the resemblance of breath and wind that the fan evoked. It would be as though anyone who waved a fan bearing his poetry gave it a voice on the current of air generated.

The gesture of the waving hand inscribes *japonisme* in a mode of circulation that infuses aesthetic practices of real or fictitious Japanese inspiration with the topoi of Western metaphysics. In Claudel's case, both his poetry and his staunch Catholicism find new ways to renew themselves during his lengthy diplomatic service in China and Japan. On other Mediterranean shores, other eyes also turned to Japan for alternatives to that all-consuming European model of modernity embodied by Claudel. From the Maghreb to Istanbul by way of Cairo, other images of Japan developed and circulated, often projecting a reinvigoration of political and social life in conflict with European imperial pursuits.

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[229] Paul Claudel, *Cent phrases pour éventails* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

Images of Japan in the Maghreb and Beyond

There was already an encounter by proximity between the Maghreb and Japan in Burty's writing on *japonisme*. In his reviews of the third exhibition held by the Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie at the Palais de l'Industrie, he discusses European ceramics that draw on a history of pottery spanning from Andalusia to Japan and China by way of Persia. At the upstairs level of this section of the exhibition, many displays of decorative and household pottery stand alongside recreations of lamps from Arab mosques, so well realized that with "[u]n peu moins de perfection dans le fini et cette indéfinissable patine que donne le temps et l'on pourrait presque s'y tromper."[230] The simulacrum again is the defining feature of this *japoniste* logic extended to a globe-girding Orient that spans from Spain to Japan. The use-value of these objects is unevenly distributed across their imaginary geography, however. *Japoniste* aesthetics, as Burty argues so passionately, serve an important purpose for modern living by making everyday objects lighter and more refined. In their case, the simulacrum is as good, if not better, than the "real thing." "Arab" objects, on the other hand, are valued as antiquities. The lamps reproductions lack the patina of age that would otherwise be their primary aesthetic quality. This valuation reiterates a temporal distinction between these two "Orients," one a trove of useful features for European modernity, the other a cobwebbed storehouse of antiquities. Thus, this two-floored exhibit of Orientalist ceramics presents the absurd geography of the imagined Orient, which comprises lands further west than France and stretches halfway around the world, together with an aesthetic hierarchy: the fashionable and modern *japoniste* works appear at ground level, where they may display their utility as tools of good living to all comers, while the musty, esoteric Arabesque lamps, with their obscure religious associations, are tucked away

upstairs, where only experts and connoisseurs will discover them.

It is precisely in this *japoniste* realm of decorative arts and often specifically in the halls of the Union centrale's exhibitions at the Palais de l'industrie that a French effort at recasting the artisanal industries of its North African colonial holdings as art begins. The interest in things *japoniste* or more broadly "Oriental" whetted dealers' and collectors' appetites for Maghrebi art objects. They were the connoisseurs who, figuratively speaking, climbed upstairs to find "Arab" ceramics and eventually reconfigured the popular aesthetic hierarchies that saw Middle Eastern and Maghrebi goods and aesthetics as of lesser quality than those coming from further east.[231] In the colonial context, this led to official exhibitions (some at the very same Palais de l'industrie) that valorized Maghrebi raw and finished goods for the role they could play in colonial economic circuits, given proper management by French imperial authorities. This ultimately led to the creation of official regulatory agencies to both sustain and exploit "native arts". Although economic gain may well have been the chief motivation, the project might not have been viable were it not for the enthusiastic reception accorded to Japanese and *japoniste* arts by metropolitan collectors and the public at large.[232] It is not without a certain irony, then, that by the 1930s the artisanal industries that France had cultivated as part of its imperial policy in Morocco and Tunisia had come under threat due in large part to Japanese "dumping" of silk and other fabrics

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[230] Burty, "Union centrale (suite)," 3.
[231] Rémi Labrusse, "Paris, capitale des arts de l'Islam? Quelques aperçus sur la formation des collections françaises d'art islamique au tournant du siècle," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1997, 276–82. Labrusse traces the development of private and public collections of Islamic art from the 1878 Exposition universelle through the first World War. It was primarily Chinese and Japanese works that garnered acclaim in 1878, but the next decades saw the first Exposition islamique at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1893. This was the initiative of a group of collectors and dealers who exerted a formative influence on the reception of Islamic arts in France at the turn of the century. Many of them associated with the Union centrale des arts décoratifs, the new name for the same Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie that had organized the 1869 exhibitions reviewed by Burty.
[232] James Mokhiber, "'Native Arts' and Empire: The 'Renovation' of Artisanal Production in French Colonial North Africa, 1900-1939" (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2001), 66-8, 82-3.

into the market.[233] This collision between market forces, bureaucratic specialization of Maghrebi artisanal production, and elite aesthetic idolization of Islamic arts illustrates a tension in modernity that Kojin Karatani traces back to Kant. If what defines art is the bracketing of non-aesthetic concerns, the fact that the production of Maghrebi handiwork as art occurs through its entry into the art market. The disinteredness required for aesthetic judgment depends on the capitalist interest in generating profit from the exchange of commodities.[234]

The fact that Japan exerted a substantial influence on the French colonial economy is indicative of the important global role it had come to play in the nineteenth century and demonstrates the need to examine this role at a scale not limited to Western European interests. From the late nineteenth century forward in the Ottoman Empire and beyond, economic, political, and aesthetic concerns alike also inflected the way that Japan became a signifier across the political spectrum for modernization without Europeanization, ensuring national survival for the twentieth century.[235] Everyone from Sultan Abdülhamid II, whose reign began in 1876 with a brief period of reformist constitutional rule that he quickly suspended and ended with his deposition in 1908, to the Young Turk revolutionaries who overthrew him, the Committee for Union and Progress regime that arose in their wake, and Arab nationalist dissidents in the provinces, all invoked images of Japan to support the paths they each believed the Ottoman

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[233] Mokhiber, 209, 255-6.

[234] Kojin Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism," trans. Sabu Kohso, *Boundary 2* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 148–50.

[235] For the Ottoman case, see Renée Worringer, *Ottomans Imagining Japan: East, Middle East, and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). For other cases not treated here, notably India and Iran, see Nile Green, "Anti-Colonial Japanophilia and the Constraints of an Islamic Japanology: Information and Affect in the Indian Encounter with Japan," *South Asian History and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2013): 291-313 and "Forgotten Futures: Indian Muslims in the Trans-Islamic Turn to Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 3 (August 2013): 611-3; Roxane Haag-Higuchi, "A Topos and Its Dissolution: Japan in Some 20th-Century Iranian Texts," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 1/2 (Winter-Spring 1996): 71–83; Adam K. Webb, "The Countermodern Moment: A World-Historical Perspective on the Thought of Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Iqbal, and Liang Shuming," *Journal of*

Empire should take toward modernity. As Renée Worringer puts it, "Japan functioned as a condensed trope upon which these different groups almost arbitrarily at times mapped any arrangement of meanings, associations, or identifications they believed were necessary to bring about 'progress' and 'civilization.'"[236] Under Abdülhamid II's rule, talking about Japan was a way to talk about the Ottoman Empire, even after the Sultan suspended the constitution in 1878 and increased press censorship, leading many journalists to relocate to British-occupied Egypt. Abdülhamid II, for his part, was intrigued by Japan's non-Western model of morality and modernity. Unsurprisingly, the figure of the Emperor held particular interest for him. By the same token, however, the Ottoman sovereign was troubled by the sudden abandonment of the shogunate Tokugawa past in favor what was, beneath the symbolic Emperor, a European-style parliamentary government.[237] The Sultan was also concerned, it seems, by the possibility that Japan would adopt Islam as its official religion to establish a second, more powerful caliphate further east, consolidating its ambitions in Asia.[238] Despite the pressure these official concerns placed on public discourse, Turkish and Arabic newspapers throughout the Empire broached virtually every aspect of Japan, at least as they saw it and insofar as the censors would allow, from the last decades of the nineteenth century on. It was in this climate, then, that the Young

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World History 19, no. 2 (June 2008): 189–212.

[236] Renée Worringer, "'Sick Man of Europe' or 'Japan of the Near East'?: Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 2 (May 2004): 210.

[237] Renée Worringer, "Japan's Progress Reified: Modernity and Arab Dissent in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Islamic Middle East and* Japan (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2007): 93-95.

[238] Worringer, "Constructing Ottoman Modernity," 212. The possibility of Japanese conversion to Islam apparently had widespread currency and was particularly popular notion among Islamic reformers and pan-Asianists. The Egyptian journalist Aḥmad al-Girgāwī authored a *Riḥla yābāniyya* that purported to recount his visit to Japan to attend a conference on world religions. At the end of the conference, the Emperor was supposed to pick a new religion for the country. Al-Girgāwī reports that the Emperor would have chosen Islam, but declines to convert only because it would cause great turmoil in his country. Thomas Eich, "Pan-Islam and 'Yellow Peril': Geo-Strategic Concepts in Salafī Writing Prior to World War I," in *The Islamic Middle East and Japan*, ed. Renée Worringer (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2007), 123–

Turk revolutionaries and the Committee for Union and Progress party in particular would liken themselves to Japan's Meiji reformers and style the Empire as the "Japan of the Near East", attempting to fashion it after their idea of that image.[239]

Elsewhere, on the fringes of the Empire and beyond, political projects of all sorts seized on Japan as a touchstone image. Among the most notable was the Egyptian nationalist Mustafa Kamil, for whom Japan had perfected the three pillars of the nation, *lugha* (language), *jins* (nationality), and *dīn* (religion), which remained weak in the Ottoman Empire because of the linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity it encompassed. Disappointed with France following the Anglo-French entente (in which France abandoned Egypt to the English in return for a free hand in Morocco), disgruntled with English rule in Egypt, and frustrated with ineffectual Ottoman politics (despite supporting the existence of the Empire as a bulwark defending Islamdom from Europe), Kamil looked eastward to Japan (or at least to an image of Japan communicated to him by the French journalist Juliette Adams and the writer Pierre Loti).[240] Kamil developed the discursive figure of the "Easterner" to represent the inhabitants of a vast territory from Morocco to Java. Over time, he came to believe that this community's guiding light was not to be found in Europe or Istanbul, but in Tokyo, the rising sun in the East. When he published *al-Mas'ala al-sharqiyya* (The Eastern Question) in the wake of the 1897 wars with Greece and Russia that were de facto defeats for the Ottoman Empire in terms of its control over Crete and Balkan territories, Kamil undertook to catalogue and denounce European designs against the Ottoman Empire, which he still saw as a bulwark against Western depredations. By 1904, however, Kamil's "Easterner" and its discursive horizon had journeyed further east with the publication of *al-*

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[239] Worringer, "Constructing Ottoman Modernity," 210–13.

Shams al-mushriqa (The Rising Sun). This book presented a Japan whose savvy and strategic modernization went hand-in-hand with the preservation of cultural tradition and was to be a model for Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and Muslims around the world.[241]

Kamil later fell out with his French contacts because of his support for Japan in its 1905 war against Russia, the latter being a French ally. Even though Japan was aligned with the British who were occupying Egypt, Kamil's mistrust of Russia had not waned since *al-Mas'ala al-sharqiyya*, where it figured as a prime antagonist. The war and Japan's eventual victory elicited even greater interest in Japan around the world. One of Kamil's erstwhile rivals, Rashid Rida, also argued that Muslims should wish for Japanese victory, since Russia was a threat to Muslim nations like the Ottoman Empire, Afghanistan, and Iran. That Asia's only constitutional government prevailed over Europe's only autocracy (not counting the Ottomans) seemed pertinent to many reformers around the world, amplifying efforts to instate constitutional rule already underway for decades from Istanbul to Iran.[242] Meanwhile, in a strange echo of Abdülhamid II's fears of a Japanese caliphate, Salafī reformers believed that Japan's modernization proved that it was ripe for mass conversion to Islam. Having attained a high level of political and social development, the Japanese could not but wish to abandon their belief in what was, according to Salafī hierarchies, a backward, heathen religion in favor of Islam, the most advanced level of religious development.[243] Some, like the Egyptian journalist Aḥmad al-

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[240] Michael Laffan, "Mustafa and the Mikado: A Francophile Egyptian's Turn to Meiji Japan," *Japanese Studies* 19, no. 3 (1999): 272–76.
[241] First published in 1898 and 1904, respectively, both of Mustafa Kamil's books have been collected in volumes one and two, respectively of Muṣṭafā Kamil, *al-Mu'allafāt al-kāmila li-Muṣṭafā Kāmil*, ed. 'Abd al-Rāziq 'Īsā and Abīr Ḥasan, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-'Arabī, 2001).
[242] Rina Bieganiec, "Distant Echoes: The Reflection of the War in the Middle East," in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05: Centennial Perspectives*, ed. Rotem Kowner, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental, 2007), 444-5, 450-1.
[243] Eich, "Pan-Islam and 'Yellow Peril,'" 127–28.

Girgāwī and the Tatar pan-Islamist Abdürreşid Ibrahim, saw the Japanese as already essential Muslim in character, wanting only for conversion in name.[244] Ibrahim spent a significant amount of time in Japan in the early 1900s and seems to have had a decisive influence on Japanese policy toward Islam.[245] Japanese pan-Asianists identified Islam as a Western religion, closely tied to European and Christian civilization (despite European Christian thought often taking Islam to be its antagonistic other), while also seeing Muslims as an intermediary between East and West, the latter in civilization and religion, the former in personality and affinity.[246] That Japan responded to such projections, particularly in the case of its engagement with Ottomans, Arabs, and other Muslims, exemplifies the sorts of interactions that contemporary transnational studies premised on a Western geography are prone to miss, precisely because it does not implicate boundaries of the "Western" world. Being attentive to such seemingly-marginal exchanges demonstrates that the cardinal divisions that so often serve as shorthand for global aesthetics and politics look very different at different times and places.

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[244] Eich, 128–29; Selçuk Esenbel, "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900-1945," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004): 1150–51.

[245] Esenbel, 1148–50. The Japanese reciprocated, in their own way, the Ottoman and especially pan-Islamist interest in Japan, developing a complex set of policy and institutional initiatives designed to increase Japanese influence among Asian Muslims. For an early diplomatic encounter between the Ottoman Empire and Japan, which ended somewhat tragically, see Michael Penn, "East Meets East: An Ottoman Mission in Meiji Japan," in *The Islamic Middle East and Japan*, ed. Renée Worringer (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2007), 33–62. In addition to the seminal study on Japan's use of Islam in Indonesia, Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958)., see also Cemil Aydin, "Beyond Eurocentrism? Japan's Islamic Studies during the Era of the Greater East Asia War (1937-1945)," in *The Islamic Middle East and Japan* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2007), 137–62; Selçuk Esenbel, "The Legacy of the War and the World of Islam in Japanese Pan-Asian Discourse: Wakabayashi Han's *Kaikyō Sekai to Nihon*," in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05*, ed. Rotem Kowner, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental, 2007), 263–80; Hans Martin Krämer, "Pan-Asianism's Religious Undercurrents: The Reception of Islam and Translation of the Qur'ān in Twentieth-Century Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 3 (August 2014): 619–40.

[246] See, on this point, Aydin, "Beyond Eurocentrism?," 148–52.

Haiku and the Aesthetics of the Ordinary in Haddad, Barthes, Perec, and Khatibi

Locating Haddad's works therefore requires an effort at triangulation: between the Maghreb, France, and Japan, and the imaginary geographies that connect them. To do so, I will move through the multiple frames at work in *Peintre* that contain its own story and the entangled traditions of imagining Japan that it takes up and refigures. I begin by analyzing the importance of haiku and its expression of the evenemential within everyday experience to framing *Peintre* through its companion poetry collection, *Les Haïkus du peintre d'éventail*, and Haddad's analysis of haiku in the *Nouveau magasin d'écriture*. Haddad is clearly aware of the literary *japoniste* tradition epitomized by haiku in France, since Couchoud and his friends' first foray into French haiku with the publication of *Au fil de l'eau* in 1905 still finds its place among the recommended readings in the *Nouveau magasin d'écriture*, alongside the acknowledged masters of haiku, Bashō, Yosa Buson, and others, as well as other classics of Japanese literature like Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of the Genji*[247] and Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*,[248] both of which are frequent references in *Peintre* and *Mā*. At the same time, *Peintre* and its companions also appear as part of a Maghrebi trajectory of haiku reimagined by Abdelkebir Khatibi through the *Alf layla wa layla*, the *Thousand and One Nights*.[249] I read the approach to haiku and the aesthetics of the ordinary in the metafictional frame formed by *Peintre*, *Haïkus*, and Haddad's other writings about Japan in relation to Khatibi and the late modernist neo-*japoniste* writing of Roland Barthes and Georges Perec. These writers share a conceptually and historically entangled territory between France, the Maghreb, and Japan. Whereas modernism domesticates features or

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[247] Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Dennis Washburn (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2015).
[248] Sei Shōnagon, *The Pillow Book*, trans. Ivan Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
[249] I will refer to the most recent French translation by Jamel Eddine Bencheikh and André Miquel, since the former's work, *Rose noire sans parfum*, is part of this study in Chapter 2. Jamel Eddine Bencheikh

traits from the latter into its own context, *Peintre* attempts to craft a domestic, “Japanese” novel: one that takes place entirely in Japan, within Japanese history, and without explicitly enacting or inviting a comparative reading with the West. Yet because its *domus*, its *demeure*, is out-of-place, or displaced, written as it is in France by the child of Jewish Maghrebi exiles whose own quotidian is unlike that of his novel, the line between domestic and foreign, familiar and strange, or even the everyday and the event, are constantly in question. Thus, this comparative reading enables an interrogation of the power relations at work in the metaphorical deployment of geographies of cultural difference between these two “Orients,” Japan and the Maghreb.

A Thousand and One Haiku

Haiku is the origin of the literary universe formed by *Peintre* and *Haïkus* (the collection of haiku published alongside it the novel), as well as Haddad’s other writings about Japan and his comments about the textual universe they comprise.[250] Not in one particular haiku, but in a sudden eruption of haiku writing one winter. Haddad describes feeling

> comme si j’étais habité, hanté plutôt. J’aurais pu continuer indéfiniment dans un coin de la côte normande où j’aime m’isoler, devant les sources d’un fleuve minuscule. Et puis je me suis dit que, forcément, ces haïkus n’étaient pas de moi, juif tunisien de l’exil, mais d’un personnage venu me hanter : c’est ainsi qu’est né le peintre d’éventail, que le roman a pris forme dans mon esprit presque instantanément.[251]

Haddad opposes here a banal scene of narration with an extreme situation that occasions it. He depicts himself the midst of his usual winter retreat in the highly specific and recognizable

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and André Miquel, eds., *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

[250] I include Haddad’s comments in interviews within this corpus because they contain elements of fiction or performance designed to align with the narrative aims of his texts. For example, his claim to have suddenly began writing haiku one winter before the publication of *Peintre* in 2013 (whether it is factual or not is immaterial) does not account for the inclusion of pages on haiku in the *Nouveau magasin d’écriture* in 2006, indicating a much longer reflection on, if not production of haiku. This is especially so regarding the use of haiku in writing workshops, as the *Nouveau magasin* also cites a 1998 publication of children’s writing from such workshops.

metropolitan geography of the Norman coast, complete with the picturesque image of a river flowing from its source. This comforting, contemplative scene is doubled by the extraordinary flow of text in haiku form, where Tunisian religious expatriation and Japanese poetic form meet unexpectedly to produce something instantaneous: the novel *Le Peintre d'éventail* and its accompanying book of haiku. Similarly, the novel's frame story describes Hi-han and Matabei drinking tea as the weather turns cold, promising snowfall, yet Matabei's imminent death looms over the scene, against the background of a landscape ravaged by earthquake and flood. Haddad identifies his action as a writer with the role that Hi-han inherits from Matabei, that of a *passeur* or transmitter of haiku created by someone else: "J'en ai écrit à la suite plus de 1000, pendant des mois, sans m'expliquer d'où cela venait. L'idée de les attribuer à un personnage de fiction s'est imposée alors: je n'étais que le passeur, le médium interpellé par Matabei et son vieux maître."[252] Like the stories contained within the *Thousand and One Nights*, the actual number of Haddad's haiku is less important than their unceasing, innumerable production and the character that they conjure up. So many haiku required a poet, and so Matabei emerges, comes along to play Shahrazad's role in *Haïkus*, as well as a transmitter, a position that Hi-Han fills in the novels' frame story.

The introduction to *Haïkus* parses out the relation of the ordinary and the evenemential, the banal scene of narration that is subject to an extreme situation, as the condition necessary to the creation of both the novel *Peintre* and the accompanying book of poems. Both originate in the "aventure dramatique de Matabei Reien (tout entière relatée dans un récit intitulé *Le Peintre d'éventail*)", which "fut celle d'un Japonais ordinaire confronté à des événements hors du

[251] Haddad and Singer, "Manuel du parfait jardin."
[252] Haddad and Blais, "Jardin extraordinaire."

commun" (*HP* 7). In this formulation, the drama of Matabei's story is the way that the *hors commun*, the unusual, bursts through the ostensible ordinariness of Matabei's life. Paradoxically, however, such extraordinary drama is precisely what the characters of *Peintre* have in common. Each of them has experienced a personal or historical tragedy that left them without friends, family, or other attachments. The only thing they all share is disaster. The drama, after all, is not the irruption of unusual events in their lives, but that it is precisely such catastrophic moments that sculpt each of their individual and collective trajectories, changing their lives in an instant. For this reason, whereas the novel's frame story turns on the 2011 earthquake, *Haïkus*'s introduction returns to Matabei's fatal car accident in 1995, claiming, "[i]l est probable que sans le battement d'aile du destin (en l'occurrence l'accident de voiture qui causa la mort d'une jeune passante à Kobe), il [Matabei] n'eût pas écrit ces *Chemins de rosée*" (*HP* 7). The production of the *Peintre* narrative and its generativity of other stories is founded on contingency. Its creation is the product of an accident rather than a deliberate intention. Yet this is, of course, an invented contingency, given as it is as a metafictional reflection on a set of fictional texts. As such, it echoes in the *Peintre* universe Haddad's own claim about inexplicably composing an endless string of haiku that demanded a character. Matabei's story, then, consigned to a novel structured as a haiku, is also the story of irruptive, destabilizing haiku writing, manifesting suddenly in western France as the seed of a Maghrebi novel about Japan.[253] It is a story about the contingent relations between writing and place.

Haddad presents his *Nouveau magasin* as both the repository of his twenty-five or more years leading writing workshops and as itself a sort of ongoing workshop in book form. Nearly a

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[253] Haddad claims that writing so many haikus had an influence "sur l'écriture du roman, qui en est tissé, et qui est lui-même, dans sa structure, comme un haïku." Haddad and Blais.

thousand pages (not to mention its 640 page sequel, the *Nouveau magasin d'écriture*),[254] the book has no discernable form, or rather, its form seems to be the *ad hoc* product of the practice of leading workshops for decades. In the preface, Haddad distinguishes the generally unconscious mechanisms of writing from the explicit, objectifying procedures of literary analysis. Yet the contrast here does not serve to forever separate writer and critic or establish a hierarchy between creation and analysis. Rather, it suggests the possibility that the writer might "revenir sur ses pas" and "descendre dans les limbes orphiques pour ramener au jour le beau spectre de 'l'inspiration'".[255] This mythological evocation of creation, descending into Hades with the musician Orpheus, is thoroughly modern: it is a myth without mythology, a myth precisely intended to demythologize the act of writing. Haddad will guide his readers to turn back toward the moment of creation, whereas Orpheus's turn toward Eurydice occasions their definitive separation, even as it brings art into the world. Haddad suggests the need for an Orphic turn that does not banish the source of inspiration to the subterranean depths, but makes possible an examination of the mechanics of creation that would otherwise be left in the dark. Whereas it is the tragedy of this turn that generates Orpheus's story, Haddad offers himself as a sure and practical guide who may illuminate the creative process without a need for tragedy.

The result is a *bricolage*, as Haddad himself infers, that is not without its own kind of magic. The book is divided into numerous subsections, some of which refer to genres, some to forms, some to themes, some to concepts, and so on. A glance across the table of contents evokes simultaneously a baroque eclecticism and an Encyclopedic totality-in-becoming, forming an inventory of possibilities of writing that perhaps most resembles the apartment building in

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[254] Haddad, *Le Nouveau magasin d'écriture* (Paris: Zulma, 2007).
[255] Haddad, *Nouveau magasin*, 19.

George Perec's *La Vie, mode d'emploi*, where the building's architecture gives form to the novel but does not determine the logic of the stories it contains.[256] Paging through sections of the *Nouveau magasin*, they are no less varied than their headings, comprising pages of essayistic writing here and there, interspersed with sketches, images, excerpts, epigraphs, tables, figures, and more. Above all else, the reader is invited to approach this assemblage as a writer. It "engage le lecteur à entrer dans la cervelle de l'écrivain",[257] not just telling the reader how writer's brains work, but helping the reader to think as a writer, moving toward the horizon of the possibility of writing. The book is therefore an open-ended tool for producing more and more writing, rather than a finished product; only with this supplement is the book truly complete, even as it becomes supplementary the works it may generate.

Of particular interest to us here is the section on haiku, which opens with a caution, ironizing that the haiku is a "[v]éritable ukase des ateliers d'écritures, tarte à la crème des *poètes dans la classe*" that risks regressing "au poétisme bêtifiant". The haiku's inevitable appearance in writing workshops is likened to an *ukase*, the edict decreed by an arbitrary power, without possibility of appeal. The irony here is not only the cliché use of haiku as a means of teaching poetry, based on its ostensible (but superficial) simplicity and the overconfidence that it invites from certain participants, but that French borrowed this word from Russian, where it named the czar's imperial decrees, and that haiku form spread throughout the Western world in the wake of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. To some extent, then, the dissemination of the haiku form (in its translation and consequent transformation) takes part in the restructuring of global geopolitics that defined the emergence of twentieth-century modernism. In this Russian

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[256] Georges Perec, *La Vie, mode d'emploi* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1978).
[257] Haddad, *Nouveau magasin*, 20.

loanword, the history of haiku's globalization remains a spectral presence in *Magasin*.

After this caution to the reader-writer about haiku, Haddad suggests what we may still learn from the haiku, beyond its clichés: it offers "une belle initiation à l'écoute croisée des mots et du silence" that opens up the interval "du non-sens" within language itself, the discovery of which "signe en retour l'evanesence de notre regard". If what the *Nouveau magasin* proposes is an Orphic turn back into darkness that illuminates rather than obscures forever the process of writing, then what the practice of writing haiku should reveal is the fleeting nature of every glance backward, that the gaze must always turn and re-turn again. The spatio-temporal interval of this turn reveals a void that is the proper subject of haiku: "l'illuminante résorption du vide en lui-même par cette opération désaliénée que le bouddhisme zen appelle *satori*." Despite this highly culturally-specific evocation of the turn in haiku through the Zen Buddhist concept of *satori*, which will become important for Barthes too, Haddad's *Magasin* also wants to shed the cultural baggage of the form to make more mobile, available to whosoever should desire to learn from it. Thus, it evokes poetry's autonomy to go beyond Japanese cultural specificity: "La poésie est censée contenir sa leçon. Et puis nous ne connaissons rien vraiment du Japon. Le haïku […] peut se fabriquer sans pinceaux ni kimono. Dépouillé de tout exotisme, quoique introduit par l'historique qui le vit naître et s'épanouir […] il devient pour nous un jeu d'écriture riche d'enseignements."[258] Poetry is supposed to speak for itself, Haddad contends, without the need for any contextualization, and certainly without the stereotypical accoutrements of kimonos and brushes. But these are the mere trappings of culture in a form, rather than the cultural shape of a form itself. What remains of that form once it comes to France? Haddad calls into question the nature of putative knowledge of Japan beyond the cliché. He seems to imply that non-Japanese

visions of "Japanese" history are just that, images and phantasms that say more about those who imagine them than their ostensible object.

What Haddad sees as essential to the haiku is not its form, but its way of opening a space of contemplation within language. Beyond the kimono and the paintbrush used both for writing and drawing (which, importantly, makes writing in characters a painted image as well as a text), he focuses on the figure of the void, in which discourse is suspended to enable the emergence of something "*impensée* (de l'être au non-être)", rendering the mind as "comme un éventail à peine agité entre le visage du vide et l'univers."[259] The fan, then, is not a mere accessory, but the proper space of the haiku, in its unmoving oscillation that is, Haddad implies, *satori*, or Zen enlightenment.

In *Magasin*, Haddad makes the haiku form and its cultural specificities circulate in and through translation. Using excerpts from Bashô, Buson, and other "maîtres", he juxtaposes haiku's historical and cultural specificity with the barest of European formal definitions that he brings into the *haiku d'atelier*. He takes Yves Bonnefoy's definition of a "monostique de trois mètres syllabiques tracé d'un seul mouvement par le pinceau" (a brush that Haddad has already set aside) and reduces it to Jean Paulhan's formula: a "poème sans explication". These definitions call back to the initial invocation of "non-sens", both of the void whose contemplation yields *satori* and as translated through the "unicité de l'humain".[260] The translated haiku standing alongside attempts at translating their essence suggest that the any unity of human existence must always pass through the work of translation, with nothing to guarantee the equivalency of one term with another. In one sense, then, everything can be translated to haiku

[258] Haddad, 133.
[259] Haddad, 135.

and every haiku can be translated into a non-haiku. Haddad translates sentences from Jules Rénard, lines of verse by Hugo, Rimbaud, Reverdy, Cendrars, and Eugène Guillevic, and whole paragraphs from Rousseau into haiku. This translatability also implies the possibility of its reversal, which Haddad illustrates by explicating haiku by Bashô and Issa, stripping them of their evocative, open-ended concision. On the other hand, the transformations that these translations effect demonstrate the irreducible difference that emerges across translation. Thus, even when exchange is possible, it is often based on inequality rather than equivalency. This eye for unequal terms of exchange are key element of the metafictional frame to *Peintre* formed by Haddad's other writings about Japan.

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How does Haddad's use of haiku and the aesthetics of the ordinary compare to other "neo-japoniste" writers who also engage with the Maghreb?[261] These late twentieth-century writers tend to eschew exoticizing views of the extraordinary characteristics of foreign lands in favor of an inventory of everyday life elsewhere in an effort to produce images of other cultures that allow for self-reflection without reifying stereotypes.[262] As in Haddad, haiku in these works goes hand in hand with an emphasis on the everyday and the banal. I expand this contemporary France-Japan axis to show how this effort in French modernism to weld ordinariness and

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[260] Haddad, 147.
[261] Chris Reyns-Chikuma coins this term to make a historical distinction between earlier *japoniste* styles and works from the later twentieth century. Of these, I focus on Roland Barthes and Georges Perec, but other names sometimes included under this heading are Michel Butor, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, and Jacques Roubaud. Chris Reyns-Chikuma, *Images du Japon en France et ailleurs: entre japonisme et multiculturalisme* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).
[262] Fabien Arribert-Narce, "Images du Japon dans la littérature française (1970-2015): un goût pour le

otherness through representations of everyday life abroad is entangled with the Maghreb. For this reason, I focus specifically on Roland Barthes and Georges Perec, who have both written explicitly (more so in Barthes's case) and implicitly (more so for Perec) about the Maghreb. In particular, I consider how Barthes's writing about haiku relates to his exchanges with Abdelkebir Khatibi and how the genesis of a modernist aesthetics of the ordinary in Perec occurs in a turn to Japan that paradoxically leaves Japan inaccessible. Following these different modernist treatments of the everyday and the evenemential will better situate the way that Haddad's novel reconfigures its relation to modernist and modernizing traditions of representing Japan by recalibrating the categories of familiar and strange, domestic and foreign, and quotidian and evenemential through haiku.

The "Reserve of Features"

Haiku, *satori*, and *bricolage* are key figures of thought for Roland Barthes, just as they are important to Haddad's analysis in the *Nouveau magasin*. Their status is quite different, however, as evidenced by Barthes's major work about Japan, *L'Empire des signes*. Although written after Barthes traveled to Japan three times between 1966 and 1968 at the invitation of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Institut franco-japonais, the book claims not to represent or analyze Japan, but rather to construct a system of traits or features under the name "Japan." Barthes conjures away any real or imagined opposition between Occident and Orient that might otherwise appear to be the subject of his book, declaring that "l'Orient m'est indifférent, il me fournit simplement une réserve de traits".[263] This "reserve of features" allows Barthes to imagine a symbolic system entirely different from his own. Japan circulates as "Japan" and its social

quotidien," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 21, no. 1 (2017): 114.

relations transform into sets of features to be rearranged to suit.

Haiku becomes one of the most important of those "features" to the development of Barthes's thinking about writing. In the four successive chapters on haiku in *Empire*, Barthes connects satori and haiku. He argues that haiku, "articulé sur une métaphysique sans sujet et sans Dieu, correspond au *Mu* bouddhiste, au *satori* Zen".[264] Entirely apart from a Western metaphysics that privileges depth and hermeneutics, the haiku is supposed suspend the action of language, and thus foreclose interpretation as such. It is impossible to ask what a haiku *means*; it is not symbolic or allegorical; its only possible commentary is tautology. At the same time, and by means of this same book (among others), the haiku travels beyond its original metaphysical and geographical context into a Western one, encountering the very Platonic and Christian metaphysics that Barthes disclaims. In this displacement, Barthes writes, the haiku "semble donner à l'Occident des droits que sa littérature lui refuse, et des commodités qu'elle lui marchande", which are precisely futility, brevity, and ordinariness.[265] Every contemporary, quotidian gesture that Barthes describes in the Japan of *Empire,* from a salesperson bowing to clients, a bicyclist carrying a tray of bowls, a pachinko player counting his money, to a dandy savoring his coffee in a street café: all of these "incidents" are "la matière même du haïku".[266] These are the qualities that attract Western artists to Japanese aesthetics (as they perceive them). The essence of haiku is not in its form, but the quality of the incident.

Empire thus suggests the possibility of a radical formal transposition of haiku that would translate its incidental effects into the aesthetic core of novelistic writing, or what Barthes calls the *romanesque*. Whereas Haddad's translations in the *Nouveau magasin* allowed for the

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[263] Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes* (Geneva: Editions d'art Albert Skira, 1970), 7.
[264] Barthes, 97.

translation of haiku across languages but maintained its link to poetic form, Barthes proposes both to move haiku across languages and forms, from Japanese poetry to the modern French novel. While Haddad's rewritings of haiku in prose and prose in haiku suggest that any text can potentially become a haiku, they also show that the exchanges between forms are not indifferent. Translating a haiku from one form to another may strip it of the inexplicable or incidental qualities that Haddad and Barthes prize in it. This ambivalence is evident in the incidental anecdotes that Barthes reports in *Empire*. On one hand, they take on forms more readily accessible to Western society in their displacement: rights, commodities, and, perhaps most of all, the right to participate in the exchange of commodities: completing a sale, delivering goods, accounting gains and losses, and so forth. On the other, something else remains in these "incidents," despite their transformation. What is familiar in such gestures (a commercial exchange, counting money, seeing and being seen in a cafe) also bears an unfamiliar excess (the bow, the game of pachinko and its clientele, the notion of a dandy in Japan). The exact nature of the "real stuff of haiku" that Barthes sees in these anecdotes becomes increasingly uncertain. Is it in the familiar, the strange, or the simultaneous experience of both? Whatever the case may be, can it be distinguished from the act of translation to which the haiku is subject as it becomes an incident?

This same question of recognition and estrangement arose in Barthes' exchanges with Abdelkebir Khatibi. In the short essay "Ce que je dois à Khatibi," Barthes writes that what he has learned from his Moroccan counterpart, with whom he shared a scholarly interest in semiotics. On the face of it, they study the same things: signs, traces, letters, marks. Behind that common

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[265] Barthes, 90.
[266] Barthes, 107.

interest, however, lays a difference that only becomes visible through a shift in perspective. Barthes attributes to Khatibi the revelation that his study of signs was not, in fact, universal, but localized to the referents of a particular territory and its people, namely, France.[267] Khatibi, invested himself in the study of signs in society, teaches Barthes "quelque chose de nouveau" because "il déplace ces formes, telles que je les vois, parce qu'il m'entraine loin de moi, dans son territoire à lui, et cependant comme au bout de moi-même".[268] As Khatibi shifts the vantage point, he reveals a great distance: they have gone from Barthes' territory to Khatibi's and are therefore no longer talking about the same things, despite the first impression. As Barthes puts it, he can never truly go to that territory with Khatibi. Instead, that journey outward becomes a voyage within to the deepest reaches of Barthes himself. To parse this simultaneous resemblance and difference between the two writers, Barthes introduces a third pole. Turning again to Japan, he introduces "l'Orient (Zen, Tao, Bouddhisme)" as examples of "l'Autre absolu." These examples, which seem to come out of nowhere in an essay focused on postcolonial academic and cultural exchanges between France the Maghreb, reprise the fundamental metaphysical difference between hermeneutics and haiku addressed in *Empire*. In this way, Barthes suggests that it is less useful to interpret this Other, mapping out and reciting a complete model of its absolute difference. To do so would maintain the boundaries between self and other, rather than creating an identity that is also a difference, as in the case of Barthes' relationship with Khatibi. The practice that Barthes develops in response is "inventer pour nous une langue 'hétérologique',

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[267] Perhaps this realization came about when Barthes proposed a collaborative project on the semiology of Moroccan clothing to Khatibi, which Khatibi recalls declining with regret because he was focused on completing *La Mémoire tatouée*. Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Le Scribe et son ombre* (Paris: Editions de la différence, 2008), 56.

[268] Roland Barthes, "Ce que je dois à Khatibi," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 3:1002. After appearing in *Pro-Culture*, this essay was republished as a postface to a new edition of Khatibi's novel *La Mémoire tatouée* (Paris: Les Lettres nouvelles, 1971).

un 'ramassis' de différences, dont le brassage ébranlera un peu la compacité terrible (parce qu'historiquement) très ancienne de *l'ego* occidental. C'est pourquoi nous essayons d'être des 'Mélangeurs', empruntant ici et là des bribes 'd'ailleurs' (un peu de Zen, un peu de Tao, etc.)"[269]. What Barthes owes to Khatibi, then, is the transformation of a "réserve d''exotisme'" into a "réserve de traits", fracturing the absolute Other into heterogeneous fragments for rethinking the Western self.[270]

The Maghreb, although present in this formulation, remains unthought. The essay implies that the difference between Barthes' France and Khatibi's Morocco is sociological and class-oriented, not on the order of the absolute difference between either of them and Japan. Morocco appears as a place where the kind of popular culture that no longer exists in France remains predominant. In other words, Morocco is the working class to France's bourgeoisie, an analogy that more or less accurately reflects that colonial and postcolonial economic order between the metropole and its former colonies in the Maghreb. At other times, however, Barthes rejoins the Maghreb to the vast, impossible geography of the Orient. Using that "un peu de Zen" from his reserve of Japanese features, haiku and *satori* allow Barthes to rethink not just the "Occidental *ego*", but first and foremost his own self. It was in Casablanca on April 15, 1978 that Barthes experienced what he called a "satori", that word borrowed from the Zen Buddhism he encountered in Japan for the event of awakening or enlightenment.[271] It beckoned him to a "new

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[269] {Barthes, "Ce que je dois," 1002-1003}

[270] The "reserve of exoticism" is embodied for Barthes by the Musée des traditions populaires, which preserves a so-called traditional popular French culture that no longer exists in reality. This reserve, however, also evokes the Moroccan or Japanese art objects exhibited in the Palais de l'industrie across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If they go from being exotic objects to features incorporated into French life, it is thanks to the work of dealers, collectors, artists, taste-makers, and more, who drive the circuits of commodity exchange.

[271] Roland Barthes, *La préparation au roman I et II: notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France, 1978-1979Pet 1979-1980*, ed. Nathalie Léger (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 32.

life" and the literary project that accompanied it, which he often spoke of as the "vita n(u)ova" in reference to Dante.[272] Perhaps it is precisely because Morocco no longer enchanted Barthes after he had worked there as it did when he came merely as a traveler that it can be the site of his awakening through the principles of Japan, a country that still fascinated him.[273] His *Incidents*, however, a set of impressionistic fragments that Barthes composed during his time traveling and teaching in Morocco in 1968-69 and was preparing for publication just before his death in 1980, attest to a long-term effort at thinking the Maghreb, or at least thinking the self through the Maghreb, for which the "réserve de traits" in *Empire des signes* was a key interlocutor.[274] When Abdelfattah Kilito remarks that *Incidents* may be read as a kind of haiku, he is following a path already marked out by Barthes himself.[275] Despite the belated publication of *Incidents*, the project was clearly of great interest to Barthes. In *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, it appears in a list of "Projets de livres" and described as "mini-textes, plis, haïkus, notations, jeux de sens, tout ce qui tombe, comme une feuille". The next page raises the question, "Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?", precisely the question that cannot be asked of haiku, according to *Empire*. There, Barthes suggests the possibility of a book "qui rapporterait mille 'incidents', en s'interdisant d'en jamais

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[272] For the evolutions of Barthes' use of "vita nova" (which ultimately leaves behind the Casablanca satori), see Jean-Pierre Martin, "Barthes et la 'Vita Nova,'" *Poétique* 156, no. 4 (2008): 495–508. It is interesting to note, too, that Philippe Sollers, who has suggested that Barthes could "se sentir proche d'un moine zen", entitled his own autobiography *Un Vrai roman: mémoires*. See Philippe Sollers, "'Sa voix me manque'. Entretien avec Philippe Sollers," in *Roland Barthes*, ed. Bernard Comment (Paris: Magazine littéraire, 2013), 156–57; Philippe Sollers, *Un Vrai roman: mémoires* (Paris: Plon, 2007).
[273] Barthes describes how the encounter with Moroccan bureaucracy transformed his experience of the country from "Fête" to "Devoir" (it is perhaps not coincidental that it is precisely the experience of officialdom that renders the foreign all too familiar to the Frenchman). Roland Barthes, "On échoue toujours à parler de ce qu'on aime," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 3: 1215-1216.
[274] Roland Barthes, *Incidents*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
[275] Kilito, "Je parle," 89.

tirer une ligne de sens; ce serait très exactement un livre de *haïkus*."[276] Because haiku is meant to arrest language and suspend the possibility of interpretation in *Empire*, where "Japan" is therefore not Japan, "Morocco" in *Incidents* is not Morocco, but a stage for a literary experiment with the *romanesque*, with the transformation of the haiku effect into novelistic form. These fragments could have been novels, but by maintaining them in their fractured state, Barthes attempts to foreclose the generation of a message through the novel's trappings of story, character, plot, and so on. The *romanesque* itself would therefore be, "in essence, fragmentary."[277]

The haiku, as a form of fragment, mediates both Barthes's imagination of what a "real book" would be (one that realizes the *romanesque*) and the revelation (or *satori*) of a "real life." These twin desires, "écrire le vrai livre" and "vivre la vraie vie," connect the brief scenes of a novel-to-come in *Incidents* and the project of the *vita nova* that Barthes awoke that April day in Casablanca. Morocco, in its simultaneous resemblance and difference to France, provides the grounds for Barthes to discover his particular modernist dream of a "real book" and a "real life" through the absolute difference of the Orient, borrowed in the form of "a bit of Japan." If Barthes's encounters with Japanese forms of haiku and bunraku theater enable him to work with fragments and with the body, respectively, it is their displacement to the Maghreb that reignites

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[276] Roland Barthes, "Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 3:209-210. Barthes' literary executor, François Wahl, who edited the posthumous publication of *Incidents*, also cites these in his introduction, albeit without emphasizing the central role of haiku.

[277] François Wahl, "Publisher's Note to the French Edition," in *Incidents*, by Roland Barthes, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (London: Seagull Books, 2010), viii. I will note as a caution Pierre Saint-Amand's argument that readers must not be taken in by Wahl's assertion that *Incidents* is fundamentally a literary game, which serves only to "obliterate its eroticism" and reduce it to "a mere experience of writing". Pierre Saint-Amand, "The Secretive Body: Roland Barthes's Gay Erotics," trans. Charles A. Porter and Noah Guynn, *Yale French Studies* 90 (1996): 154-155.

an autobiographical desire and allows him to write "je" in his "vita nova.[278]" The "new life," paradoxically, already has a model in the old. As Kilito notes, Barthes reserves the qualifier "vrai" for works like for Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, "le vrai livre" that Barthes opens at night once he has completed the drudgery of examining the latest publications from a major French publishing house.[279] Barthes's heterogeneous language of fragments borrowed from Japan and recomposed in the Maghreb turns outward in order to return inward to the tradition of French literature. Chateaubriand, another writer noted for his use of "exotic" materials, is therefore a fitting exemplar of the tradition from which Barthes is estranged and to which he attempts to return through the metaphoric use of actual cultural difference in the world. Thus, the "vrai roman" that Barthes desired to write for his "vraie vie", his "Vita Nuova", was perhaps first and foremost a "vrai haïku", the culmination of haiku's transformation into a modernist form *par excellence*. Nevertheless, the vision of "Barthes romancier après le Barthes critique" through a "total" novel in the style of Proust no longer seemed possible in the late twentieth century.[280] The effervescence of the Casablanca *satori* faded and was quickly forgotten with Barthes's sudden death.

The Modernist Ordinary

In Barthes' project, the Maghreb oscillates between a (post)colonial geography that aligns it with France (albeit across an inevitable sociological divide) in opposition to Japan, and a

[278] Yoshiko Ishikawa discerns the importance of these Japanese forms to Barthes's writing, but does not note the crucial role that Morocco plays. Yoshiko Ishikawa, "La Passion du Japon," in *Roland Barthes*, ed. Bernard Comment (Paris: Magazine littéraire, 2013), 132–34.
[279] Roland Barthes, "Soirées de Paris," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 3: 1275. "Soirées" was first published in the same posthumous volume as "Incidents."
[280] Antoine Compagnon, *Les Antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 406–7. See also Jean-Pierre Martin's stronger contention that this project is an impossibility in itself, rather than because of the gradual cultural marginalization of literature. Martin, "Barthes et la 'Vita

modernist geography where the haiku proves capable of speaking to the whole of the Orient, in a certain sense, from Morocco to Japan and back again, just as the ceramics exhibition of the Union centrale comprised the vast, impossible geography of Orientalism in the space of the Palais de l'Industrie. In both of these cartographies, the Maghreb becomes available as part of the "reserve of features" that makes possible a journey within the self that passes through a piece of ("un peu de") an other. The transformation of the "reserve of exoticism" into a "reserve of features" takes place through the modulation of the foreign and the domestic, or what Georges Perec calls the exotic and the endotic. Perec's *japoniste*-influenced modernism takes up the incidental core of the haiku and condenses it to the category of the quotidian, extracting these notions of the everyday and the ordinary while doing away with the "reserve" entirely. The Maghreb and Japan disappear almost entirely from his geography, but traces of their influence may still be found.

Barthes' conflation of haiku and *romanesque* into the incident is, in a sense, the ideal vehicle for Perec's principle directive, which is to focus on the ordinary. Specifically, Perec develops concepts of the "infra-ordinaire" and the "endotique" (as opposed to "extraordinaire" and "exotique") in the essay "Approches de quoi?", republished in a collection bearing the title *L'infra-ordinaire*.[281] Like Haddad, Perec was influenced by the eleventh century classics of Japanese literature, Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* and Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*, which give detailed and formally-innovative accounts of the everyday life of the imperial court. Perec most notably borrowed Shōnagon's use of lists and tables.[282] Perec's *infra-ordinaire* explicitly

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Nova,'" 501.

[281] Georges Perec, "Approches de quoi?," in *L'infra-ordinaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 9–13. Jacques Roubaud, one of the so-called "neo-japoniste" writers, also borrows the term for the title of a poetry collection. See Jacques Roubaud, *Tokyo infra-ordinaire* (Paris: Inventaire-Invention, 2005).

[282] Arribert-Narce, "Images," 111.

claims the ordinary as literature's domain. Working against the monumentalization of the event, the spectacular, the extraordinary in the form of news media coverage — "cinq colonnes à la une, grosses manchettes [….] Il faut qu'il y ait derrière l'événement un scandale, une fissure, un danger, comme si la vie ne devait se révéler qu'à travers le spectaculaire"[283] — Perec sees the real scandal as everything outside the event. It is not in the disaster or the strike that will be featured in the newspaper, but in the daily experiences of struggle and misery. The conditions that make scandal, disaster, and danger possible are already present in the course of everyday life and thus require analysis in their latent, rather than explosive, state. This is not only a militant sociopolitical stance, however. It is also an aesthetic one, which calls for a new aesthetic practice. Perec operates an inversion of media and literary aesthetics, a chiasmus that switches the places of the extra- and infra-ordinary. In truth, it is precisely the spectacular that is boring and the quotidian compelling: "Les journaux parlent de tout, sauf du journalier. Les journaux m'ennuient, ils ne m'apprennent rien; ce qu'ils racontent ne me concerne pas, ne m'interroge pas et ne répond pas davantage aux questions que je pose ou que je voudrais poser."[284] The daily paper fails to speak to daily existence. Its problem is not that it fails to communicate the import of its stories, but that its stories are not responsive the lives of its readers.

The reason that Perec provides for our inattention to the everyday and the everyday's failure to hold our attention is surprising. He suggests that it is the absence of wonder that renders the everyday unremarkable, but his example of a lost sense of wonder turns back to the evenemential: he calls for writing "Retrouver quelque chose de l'étonnement que pouvaient éprouver Jules Verne ou ses lecteurs en face d'un appareil capable de reproduire et de transporter

[283] Perec, "Approches," 9.
[284] Perec, 10.

les sons. Car il a existé, cet étonnement, et des milliers d'autres, et ce sont eux qui nous ont modelés."[285] In this formulation, what makes the ordinary fundamentally engaging is that it was originally spectacular and evenemential. The first reproduction of sound was singular, new, and innovative (even as it itself both revealed the nature of and undermined singularity in its reproductive function). Only when it ceases to be extraordinary does it become quotidian, and only can its power as quotidian be recovered by reactivating its extraordinary capacities.

Literature's task is to weld together the ordinary and the evenemential by restoring a sense of wonder at quotidian experience. To do so, Perec calls for a new anthropology that takes as its object the endotic instead of the exotic. Rather than turn outward toward the other, it should look inward, making possible an interrogation of the habitual beyond our habituation to it. If the old anthropology was premised on the study of other cultures, the new one will focus on the relative categories of self and other. The prefixes en- and ex- that differentiate these objects are shifters, referring to an inside and outside defined only by the perspective of the speaker. This means that Murasaki Shikibu's and Sei Shōnagon's exemplary endotic inquiries into the eleventh century Japanese remain another exotic element that Perec must weld to the endotic. Thus, when the "exotic" (in the strict sense of exterior, coming from the outside) is used to articulate a concept of the endotic, actual difference is transmuted into the abstract category of difference, both within the self and between the self and its others. Perec's neo-*japoniste* modernism is defined by this ambiguous attempt to join together the everyday and the event, which tends to turn difference back onto the self.

This would leave Japan or the Maghreb basically inaccessible to a writer following Perec's endotic directive. And yet, Perec's work bears the traces of how such ostensibly exotic

[285] Perec, 12.

locales have indelibly shaped a modern metropolitan quotidian that seeks to relegate colonialism to the dustbin of history.[286] His 1967 short novel *Les Choses: une histoire des années soixante* places the accoutrements of modern living center stage, following the young couple Jérôme and Sylvie who are unable to buy into the lifestyle portrayed in magazines and advertisements. *Les Choses* subtly exposes the imbrication of African art objects in modern fashions and the haunting presence of decolonization in everyday living. Phantasmal echoes of the Algerian War surround Jérôme and Sylvie in a language that is also characterizes "primitive art" exhibition catalogues of the time.[287]

Algeria also frames the 1972 lipogramatic novella *Les Revenentes* (which uses only the vowel "e" that Perec avoided in *La Disparition*).[288] Although the main plot is about a jewel heist during an ecclesiastical orgy in Exeter, a brief account of anticolonial rebellion in Algeria gives the back story of Thérèse Merelbeke, one of the would-be thieves. Both in this episode and the novella as a whole, Perec's text borrows Algerian Arabic words like "bézef" (really, a lot) and "djebel" (mountain) to maintain its compositional constraint.[289] These borrowings, alongside others from English, are embedded in an increasingly-distorted French. The putatively formal exercise of the lipogram leads to a destabilization of national languages.[290] Born in Tlemcen to a

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[286] Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 9.

[287] Perec describes an "irruption du martyre dans leur vie quotidienne" that "donnait aux jours, aux événements, aux pensées, une colorations particulières. Des images de sang, d'explosion, de violence, de terreur les accompagnaient en tout temps." Georges Perec, *Les Choses: une histoire des années soixante*, in *Romans et récits* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2002), 92. Daniel J. Sherman shows how essays on "primitive art" displaced this omnipresent sense of imminent and immanent violence onto objects, whose "an obscure and presumably invincible power" masks the colonial and decolonial history embodied in their collection and exhibition Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire 1945-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 103.

[288] See *Les Revenentes* and *La Disparition* in *Romans et récits* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2002), 563-639 and 305-562.

[289] Perec, *Revenentes*, 574, 579.

[290] For Emily Apter, this codes resentments in the political unconscious, but remains itself politically

sergeant in the French army, Thérèse is kidnapped by a rebel leader named Ben Berek. When her father arrives to free her, he finds that she has fallen in love with her erstwhile captor and wishes to negotiate a truce, sealed by her marriage. The French general who wishes to destabilize this truce realizes he can turn the Berbers against Ben Berek through Thérèse. He sends her clothing from Hermès and implicates her in dealings with European corporations seeking oil in Algeria, implying that Ben Berek is spending the rebellion's finances on European luxury goods, angling for his own profit. This cleverly mirrors the logic of post-war modernization in France, which borrowed directly from colonial tactics by targeting women as the *doyennes* of everyday life. From the staging of all the accessories of modern life in *Les Choses* to their weaponization in *Revenentes*, Perec works backward from a history of the sixties in France to its "monstrous, distorted double" in decolonizing Algeria.[291] This complicates Barthes's notion of borrowing from a "reserve of features," useful precisely because of their difference. These traces suggest that they are not always so completely foreign as they may seem. It is precisely this porosity of exotic and endotic that *Peintre* will undertake to modulate from a perspective other than those imagined by Barthes or Perec.

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With his interest in haiku and the modulations of the everyday and the event, Haddad is plainly working in the wake of Barthes and Perec. His works do not simply reprise their

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ambiguous. The use of such borrowings to meet a formal constraint strikes me as requiring precisely a conscious effort that cannot but reveal the concomitant politics of decolonization and modernization in language itself. Emily S. Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Translation/Transnation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 122–25.

[291] Ross, *Fast Cars*, 77-78, 108.

approaches, however. By examining the *japoniste* genealogy that passes through Barthes and Perec in terms of its entangled engagements with Japan and the Maghreb, rather than seeing the two as unrelated, we can see *Peintre* transforming the literary economy of these axes into an a-centric, asymmetric territory where writing about Japan or the Maghreb does not always turn back to France. With Abdelkebir Khatibi, we can add a third interlocutor to the mix to illuminate *Peintre*'s intervention into these unequal exchanges of images. Haddad's and Khatibi's writing about Japan displaces both the (post)colonial axis of France-Maghreb relations that tends to overdetermine Maghrebi literature and the *japoniste* axis of European modernism that tends to overlook the other geographies of difference it interacts with. This allows us to investigate how *Peintre* transforms the traditions it takes up what these transformations mean for the territory of Maghrebi literature. To reprise Christopher Bush's argument that I invoked to frame my brief history of images of Japan, if the concepts of otherness developed in western theory and cultural studies are not so much part of a dialectical history or a return of the repressed, but rather neighbors by circumstance in modernism's deployment of cultural otherness as a floating signifier for internal estrangement, where does a postmodern, postcolonial text like *Peintre* intervene in this geography of otherness?

Thus, in contrast to Perec's endotic anthropology, the specific modality of *Peintre*'s engagement with Japan has more to do with what Khatibi calls "l'exote", one who "change son point de vue d'observation, sans croire devenir soi-même [un autre]".[292] *Peintre* attempts something impossible in Barthes' and Perec's frameworks: to immerse itself in what is endotic to the other, while also not turning that perspective back on to what is endotic to the self — and that without the supports of biography or ethnography, the seal of the writer's having been to the

place in question. Haddad's calibration of haiku, the ordinary, and the extreme also follows from Khatibi's examination of narration between the *Thousand and One Nights* and Japan in a series of essays each identified as the "Mille et troisième" and "Mille et quatrième" nights, published under the title *Ombres japonaises*.[293] Read in sequence, these essays connect the gendered violence that undergirds and impels narration in the *Nights* with the desire to write about other peoples and places in the guise of Japan.

This violence is embedded in the narrative principle of the Nights, which may be summed up as "Raconte une belle histoire ou je te tue", as Khatibi suggests in his own version of the one thousand and third night.[294] Shahrazad, the new wife of a king who believes all women to be unfaithful and thus has his brides executed the day after he marries them, tells the king stories that are always left unfinished at dawn, forcing him to let her live another day in order to learn the conclusion of each tale. The banal, almost abstract scene of narration in the *Nights*, which spends no time describing the bedroom where Shahrazad distracts her husband the king from his murderous desires with fantastical stories while the threat of execution hangs over every word she utters, is the foil to extraordinary images of Japan.[295] That the *Nights* became extremely popular in Europe, fueling a vast, Orientalist imaginary from Antoine Galland's initial eighteenth-century French translation to the present makes them a fitting interlocutor for the text that occupies Khatibi's one thousand and fourth night, the Japanese novelist Junichiro Tanizaki's

[292] Khatibi, *Scribe*, 42.
[293] Khatibi, *Ombres japonaises*.
[294] Khatibi, 11.
[295] In this reading, I follow an interpretation of Boubacar Boris Diop's *Le cavalier et son ombre* proposed by Nasrin Qader. In this novel, which also echoes the *Nights* in its engagement with storytelling, narrators and narrative spaces are doubled, creating a back and forth between ordinary and extraordinary spaces. Qader likens this to the "*Thousand and One Nights*, where a threshold is often crossed between 'ordinary' life and 'extraordinary' events where other laws of interaction and other relations of power and language are proposed." Nasrin Qader, *Narratives of Catastrophe: Boris Diop, Ben Jelloun, Khatibi* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 100.

essay on Japanese aesthetics and their encounter with the West. Published in 1933 and only translated to French in 1977, Khatibi reads this essay originally written for a Japanese audience in its belated circulation as another image of Japan abroad. As a parallel to the narration and reception of the *Nights*, this underscores the power relations that run through these exchanges of cultural difference.

In the rest of the chapter, as well as in the next, I will analyze *Peintre*'s cartography of self and other, domestic and foreign, and ordinary and evenemential. Its tracing and retracing of boundaries shows that to before even beginning to think the different approaches to O/others and O/otherness, whether in theory and cultural studies or in modernist *japonisme* and Maghrebi literature, borders must be drawn *a priori*. A territory has already been formed and with it the distinctions between self and other, inclusion and exclusion, belonging and unbelonging. Thus, as *Peintre* crafts a "domestic" and "Japanese" environment, it also reckons with the creation of these boundaries between inside and outside.

Conclusion: Orphan Knowledge

Qu'entend-on par 'orphelin'?
Toute hiérarchie suppose
Un père une mère et un tiers
Toute politique
Un maître un esclave et un tiers
Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Lutteur de classe à la manière taoïste*[296]

Moving between the historical, conceptual, critical, and metafictional frames to *Le Peintre d'éventail*, we arrive now at the novel's own frame story. There, the imminent death of

[296] Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Le Lutteur de classe à la manière taoïste* (Paris: Sindbad, 1976), 13.

the protagonist, the fan painter and master gardener Matabei Reien, poses the question of inheritance for a single, solitary man with no living family. This impels the legation of his life's work to his former student, Xu Hi-han, who has become an art historian. By thematizing transmission in the moment of narration occasioned by death, the frame story stages the relation of the text as a whole to the literary, philosophical, and geopolitical genealogies that might situate it variously as Maghrebi, francophone, postcolonial, *japoniste*, and so on. In turn, this sets up a fictional world where the nation-state boundaries that define political belonging are ruptured by the vagaries of history, interrupting the pseudo-biological relation between art, person, and nation.

Peintre's frame story creates an important dynamic in the novel's narrative. Arriving at its end, the story returns to its beginning. This turn back, however, is also a turn away. In the first version, Hi-han introduces Matabei's story, "la vraie histoire" (*PE* 19) by reflecting on Matabei's preference for painting the nearby, but lesser-known Mount Jimura over the celebrated Mount Fuji. The dormant Jimura has "aucune fumée d'immortalité", which Hi-han finds fitting: "c'est moi […] qui lui ai donné son nom pour l'au-delà, lequel demeurera caché à jamais des flâneurs de ce monde. Nous continuerons d'appeler Matabei, Matabei Reien, par ce bruit de bouche à la faveur du bruit léger du vent" (*PE* 18). At first glance, Hi-han implies that Matabei achieved such an artistic refinement that most will pass his work by unaware, even though his legacy will endure. Yet he is saying something more by comparing the smoke over Fuji to its absence over Jimura and the sound of the voice articulating Matabei's name to the sound of the wind. Paradoxically, something remains forever hidden in the name whose artistic legacy Hi-han's art historical work guarantees. In contrast to the articulations of the voice, which come to name an oeuvre and its study, the wind, like the absence of smoke over Jimura, is the proper signifier for

something hidden where there is nothing to see or for an absence where nothing is missing. Thanks to Hi-han's efforts, more remains of Matabei's memory in his paintings and the recording of his final account of his life than of most people, but what really remains is something "[m]oins que son poids de cendre après la crémation" (*PE* 18-9). The rest of the narrative will explain what this remainder is.

The opening and closing versions of the frame story are linked by the inheritance Matabei prepares for Hi-han, which will provide the foundation for the latter's career. As Hi-han studies a fan that Matabei was unable to complete, the old man makes a final request: "Quand c'en sera fini de cette pénible comédie, promets-moi d'achever dignement le travail, cher fils…" (*PE* 18). Calling Hi-han his "son" for the first time, Matabei initiates a genealogy based on artistic, rather than biological reproduction. Matabei does not just leave his story and his work to his former student, but charges Hi-han with continuing and transmitting his work. In the first version of the frame story, this marks the transition from Hi-han's frame story to Matabei's life story. In the second telling, the turn away in the return to this frame transforms Matabei's dying words from the introduction to the story of his life to the image of his death, which is only hinted at in Hi-han's earlier reflections on what is immortal in death. In this final version, once Matabei has finished recounting his story and charged Hi-han with the cases containing his fan paintings, Hi-han tries to convince Matabei to return to Tokyo with him and seek medical attention. Hi-han goes to load the boxes in his car, but when he returns to the cabin to take Matabei with him, he finds the structure ablaze with his mentor inside, cremated "selon un rituel unique" (*PE* 186).

By shifting Matabei's final words from the beginning of a story to its ending, Hi-han's frame story offers an inverted version of the narrative principle of the *Thousand and One Nights*, "Tell me a story or I will kill you." It is as though Matabei were saying, "Let me tell my story so

that I may die." Hi-han reports as much, observing, "Il m'avait raconté avec sérénité ses pires épreuves et il s'éloignait maintenant sous mes yeux" (*PE* 16). Rather than tell a story to keep death at bay, Matabei's tale makes his death possible. In the *Nights*, on the other hand, the narrator Shahrazad must tell stories to stay alive and save the kingdom before all its young women are killed by the murderous king who marries a new woman each evening and has her executed in the morning. By telling the king stories that do not end with the sunrise, she earns a reprieve until the next night because the king wants to hear how each story ends. On the face of it, then, the frame story of the *Nights* is infinitely expandable, as one more story is always welcome to stave off death another night, whereas *Peintre*'s frame closes with Matabei's death, once his story is told. The *Nights* would by necessity end should Shahrazad die, whereas *Peintre* can only begin its tale with Matabei's passing.

Peintre inverts yet another aspect of the *Nights*, which ultimately resolves not with Shahrazad's death, but with her giving birth to a son. By prolonging the king's lineage, she abates his misogynistic anger and restores women returns to their "proper" role in the royal household.[297] By contrast, Hi-han becomes Matabei's "son" by inheriting the collection of fans painted with landscapes and haiku, which come with the injunction to carry on their unfinished work. Initiating a genealogy does not bring the story to an end. Instead, it impels its own continuation. What Hi-han receives is not just Matabei's life story and life's work, but the task of furthering its address to others. He acknowledges as much in his presentation of Matabei's narrative: "L'essentiel des paroles de Matabei (dont j'étais à peine le destinataire), le voici rapporté, comme j'ai pu l'entendre" (*PE* 11). Even though receiving Matabei's life story and

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[297] The topos of royal lineage throughout the *Nights*, especially in the story of the "Seven wazirs." See the discussion below in Chapter 4, 272-3.

work marks Hi-han's artistic adoption, this inheritance is not ultimately destined for him. He is only the transmitter of words that he heard but were not addressed to him alone.

To realize this transmission, the text must turn away from Matabei's direct discourse and Hi-han's first person narration to a third person narrative of Matabei's life. Hi-han indicates that this is his own rendering of what he heard and understood from his former teacher. From a formal narrative perspective, however, the text that follows the frame story cannot be Matabei's own words as Hi-han recorded them on his phone. A transformation takes place between the frame and the story it surrounds. At the risk of stating the obvious, Matabei's story has been *novelized*, suggesting that Matabei's biography can only circulate in a *literary* form that is irreducible to the frame story or the phone recording it describes. Hi-han only becomes a *passeur*, a transmitter, of this story, rather than its *destinataire*, its addressee, by making it possible to cross this gap between frame and story. In this way, he repeats Matabei's own gesture of legation: he does not pass on an object received, but repeats, continues, prolongs a work of creation, reworking Matabei's story into a novel. Diegetically, the frame story tells us that it is thanks to Hi-han the art historian that Matabei's work is not only documented, but well-known and recognized as masterful. Yet the novel poses the challenge of a new kind of writing that Hi-han must undertake, one that reckons not with transmission but with creation, with the relation between art and nature, just as do Matabei's and Osaki's fans and gardens.

Thus, *Peintre*'s frame story eschews the biological reproduction that closes the narrative structure for an artistic genealogy. What is more, this transmission also takes place beyond the bounds of national and familial belonging. The cast of characters in dame Hison's rural guest house, from the boarders to the staff, are misfits to models of familial and national belonging. The proprietor is a former courtesan who retired after a miscarriage and purchased the property

with her savings. The guest house has become a home for various "orphans" of ruptured genealogies, sundered by catastrophes personal, national, and natural: it is a "pension de famille qui n'hébergeait guère que des célibataires" (*PE* 13), where there is "point de famille", the only couple being a pair of adulterers on the run from the husband's vengeful family (*PE* 14)! Matabei, the orphaned son of a Burmese expatriate and the young Japanese woman he seduced, who died with their families in a bombing at the end of World War II, comes to dame Hison's after he fatally strikes a young woman with his car. Only later do we learn the reason for his choice: the boarding house is the former family home of a widower and his daughter Osué, who is the girl that Matabei accidentally killed (*PE* 34). The house too, then, has passed beyond the logic of familial inheritance, like the fragmented family that had inhabited it. Dame Hison kept on their cook and their gardener, Osaki, who takes a distraught Matabei under his wing. Osaki himself witnessed his parents commit suicide upon the Emperor's surrender in 1945 and sells his fans to a nearby monastery to support the child of a deceased niece. The young boy Xu Hi-han, the son of Taiwanese expats, starts working for dame Hison at fifteen to support his mother, whose second husband has been imprisoned. And Aé-cha, another long-term boarder, is the daughter of Koreans who, Matabei speculates, may have been among the forced laborers in Nagasaki who died in the atomic bombing. For these reasons, the boarders don't normally speak of their families (or lack thereof). Only outsiders pose such questions, like the itinerant and somewhat chauvinist tea merchant Monsieur Ho who stops in once a week or so. Early in the novel, he drunkenly asks the "foreigners" Matabei and the Aé-cha about their families or comments to Hi-han and Aé-cha that foreigners make good cooks; Aé-cha's response is simply that "Chez moi, c'est ici" (*PE* 24-5, 87). M. Ho conceives of territory and origins in terms of nations into which one is born, in the microcosm of the family. He asks insistently if either Aé-

cha or Matabei return to “their” countries, implying that their families must miss them. But there is precisely “point de famille” at dame Hison’s, just a collection of virtual orphans who link themselves to the locale of the lodging house and, most importantly, its garden and surrounding countryside. M. Ho’s impertinent questioning polices the boundaries of national territory, while the boarders imagine other modes of belonging in relation to a landscape.

This form of affiliation without filiation might be called “orphan knowledge,” to borrow a phrase from Abdelkebir Khatibi’s poem *Le Lutteur de classe à la manière taoïste*. The “orphan” evoked above as an epigraph an unaffiliated third that replaces the child in the Oedipal triangle of the family and opens up Hegelian master-slave dialectic, just as the titular *taoïsme* takes the place of a more intuitive *maoïsme*, provincializing the universalist pretensions of religion and Marxism. The Marxian resonances of the titular class warrior play out more in the definition of self and other than a dogmatic exposition of Marxist doctrine. The key question of the second sequences is, “peux-tu défigurer l’ennemi de classe / sans emprunter ses traces? / peux-tu te retourner / contre tes propres images?”.[298] These lines lay out the classic problem of a bourgeois revolution, wherein the proletariat seeks to occupy the position of the bourgeoisie, rather than overturn class structure itself, but also suggests that the formation of a class itself is defined by the image it projects of an enemy, rather than a set of objective social relations. Khatibi’s poem outlines the alternative of “orphan knowledge” in place of origin, identity, or any other mirage that offers itself as the objective foundation of a class: “tout le monde chérit l’identité / tout le monde cherche l’origine / et moi j’enseigne le savoir orphelin”. The poem instead teaches “la différence sans retour”, which is to say difference as such, rather than a

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[298] Khatibi, 13–14. This is also the problem of ’Alî’s revolution in Jamel Eddine Bencheikh’s *Rose noire sans parfum*. See Chapter 2, 164-5.

boundary demarcating the line between self and other, always returning back to the self that establishes its identity in that boundary.[299]

Thus, just as the orphan reconfigures the Oedipal triangle and the master-slave dialectic, the residents of Dame Hison's guesthouse are virtual orphans to the mutual constitution of nation and territory. And perhaps Haddad's novel is yet another of these orphans, these third parties, that puts Japan, France, and the Maghreb all into an a-centric, asymmetrical relation. This is *Peintre*'s "orphaned" approach to traditions, whether it is Matabei's legation of his life's work, European modernist *japonisme*, the *Thousand and One Nights*, the haiku, or the aesthetics of the ordinary: inheritance by rupture or by non-transmission. Ultimately, it is more interested in how tradition gets transformed rather than in its influence. In the next chapter, I will examine these transformations through the relation of art and landscape. I will argue that the novel's key transformation of the entangled traditions of imagining Japan that it draws on is through the introduction of a concept of disaster, which calibrates painting's responsivity to landscape and vice versa and, ultimately, of writing to life and to death. As the story responds to the threat, imminence, and intimacy of death, art responds to the possibility of catastrophe; it is a document not of referentiality, but of the disruption of referentiality, of the withdrawal, disappearance, destruction of the referent; a turn away from the referent. It is not just the possibility of representation that is at stake, but the aesthetic form that representation must take, both in medium and style. Writing, painting, and gardening all measure themselves against one another here, but also realism, fictionality, and more.

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[299] Khatibi, 14.

Chapter Four: Writing Disaster Elsewhere

Introduction

Le Peintre d'éventail sits within a series of overlapping frames, from European and Islamicate interest in Japan as an alternative modernity across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to a metafictional frame in Haddad's other writings about Japan and the novel's frame story itself. Having explored these historical, conceptual, and literary frames in the previous chapter, I turn here to the body of the text itself, which I read as a meditation on the role of disaster in the relation between art and territory. At the fore of the narrative are the relations among art, life, and the environment, in particular through Matabei's monastic devotion to his garden and his fans, and the transformations wrought by disasters. Disaster, as the possibility of disruption, also implicates the question of transmission, whether by filiation or affinity, and the formation of aesthetic traditions. These problems are filtered through entangled and overlapping oppositions of indigeneity and foreignness, the quotidian and the event, and the rule and the exception, with catastrophe as the operator that modulates these categories.

I begin by tracing Matabei's evolving understanding of the relations between the landscape of Atôra, the garden at the guesthouse, and the fan paintings with their haiku inscriptions. At each stage of the narrative, he develops new ways of seeing his surrounding environment. The reader, too, must learn different ways of reading the novel's landscapes, painted fans, and haiku. Matabei learns to maintain the boarding house's magnificent garden, which is said to contain all landscapes within it, by studying its virtual blueprints that Osaki prepared in his fans painted with landscape scenes and haiku. Rather than one representing the other, there is a constant movement of doubling between them. Both contain the other but are not

reducible to one another. The reader must follow this movement as it spirals around an a-centric, asymmetrical territory. The landscape it demarcates is heterogeneous, at once idyllic and eclectic, natural and anthropogenic. Thus, the garden is a human-made foil to the landscape of lakes and mountains above the guest house. The juxtaposition of their vantage points creates a back-and-forth relay of images of the landscape. The inn sits paradigmatically at the interstice of these views and the elements they present, between the ocean and the foothills and the cement pylons of the port and the town crematorium. The latter, like the smoke that rises off of Matabei's cigarettes and the ash that falls from them, provides an ever-present sign of absence. It is a visible reminder of death that also blocks views of the mountains from Matabei's window. Everything visible in the landscape is also the mark of something obscured and that may only be revealed by the discovery of other perspectives. When the earthquake strikes and a great wave follows it, they overturn those relations, radically transforming the natural landscape, the town, the manicured garden, and the painted fans and leaving them beyond recognition. In the wake of disaster, an ephemeral sign of the absence of their prior relations appears in the hallucinatory image of smoke above the dormant volcano Mount Jimura, the cloud of steam from the damaged nuclear power plant, and Matabei's self-immolation at the end of the novel.

I thus close with an examination of *Peintre* as a novel about disaster, both in the natural, national, and personal disasters that mark or strike its characters, but also about what Maurice Blanchot calls the "écriture du désastre." Combining elements from a speculative Islamo-European philology of disaster with certain Zen Buddhist notions, or at least versions of them that circulate well beyond Japan, disaster is woven through the text as a way of thinking about contingency, potentiality, and inactuality. Read alongside Edouard Glissant's "pensée du tremblement," *Peintre* shows disaster to be a necessary concept for thinking the relation of art to

place or territory. This potential interruption within every continuity suggests that being out of place is as, if not more important to the Maghrebi novel than always being "about" the Maghreb.

Against Metaphorization

The landscape that Matabei must reckon with puts to test the powers of the novel form (what Barthes was trying to get at as the *romanesque* in his haiku-inspired fragments in *Incidents*)[300] by challenging the operations of reference. The literary world formed by *Le Peintre d'éventail* and its companion pieces combines names and places both entirely invented and that have real-world referents. It is simultaneously a world whose author calls it entirely imaginary while also investing it with a personal pathos as a member of the Tunisian and Jewish diasporas. It is modulating the exotic and the endotic, immersing itself in the imagined everyday life of misfit characters in a foreign place whose lives are defined by exceptional catastrophe. The blurb Haddad's publisher has posted to its website about *Peintre* evokes the interruption of a serene quotidian by disaster, which calls into question the entire reality of the novel's setting: "des événements considérables, contrastant jusqu'au vertige avec la sérénité première du récit, viennent bouleverser la réalité comme suspendue de cette contrée peut-être rêvée d'Atôra, laquelle nous évoque de façon insidieuse la phrase de Nicolas Bouvier: 'Moi, j'étais envahi par un doute: après tout, si ce pays n'existait pas?'" The ordinary is so exceptional in the reader's wonderment at a quotidian so extraordinary that its very reality, the possibility of its existence of a world seemingly so different from the observer's, is always in doubt. At first glance, this would recall the project of Perec's new modernist anthropology to weld together the ordinary and the extraordinary. Indeed, in keeping with the publisher's use of a publicity band reading "Sublime

[300] Barthes, *Incidents*. See the discussion above in Chapter 3, pp. 222.

Japon" on covers of *Peintre* and its description of Haddad's second novel set in Japan, *Mā*, as a "roman japonais," the quotation from the Swiss traveler and travel writer Nicolas Bouvier roots this experience in the perspective of the European voyager. The novel itself, however, eschews any such outsider point of view for a non-Japanese reader to identify with.

Rather than staging differences between France and Japan, it plays on fiction's capacity to both create and suspend reference to peoples and places outside the text. "Atôra" is a fictional region, as are the Mount Jimura and Lake Duji that define its landscape, even as Haddad locates within it identifiable places amid the historical events of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima nuclear accident. *Peintre* also suggests early on the possibility that the near entirety of its narrative may be the hallucinations of a drunken, sleep-deprived, and depressed Matabei (*PE* 15). Nor does the novel ever resolve the uncertainty surrounding the woman Enjo, a young woman who comes to the guesthouse and becomes the object of Matabei's and Hi-han's rivaling affections, leading to their separation. Matabei becomes obsessed with finding Enjo after the earthquake and is haunted by nocturnal visions of her when he cannot sleep. Matabei presumes she has died, but the narrative suggests she has left the lodging house long ago and married Hi-han (*PE* 151, 187).

The reader must therefore reckon with the possibility of facing a different system of reference, where the coordinates provided by the narrator and the narrative may not correspond to the real-world objects with which they share names, nor even to the fictional objects whose diegetic reality remains uncertain. This referential ambiguity, however, differs significantly from the metaphorical deployments of Japan that characterized both European *japoniste* aesthetics and Ottoman, Arab, and Islamic images of the "Rising Sun". Indeed, *Peintre* cautions against metaphorical images early on. At stake is the way that language maps or gets mapped onto its

territory (both the geopolitical designations of texts, but more broadly, the set of referents taken to be proper to a text). As “Japan” became a shifter in European, Ottoman, Arab, and Islamicate discourses alike, it took on a particular mode of reference, one that can only be determined within a given discursive context. Generally, in these cases, “Japan” referred only obliquely to a real place called Japan, more often to readers’ perceptions of that place called Japan as determined in large part by the popular press and most directly to whatever political or artistic modernizing program a writer wished to evoke. *Peintre* usually deals with images rather than names, which will require a slightly different approach.

One important scene plays a formative role in the novel’s mode of representation. Matabei and dame Hison lie in bed after making love. Matabei reaches out to touch dame Hison:

> De son autre main, il explore l’éventail irisé de cette chevelure, comme une queue de paon déployée sur le drap.
> ‘Tu es comme l’arbre sans chagrin,’ murmure-t-il en riant. ‘Comme la fleur hirsute de l’ashoka!’
> ‘Et toi comme le pauvre ivrogne qui peignait ses haïkus au bord du chemin. Mais je ne suis pas un chemin et je veux bien te garder encore, vagabond!’ (*PE* 48)

Here, the text twice metaphorizes dame Hison’s body, once in the narration describing her hair as a fan, then in Matabei’s direct discourse, where he compares her to the flower of the ashoka tree (“l’arbre sans chagrin,” a literal translation of the tree’s Sanskrit name). This suggests a possible fan painting of this tree and an allegorical reading of it: a fan painting featuring an ashoka tree is not meant to evoke a tree, but a beloved. The text tries out an allegorical mode of relating art to the world, or specifically here of relating an image to a body through metaphor. Dame Hison, however, resists the metaphorization of her body. She ripostes playfully with a further metaphor that both allows her to critique Matabei’s description of her within the metaphor and to reject metaphor as a descriptive premise for her body. Likening Matabei to an

impoverished drunk writing out haiku on the roadside (presumably to make some money selling them to passers-by), she first takes a jab at the quality of his poetic diction.[301] She then turns the metaphor's premise against itself. Were one to accept the image it puts forth, she, laying on the bed, would be the road next to which Matabei, the drunken poet, is peddling his wares before wandering on with whatever earnings he has made. "I am not a road," she asserts, rejecting both metaphoric language that would call her by a different name, or portray her allegorically as a different object, in order to justify a particular action, like leaving her behind to wander on to the next wayside.

Just as Dame Hison denies the possibility of signifying her body by metaphor or allegory, the novel indicates that the landscapes and images to follow must be reckoned with on their own terms. They should not be taken as standing for or in the place of something else. "Japan" is not a signifier for the Maghreb or Europe. This does not mean that "Japan" in the novel is therefore equivalent to real-world Japan. To the contrary, the novel still deals with a metafictional universe built on the play of ambiguous referents. The reader must confront this undecidability, just as fans, garden, and landscape measure themselves against one another in the novel, without ever representing one another or resolving into a hierarchy.

Reading Images

Tout ou presque était écrit.
(*PE* 82)

How, then, are we to read the images that *Peintre* gives us to see? Fans, garden, and landscape alike pose the question of how to interpret what we see (whether in terms of a content,

[301] I have not yet been able to ascertain whether this is a reference to a particular poet, a folktale, or any other definite source. It does resonate somewhat with the story of the modern haiku poet Santōka Taneda as told in *Mā*.

a message, or of a mode of seeing or reading)? It is not just the reader, but also the novel's characters who must reckon with this question, from the magazine photograph that catches Hi-han's eye in the novel's opening lines to the vast collection of fans that Matabei inherits from Osaki. When Matabei first takes over for Osaki as the inn's gardener after the latter's death, at first anxious about betraying Osaki's life work by improperly caring for the garden or modifying it to greatly. Having learned simply by working at Osaki's side, Matabei lacks knowledge from ancient chronicles on the art of gardening, but he feels that the deceased gardener's fans hold the secret. Only at the point of despair over his ability to preserve the garden, "livrée aux poussées de sève comme aux intempéries" since Osaki's death, does Matabei discover the "manuel du parfait jardin de maître Osaki […] dans les pliures de ses trois lots d'éventails" (*PE* 81). These three collections comprise a loose)leaf "encyclopédie botanique" depicting most of the garden's plants in their context, a set of anecdotal sketches done in a single session, and a set of mounted fans "qui constituait proprement la mémoire du lieu, son plan de création détaillé" (*PE* 79). This encyclopedic corpus is the work of an artist who has surpassed his peers both technically and spiritually. Ironically, Osaki has done so precisely by eschewing traditional religious subjects, like representations of the Buddha or the Mountain of Immortals that Osaki has done so: he "avait atteint un seuil de délivrance qui tournait le dos aux représentations traditionnelles […] comme à l'extrême abstraction" through the key technical innovation of "l'harmonieux vertige", which involves a constant inversion of "l'impression de proche et de lointain […] de sorte à désorienter le regard" (*PE* 79-80). Assurances of Osaki's abilities aside, this new technique makes his visual encyclopedia of the garden into something of a paradox. How can one read an image that disorients the gaze? How exactly is such a corpus of paintings to serve as the blueprints to the garden?

Matabei will only discover the solutions to these enigmas as he re-learns how to see the world around him as a painter. This allows him to understand the secret correspondence between Osaki's fans and the garden, which ultimately "lui donnait à comprendre toute l'adresse du vieux peintre," as though his message carried through clearly in these visual supports that take the place of the deceased gardener's voice. Matabei's description of the process, however, is more musical than discursive. The knowledge he gains takes the form of the embodied experience of seeing a place from a specific vantage point with the help of a certain fan. He evokes "une danse permanente entre l'atelier et l'enclos enchanté" wherein "[*j*]*ouer des éventails* devint le mode d'étude le plus complet." On the model of a musical instrument (*jouer de*, e.g. *jouer du piano*), the play of fans is more expressive than directive. Where, when, and how one plays changes the sound or image produced. As such, a space of uncertainty opens up in the mode of reading the fans and their relation to the garden: "Fors les aléas de l'interprétation, tout ou presque était écrit de l'art des saisons, de l'univers et des mondes miniatures…" (*PE* 82). A gap appears here between the *aléas* of interpretation and the "everything, or almost" that is to be interpreted.[302] To even arrive at this provisional *almost* everything, on must first bracket the hazards of interpretation. It is clear that this interpretation has challenged Matabei. He is aware of and troubled by the problem of repetition and difference. Is the music or the dance ever identical in its instantiation, or is something ephemeral, always coming and going? Can such *aléas* truly be

[302] The relation between the distinct series of images of and as landscape, garden, and fan in *Peintre* presents what Michel Foucault identifies as "aléas" in his reformulation of the history of ideas as the study of discourses themselves, rather than discourses as representations of objects and events. There, the *aléa* emerges as a necessary element of thinking the continuity and discontinuity of discourses in their difference from historical events, since each constitute series with their own logics without causality or necessity between them. Thus, he writes, "Il faut accepter d'introduire l'aléa comme catégorie dans la production des événements. Là encore se fait sentir l'absence d'une théorie permettant de penser les rapports du hasard et de la penser." Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours. Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France prononcée le 2 décembre 1970* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 61.

bracketed? If fans and gardens are frames that attempt to order a hazardous reality, the *aléa* exemplifies the irreducible ambiguity of the framing process. Like the creation and maintenance of an artistic oeuvre, reading the image will therefore become an unending process.

Introducing the Landscape

The unspoken disaster that haunts Hi-han's opening pages in *Peintre* retrospectively frames the rest of the novel. The revelation of this disaster later in the text, however, does not represent the culmination of a traditional three-act narrative. Instead of accumulating signs whose true significance is only unveiled at the story's climax, the novel proceeds through multiple sequences of uncertainty and definition, secrecy and revelation, and hiddenness and discovery. These sequences have their own logics that contribute to but are not determined by the overall narrative. Each is an important element unto itself in the lines of the novel's haiku-like structure. The first line covers Matabei's arrival the guesthouse, the second his time as gardener and fan painter after Osaki's death, and the third the period after the earthquake. The would-be climax — the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident that take place two-thirds of the way through the novel — is instead the *kireji*, or cutting word, of a haiku. The *kireji* is an essential but untranslatable syntactic particle in Japanese haiku. The inflection it adds to a poem depends on which *kireji* is used and where it is located in the poem: it may pose a question, give a sense of closure, suggest an equivalence, and so on. In relation to *Peintre*'s preceding narrative, the earthquake-as-"kireji" is interruptive and disjunctive rather than causal. Disaster irrupts into the narrative of its own accord.

Rather than build to a logically-necessary climax, the text creates localized intensities of concealment and unveiling, the latter often revealing that there was, in fact, nothing hidden, or

what was seemingly hidden was already in plain sight. Matabei's gradual discovery of the landscape around dame Hison's inn is illustrative. When he first arrives, he describes an orderly landscape, whose perspectives are managed by trees that punctuate its views. Yet there is a sense that this regulation is not just creating a positive image, but also hiding other elements of the landscape. Matabei says that they "cachent tout ce qui ne mérite pas d'être vu" (*PE* 12). From early on, the novel indicates that every image implicates a selection of elements or a distribution of the visible, just as a landscape painter would select aspects of a scene that fit the scheme of work while excluding others and adding whatever else is missing. Matabei's explorations of the surrounding countryside will uncover other perspectives, with different distributions of elements that "deserve" to be seen or to be hidden in a particular tableau. What becomes clear is that both the landscape and the images of it (real or imagined) work to manage the visible. And what Matabei offers to the reader through a series of formative tableaus that capture his painterly gaze is a heterogeneous landscape of multiplicitous elements, first framed through the view from his window at the inn, seated between the wooded foothills above and the town crematorium, with a view of swatch of ocean and the wharfs, pylons, and cargo ships. As Matabei travels outward, usually up the mountain, we find more mixed elements: tea plantations and bamboo forests, snow-capped peaks and island monasteries. It is a landscape of human and natural constructions together, of the commercial and the spiritual, where light and shadow, green and grey, wind and smoke play back and forth in shifting volumes. In one of its rare, albeit oblique, references to images of Japan that circulate abroad, the novel differentiates this landscape from the iconic views of Mount Fuji painted by Hokusai and hordes of apprentices and tourists in his stead (*PE* 18).

Like the gradual discovery of the landscape, character's secrets are progressively staged

and revealed. Matabei first claims that he came to dame Hison's by chance, only to stay for a few days, but his description makes it clear that he has stayed much longer and knows the place well. And shortly thereafter, the novel reveals that he came, not just to that region or town, but to that specific inn for a particular reason: it was the childhood home of Osué, the young student that Matabei accidentally struck with his car outside Kobe, leading to her death (*PE* 34). Even though no one remembers her there, her image continues to haunt Matabei. Soon, however, the novel stages other captivating images, through which Matabei's relation to images will continue to evolve.

Distracted Vision, Sudden Images

La vue qui baisse —
un peintre dans le brouillard
cherche ses couleurs
(*HP* 22)

The first time that Matabei explores the rugged landscape above the boarding house, he hikes up past a certain Lake Duji into a dense forest of giant bamboo. In a theme that will come to characterize his interactions with the local landscape, he happens upon a vantage point that offers up an unexpected perspective. He finds a rocky outcropping that rises above the bamboo, yielding a view of the ocean and of Mount Jimura, which were otherwise invisible to anyone in the forest below. This sudden reorientation that allows Matabei to locate himself in the landscape mixes the familiarity of these landmarks with an entirely new view of them. Between the ocean's "bourdon des paquets de vagues" and Mount Jimura above the lake,

> Matabei, qui ne l'avait jamais vu ainsi, dans son ampleur d'ancien volcan, recouvra à ce moment le goût de dessiner. Mais il était parti sans matériel et, démuni, il se tailla l'extrémité de l'index avec une pointe de bambou. Sur un mouchoir de papier retenu au sol par des cailloux, il fit sa première esquisse depuis la mort d'une jeune fille percutée en sortant d'une voie souterraine de la banlieue de Kobe, quelques jours avant le séisme de 1995. Pourquoi souriait-elle ainsi devant ses roues? (*PE* 21)

This image of the girl's smile, only an instant in duration, had suspended Matabei's taste for depiction. Perhaps he could never have drawn anything other than this haunting image again. But the instantaneous emergence of another image summons that taste back into being. The physical violence of the car accident finds a foil in Matabei's makeshift pen and paper, the small cut he opens on his index finger in order to draw on a crumpled tissue. The blood-ink that allows him to create this new image also calls up those of the past: "En même temps que son doigt saignait, le souvenir de ces années l'envahissait avec la véhémence du vent dans les branches [….] De retour d'une virée à Kyoto, il y eut l'accident, le regard étonné de la jeune fille un quart de seconde, son sourire aperçu une poussière d'instant, puis le choc de côté et cette danse qu'elle fit avant de basculer parmi les tulipes d'une bordure protégée" (*PE* 21-2). Not only is drawing tied to disaster in these twin images, they both share an interruptive quality that interpellates the viewer lastingly. Rather than proceeding out of a coherent narrative sequence, they burst into narrative, interrupting and redirecting it. *Peintre*, all while telling a simple story, will move from one such image to another.

What has reawakened Matabei's painterly eye, having found again a taste for drawing in the sudden view of Mount Jimura, is his encounter with Osaki Tanako, the gardener and fan painter at dame Hison's inn. Osaki is a curious figure. Matabei admits early on that, in his dissolute state upon arrival, it took him more than a year to take note of Osaki Tanako, who resided in a small hut resembling the hull of a boat (a bit of foreshadowing to the sloop that will be washed into the garden and crash upon the hut in the tsunami), tucked away in the garden. But it is not just Matabei's drunken stupor that blinds him: "C'est que maître Osaki avait atteint un rare degré d'invisibilité" (*PE* 13). Osaki's near-invisibility is an extension of his painterly powers to the level of his personal existence, much like how the trees around the guesthouse that

frame what can and cannot be seen. When Matabei first meets Osaki face to face, the old gardener seems barely human at all; rather he has become like one of his own fan paintings: "il donnait l'impression d'échapper à l'espèce humaine par l'inexpressivité de sa figure et le total défaut de cette espèce d'énergie contrainte qui maintient chacun debout. Immobile sur un petit banc, on eût pu le croire mort ou constitué de matériaux inertes comme le pantin ou l'épouvantail" (*PE* 29). A bird perches on the old man's shoulder, augmenting his scarecrow-like appearance, or further adorning the fan-like scene Osaki has composed with his body. Through his expertise as a gardener, he has forged a more harmonious relationship with nature. Nevertheless, Osaki breaks his silence and the bird takes flight. Matabei, as unsure if he should pause his stroll as the bird was to remain, is also interpellated by this speech, which sends the bird away and draws Matabei in, ending in an invitation to tea in the gardener's hut. Matabei, drunk, hungover, or both, is taken aback when the gardener suddenly asks, "Combien de temps croyez-vous que je vivrai encore?" and proposes that Matabei learn his "petits trucs" in the garden and the workshop (*PE* 37). The old master, in search of a disciple who will continue his work, settles on Matabei. Soon, the question of his remaining time turns to the certainty of his expiration as his health worsens. The scene of transmission from Matabei to Hi-han that opens the novel appears as an echo of the last exchange between Matabei and Osaki:

> 'Quand je n'y serai plus, il restera les éventails.'
> 'Et le jardin,' ajouta Matabei.
> 'Et le vent, oui,' dit Osaki [….] 'Ah! ce jardin contient pour moi tous les paysages…'
> 'Tous les éventails' pensa Matabei. (*PE* 42-3)

Osaki's life work will survive him in the twin form of garden and fans, in a relation of plenitude with the landscape. This is, however, a life's work that always requires more work.

Even as they exchange these words, a hard rain is falling, which Matabei knows will

require maintenance and repair the next day ("le jardin intégrait le désordre à condition d'en gommer les plus brutaux effets", *PE* 43). As it changes, it offers new perspectives and integrates new landscapes, all of which call for and make possible more fan paintings. What will remain of Osaki's work is not a finished object, but the ongoing tasks that constituted his daily life, which still require someone to accomplish them again and again. This is what Matabei sees in what will turn out to be Osaki's last gaze at him: "Le vieil Osaki aujourd'hui l'observait du bout extrême de sa vie, sans doute à peine plus large que la brosse du pinceau. Matabei sourit et, d'un geste nerveux, tapota de nouveau le creux de sa paume. Peindre un éventail, n'était-ce pas ramener sagement l'art à du vent?" (*PE* 45). From Osaki's perspective at the far end of his days, Matabei is so far away as to resemble the tip of a paintbrush. Just as Osaki first resembled a fan to Matabei, the disciple now appears as the tool to continue the master's work of creation, visually equating Matabei with the charge he is receiving as Osaki's legacy. The last phrase is an ambiguous piece of free indirect discourse that cannot be attributed exclusively to one character or the other. It is an intuitive understanding circulating between them of the impossible goal of painting the wind or of creating a painting that disappears into the wind. The impossibility of painting the wind speaks both to Osaki's knowledge that neither painting nor gardening are ultimately about representation, a lesson his student will have to learn on his own, and the fact that Matabei will not be able to simply follow the example of his departed master.

Matabei is not successful straightaway. His clumsy attempt to metaphorize dame Hison's body immediately follows this scene with Osaki. It is important, therefore, to contrast the genealogy among male artists with the way that dame Hison's vision of male genealogy, as her courtesan's body became a rite of passage between father and son, witnessing a "long cortège des pères et des fils, visages et pénis echevêtrés" (*PE* 47). Just as dame Hison takes a firm stance

against image as metaphor, she also recalls the perversion of biological genealogies, in contrast to transmission by affiliation from one painter to the next, from Osaki to Matabei and Matabei to Hi-han. Just as Osaki helps Matabei to once again see with his painter's eye what he had become blind to (including the "invisible" gardener himself), dame Hison evokes the blind spots of male genealogy.

Matabei does begin to develop a new way of seeing the environment around, however. Floating in a canoe on Lake Duji, Matabei contemplates the scene with a painter's eye:

> il étudiait avec une distraction entière le juste rapport des volumes au gré de la distribution des ombres et de la lumière. Ramené au premier plan par un effort de pensée, le point de fuite entre les rives était assez décalé pour mettre à mal un équilibre toujours fautif, source d'aliénation. Il n'avait pas oublié la symétrie cachée du Ryōan-ji. Son œil de peintre déclinait mentalement sur divers supports, en noir ou en couleurs, le spectacle qui s'offrait depuis ce bras du lac. (*PE* 51)

Recalling Matabei's previous inability to draw and the change in his gaze that restored his taste for painting, we should recognize that the painter's eye evoked here is more than a passing description of Matabei's observations. It is a specific mode of looking at the landscape that uses a particular mental and optical disposition ("une distraction entière") to see (at least) double: the landscape and the potential painting, or multiple paintings, at the same time. Recalling the trees around the guesthouse that organize the view out of Matabei's window when he first arrives, the painter's eye reorganizes and reframes as necessary to produce its desired image. The line between the two is not entirely clear, either. The physical landscape and its image have a fluid relationship in this mode of seeing. The "juste rapport des volumes" is an analytic of the image, but here Matabei studies it directly in the landscape, from the perspective of its possible becoming-painting. So, too, is the vanishing point ("point de fuite") a property of perspective rendered in an image, but here it seems to extend out of Matabei's eye into the landscape itself.

Matabei, entirely consumed with his distracted gaze, floats around the island in the middle of the lake and nearly runs into a blind monk out fishing for food. The painter's eye is therefore also a kind of blindness, as Matabei at first senses that the monk's boat has appeared out of nowhere, when in reality it was his own canoe that had remained in motion. This unperceived motion says something else about the scene's ever-receding vanishing point, which never was fixed, as it would have been in an image, but was playing out its alienating disequilibrium in the confused displacement of image, landscape, and boat on the water.

Upon returning from the lake, Matabei finds Osaki dead in his cabin. Already immersed in his painter's gaze, his first thought is of a still-life scene: "Il aperçut du même coup d'œil l'éventail ouvert sur la table basse, près du matelas, et le visage d'Osaki, compact et jaune comme un coing. L'idée saugrenue d'une nature morte l'effleura, vite délogée par les sanglots de la propriétaire" (*PE* 52). The double morbidity of this scene of death as a still life (or *nature morte* in French) is broken not just by dame Hison's crying, but also by a glimpse of Osaki's last fan. With its still-drying ink, the haiku that adorns it speaks of the forthcoming ashes of the artist's cremation. Matabei's still-developing painter's gaze is inapt for this scene of passing. The visual remains of Osaki's body do not speak to the absence that is emerging in that very instant. Instead, it is the glistening wet ink on Osaki's final fan, almost as possible to depict as the wind, that bespeaks this fleeting moment. The irreparable is underway, just as the ink will inevitably dry.

*

Le jardin parfait
somme d'inachèvements —
je cueille une rose
(*HP* 142)

As Matabei takes over caring for the garden after Osaki's death, he comes to find that it, too, is shaped by the risk of something irreparable taking place, in addition to its need for constant maintenance. As Matabei comes to understand the garden better and better, he articulates his knowledge in the former of lessons to his largely-uncomprehending pupil Xu Hi-han, a teenage boy who has come to work in the kitchen and grounds of the inn to help support his single mother. Matabei insists to his apprentice that, in the garden, "[n]ous ne faisons en somme que transposer l'esprit de la nature dans un cadre réduit" (*PE* 102). Like *Peintre*'s frame story to Matabei's biography, the garden is to be but a frame for natural phenomena, creating a scaled-down version of nature that is still natural in itself. The modes that Matabei uses to produce the garden, framing and transposition, are meant to evoke a process of creation that never actually touches its object. Placing a frame around a scene should be no different in a rocks-and-earth garden than in Matabei's painterly imagination of scenes at Lake Duji. Transposition should simply move or scale without transforming. And yet, Matabei must admit at the same time that the garden is not just a circumscribed natural space and that the acts of framing and transposing themselves do act on their object. Musing over the secrets contained in Osaki's fan paintings one night shortly after the old gardener's death, Matabei reflects that "[u]n jardin rassemblait la nature entière, le haut et le bas, ses contrastes et ses lointaines perspectives; on y corrigeait à des fins exclusives, comme par compensation, les erreurs manifestes des hommes, avec le souci de ne rien tronquer du sentiment natif des plantes et des éléments" (*PE* 65). Here, other actions are at work: the garden gathers together (*rassembler*) all of nature, rather

than just transposing it, even across geographical and hierarchical distinctions (both high and low, across contrasts and distant perspectives). It also involves correction, which Matabei hastens to qualify as merely the correction of human error. But where does human error appear in the framing and transposition of a natural space, if not in those very acts of demarcation in the first place? Thus, the gardener cannot but introduce incompletion and imperfection by intervening in nature. Even the gardener's attempts at rendering striking perspectives, captivating landscapes, and surprising vistas, pale in comparison to a walk in the countryside above the inn. As Matabei frequently repairs to the confines of Lake Duji, he is forced to admit "la souveraineté de la nature. Jardiniers et maîtres paysagers s'épuisaient en vain dans l'imitation de son aspect sauvage. Tant d'harmonies et d'heureux contraste n'étaient pas dus au seul hasard: des millénaires d'ajustement avaient façonné des abords jusque dans la sensibilité de générations contemplatives" (*PE* 117). Subtly, however, even as Matabei owns up to human shortcomings, the text likens nature to a gardener and vice versa. Nature, like a gardener, achieves its incomparable harmonies and contrasts not by chance, but through gradual adjustments over the millennia. Nature's advantage is to work at a geological timescale, which leaves human work seeming fleeting and ephemeral. Both, as we will see, are nevertheless vulnerable to the hazards of disaster.

To Matabei, the newly initiated gardener, Osaki's masterpiece seems to hold many secrets, as do his fan paintings and the surrounding countryside. Unlocking those secrets requires a labor of studying both the garden and the fans, as well as an attentiveness to the contingencies of time and season, without which the garden often does not divulge its secrets. For example, under snow, "[s]oudain offert à l'œil comme une seule immense sculpture, le jardin donne enfin à comprendre certains secrets que la diversité colorée des végétaux ordinairement dérobe" (*PE*

70). The garden's own composition distracts from an understanding of its design. This principle of distraction, so central to the gaze of the painter's eye, is both the garden's principle capacity and the greatest challenge to the novice gardener who must come to understand its asymmetrical equilibrium. To do so, whether working in the garden during the day or in his new lodging's in Osaki's former hut in the evening, Matabei carries Osaki's fans with him as fragmented doubles of the garden. Looking at both simultaneously, Matabei

> étudiait les dimensions angulaires et la succession des perspectives à partir des différents points de vue auxquels conduisaient les pierres plates, petites ou grandes, disposées en chemins de gué pour circuler d'un pas divers. Toujours en décalage, hors de tout centrage selon le principe d'asymétrie, mais avec des répétitions convenues […] le spectacle changeant du jardin accompagnait le regard en se jouant des mouvements naturels de l'oeil par à-coups et balayages, ce qui l'égarait dans sa quête d'unité par une manière d'enchantement continu ourdi de surprises et de distractions. (*PE* 78)

The garden's a-centric territory is meant to continually elicit the distracted gaze of the painter's eye, which sees a landscape and its image simultaneously, perceiving the distribution of volumes across the visible rather than a set of reified objects or their representations.

Distractions sometimes come from outside the garden, which may accidentally provide a captivating frame for an image beyond its borders. Such is the case when Hi-han and Matabei spot the new boarder, the young woman Enjo, a university student whom dame Hison met in Kobe and invited to the guesthouse, leaning out of her window: "Cette immobilité pensive soudain, dans l'encadrement illuminé de soleil, concentrait l'intensité orgueilleusement mélancolique des peintures d'illusion chères aux Occidentaux, les Murillo et les Rembrandt, ces singuliers maçons d'images qui convoitaient l'arrêt du temps" (*PE* 83). Both men are enraptured by this vision and become enamored of Enjo, a rivalry that leads to their eventual falling out. It is Hi-han, though, who first suffers the effects of this image most clearly. The young Xu had

already been moved to tears by a print of Murasaki Shikibu in Matabei's collection, exclaiming, "Les femmes sont trop belles" (*PE* 76). His vision of Enjo seizes him the way that Matabei's fleeting glance of Osué's smile in front of his car haunted him on his arrival at the inn. Following the model of Shikibu, Hi-han only knows how to read Enjo's image as though it were a book or a print. As Enjo looks out over the garden while Matabei and Hi-han continue their work, the latter is deeply troubled. Spotting a cat eating a toad, he expresses to Matabei a sense of guilt that he feels watching a fishmonger in the market cleaning rays for customers or as he himself drops crabs into boiling water to prepare dinner. But the core of his guilt is not so much animal suffering as it is a sense of inadequacy before Beauty, embodied by Enjo: "Ce n'est pas le chat, monsieur. Les filles sont trop belles et je me sens plus tourmenté que ce crapaud. J'aimerais tant atteindre l'émotion pure dont parle vos livres…" (*PE* 85). Fundamentally, Hi-han is not bothered by animal suffering itself, but by its metaphoric reminder of his own internal torment, arising out of his incapacity to interpret images of woman otherwise than as allegories of pure Beauty. In this way, the print of Murasaki haunts the vision of Enjo leaning out of her window. Both captivate Hi-han, but also capture his gaze in an allegorical hermeneutic.

Consequently, just as Matabei attempted to metaphorize dame Hison's body, the text does the same for Hi-han's perception of Enjo. While Matabei disserts to Hi-han on the relation between the composition of a painting and a garden, the latter watches Enjo's silhouette on the balcony. More interested in women than gardens, Hi-han reflects, "Enjo serait son jardin à titre exclusif, et il ne cueillerait jamais ailleurs d'autres fruits ou d'autres fleurs. Une jeune fille cache plus de promesses et d'énigmes que la nature entière" (*PE* 101). While Matabei expressed his vegetal metaphors aloud to dame Hison, in the guise of flirtation or seduction, Enjo stands at a remove from the exchange between Matabei and Hi-han, the object of their desires, but unable to

respond to Hi-han's metaphorical vision of her body. Hi-han is turning away from the heritage Matabei wishes to pass on to him, both the print of Shikibu he happily handed over and his knowledge of gardening and painting. This vision of Enjo's body as a garden will take on a new aspect after the tsunami wipes away the inn's garden.

Hi-han's captivation by Enjo's image leaves the garden merely a frame for her face, nearly invisible to him. By contrast, when Matabei had invited the blind monk from Lake Duji to perform Osaki's funeral rites at the inn, the monk expressed his knowledge of both Osaki's garden and his fans: "l'aveugle traversa le jardin nocturne avec une brusque attention aux mouvements de l'air et aux senteurs. 'Quelle beauté,' s'était-il exclamé, 'quel enchantement dans les perspectives!'" (*PE* 57); "Le moine aveugle lui avait d'ailleurs décrit avec une rare précision certains thèmes de prédilection du peintre d'éventail. 'Nul besoin d'yeux pour apprécier un vrai maître!' avait-il proclamé sans rire" (*PE* 119). What Hi-han is blinded to in the garden, what Matabei for so long could not make out in Osaki's fans, are plain to a blind man, who is attentive to the currents of the wind and the scents they carry — the relation of art to the wind. Thus, the pairing of blindness and vision will become essential to Matabei's theory of art.

Images of Absence

La rose des vents —
ni rose ni même fleur
au vent n'est plus rien
(*HP* 126)

These experiences are formative for the way Matabei will articulate his concept of painting. Painting operates for him as an extension of sight, like gesture for the blind. This is "l'énigme d'un éventail": "Peindre n'a guère d'autre signification qu'un prolongement indéfini du regard — aurait-il plus de sens, l'aveugle gesticulant?" (*PE* 71). The intersection of vision

and blindness is important. The extension of sight is not merely instrumental, as though painting allowed images allowed for scenes to travel beyond their location by means of representation. It is, in fact, "indefinite", a property not usually afforded to sight, which is limited by distance and visibility. In the same way that a blind gesture reaches out into the unknown, painting takes sight into a zone where it cannot know in advance what it will see. The object of sight precedes vision, instead of being constituted by the gaze that captures it. Such is the operation of the captivating images that mark the novel and instigate transformations in its characters' perceptions.

At the same time, painting contains a constitutive gap that separates its images from the captivating vantages Matabei encounters. From his first meetings with Osaki to his deathbed exchange with Hi-han, Matabei comes to associate fan painting's (admittedly-impossible) aim with depicting the wind. From his first, hesitant reflection that "[p]eindre un éventail, n'était-ce pas ramener sagement l'art à du vent?" (*PE* 45) to his dying words to Hi-han that "[m]on histoire fut comme le vent, à peu près aussi incompréhensible aux autres qu'à moi-même" (*PE* 10), his lesson to Hi-han puts it most plainly: "Les trois pinceaux de bambou, par exemple, nous en ferons usage des années encore en espérant savoir peindre un jour les jeux du vent dans la forêt de bambous…" (*PE* 102). Fan painting returns to the invisible, to its inevitable blind spot. This is not merely something left out of an image, as though it were a poor representation, but rather what is present in an image and cannot be depicted. In this, *Peintre* transforms the role of the fan in Paul Claudel's *Cent phrases pour éventails* and Roland Barthes' approximations of the *romanesque* in *Incidents*. Claudel's collection invokes the fan as a material support for the metaphysical equivalence of breath and breeze carrying voice and poem. *Peintre* transforms the connection between the fan and the wind, relocating the wind as the constitutive gap in the fan-painting's visual system. Rather than give voice to the poem, it recalls the sound of the wind that

can never appear in the fan itself. Between the landscape image, the accompanying haiku in calligraphy, and the structure of the fan itself, the wind in the bamboo remains the absent image in the visible. The fan's tripartite image creates a spiraling movement across its asymmetrically-deployed elements that moves toward and away from the wind, without every reaching it. The wind, then, is something like Barthes' attempt to render the *romanesque* itself in the fragments of *Incidents*, insofar as the novelistic is what impels a novel but is inevitably lost in the elaboration of the text and the wind is what fan painting aims at even as it can never appear there.

Matabei's theories of painting are inextricably linked to the garden. Practically speaking, the fan is a tool of garden maintenance, alongside shears and spade (*PE* 54, 78, 93). Before understanding Osaki's methods, Matabei would see him constantly moving between the garden and his workshop, or even in the garden, fan in hand, comparing a painted landscape with the manicured view before him. It offers a record of what actually and potentially exists with the garden and beyond, as well as a kind of landscape unto itself. Before Matabei, Osaki adapted himself to the art of gardening based on his experience as a painter, transforming the garden as he would create a fan: "Sans en avoir les aptitudes, mais avec un goût naturel, il était devenu le jardinier de son hôte en transposant son art de peintre à l'esthétique du jardin" (*PE* 28). This means arranging the garden around something absent at its center, or rather, the absence of a center at all. The garden, too, is an a-centric territory, creating spiraling movements and vistas that oscillate between multiple perspectives, doubling intimacy and distance. The garden creates the same kinds of arresting images as the sudden view of Mount Jimura that inspires Matabei to draw again, even with his own blood. Matabei integrates these lessons and passes them on to Hi-han, linking the expressivity of painting to that of gardening: "On peut exprimer sa pensée avec des couleurs, des mots, mais aussi avec ce que tu vois: les plantes, l'eau et les pierres. Là, il faut

compter avec l'adversité, le vent et la pluie, les saisons. Le jardin vit de ta vie, c'est la différence…" (*PE* 100). The adversities of wind and rain are, in fact, essential parts of the life of the garden: "il faut laisser les choses vivre un peu de guingois autour de toi. L'imperfection ouvre à la perfection. Tu achèveras en esprit l'inachevé. Le jardin idéal n'est qu'un rêve qui invite l'infini par clins d'œil" (*PE* 102). Just as painting has set for itself the impossible task of depicting the wind, the garden lives off of its imperfection and incompletion, forever inviting further work to be done. It does so by means of glances, fleeting glimpses the call for a painterly eye even as they pass out of perception.

Art therefore frames, rather than represents, this ephemeral object. In *Le Jardin des peintres*, Haddad relates the birth of painting to an attempt to master or bring order to the vagaries and possible dangers of the world. Visual and plastic arts "prolongent par un travail mimétique exemplaire une nature qu'il faut s'approprier au moyen de la mécanique des solides et selon les principes de l'ordre social humain afin d'établir ce qu'on on nomme la réalité, grand décor salvateur où viennent s'ordonner les abîmes extérieurs, cataclysmes et autres périls immédiats ou cachés." This "mimetic" or representational work seems to immediately call itself into question in Haddad's formulation, however. Already, what "one calls reality" becomes not the prior ground of representation, the real existence of an object then represented, but something that only emerges in its duplication in art. The function of art, here, is not to reflect reality, but to constitute and define it, to give order to dangerous, unpredictable phenomena. The very act of mimetic, representational extension creates a turn away from the world: "Le monde n'est plus exclusivement dans le monde."[303] Representation cannot just be representation here: if it were, the world itself would not be displaced in the image created of it. Images instead displace the

very quality of world-ness, not just shifting *the* world into the image, but also creating *a* world, perhaps *an other* world.

Jardin likens a garden to an island made of the same substance as the surrounding sea, but distinguished by its enclosure and order; or, a garden is to the landscape as an oasis to the desert. It is part of the natural landscape, but defined by being set apart from it. Like an island in a rough sea or an oasis in the desert, it is also a haven that offers a reprieve from the hazards of nature writ large. In this, it is a fundamentally architectural form that creates a frame to bring order out of chaos. Art, by beginning with this same fundamental framing gesture, is an extension of the "architectural imperative" rather than of nature. Art and nature do share, however, in "excessive and useless production", in which art borrows the "excess of colors, forms, materials" from the earth to produce "its own excesses."[304] Gardens and fans, thus, are frames of territory from within the novel, alongside the narrative, metafictional, and historical frames in which I have located *Peintre*'s territory. In transforming nature into architectural form, gardens and fans do not eliminate nature's excesses. They do not keep its unpredictable risks at bay. They confine risk to a frame, making it manageable in the ongoing work of creation and maintenance. The novel calibrates this possibility of disaster present in the everyday (in the constant maintenance of the garden and in the banal scenes of narration where death or danger lurks in the background) with its sudden amplification in the earthquake that radically transforms the garden, the fans, and the landscape. Thus, even as the earthquake appears as an event that catastrophically disrupts the ordinary sequence of life that Matabei has cultivated as gardener and fan painter after Osaki's death, the very labor of maintaining the garden bears in itself the

[303] Haddad, *Jardin des peintres*, 5.
[304] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia

possibility of disaster, of destroying the carefully-cultivated harmony of the crafted landscape.

Disaster

Tremblement de terre
les oignons du potager
toujours alignés
(*HP* 136)

The earthquake and tsunami uproot the garden, flood the fan collection, and overturn the landscape. As Matabei recounts his biography to Hi-han from his deathbed, he evokes the garden as "le plus beau jardin qui fût" (*PE* 13), as though the formal *passé simple* form relegated it firmly to the past, cut off from the present by the chaos of disaster. I will argue, however, that the garden and the fans, although radically changed, have not ceased to exist. In an unexpected way, they maintain their relation through this transformation, as they are all affected by the same elements of water, mud, and radiation. The earthquake, as the *kireji* to the novel's haiku-like structure, marks a turn, rather than a climax, that is also a return: the devastated world of the final third of the novel both turns back to the apparent serenity that preceded it, while also turning those traces of the past into something new.

The novel links catastrophe and art in both creation and interruption, as in the sudden discovery of a view of Mount Jimura that restores Matabei's desire to draw, which had previously suspended by the image of Osué's flash of a smile as she stepped in front of his car coming out of a tunnel. Flashing, instantaneous images erupt throughout the text: Osué's smile, this sudden view of Mount Jimura, Hi-han smitten by an engraving of Murasaki Shikibu, then later by a glimpse of Enjo leaning out her window, then much later the photograph of Matabei spotted in a tabloid. They surge up as if out of nowhere, just as disaster may strike without

University Press, 2008), 9–11.

warning. Thus, it is on the same site above the bamboo forest and Lake Duji that Matabei will live through the earthquake and tsunami, this time with a different young woman's image on his mind. He is hopelessly in love with the new boarder, Enjo. Matabei and Hi-han, formerly master and disciple, became rivals for her affection, leading to their dispute and Hi-han's departure from Atôra upon finding his mentor in bed with Enjo. Contemplating both his happiness to be in love and the clumsiness of it being public, Matabei is taken with a sort of vertigo, already among the heights of the foothills rising above the guest house. The text amplifies the play of groundedness and dizziness, the oscillation between Matabei's emotions and reflections, his old age and ill health and youthful lovesickness, displacing them with a literal shaking of the earth that overturns everything: "Au moment où il se rétablit sur sa longue canne après un début de vertige, la terre se mit à trembler." The scene of the earthquake is a perfect foil to Matabei's first discovery of the view of Mount Jimura above Lake Duji, connected by the variously melodious or disharmonious sounds of the wind in the bamboo. If this produced, on that first occasion, "un bruit de claquette, de flûte ou de cloches tubulaires et, parfois, quelques secondes, d'étranges harmonies" (*PE* 20), in the earthquake the trees instead "tintannabulaient sur fond démultiplié de grelots, de trompes et de gongs" (*PE* 122). The vantage of Mount Jimura, become a familiar site across the novel, now in the moment of disaster offers a new, sinister aspect: "Matabei crut voir fumer le mont Jimura", as though the ancient volcano had awoken again, the sinister double of the smoke regularly rising above the crematorium that had become a regular part of his life in Atôra.

How may we think through this disaster that takes the place of a narrative climax? The narrative experience of the earthquake sets the parameters for how to read disaster here. First and foremost, disaster appears as the unthinkable, not just in the moral sense that causes effects that

human ethics would rather never happened, but as a phenomenon that suspends thought, or precisely what is unthought or unthinkable in any philosophical or discursive situation. The earthquake is "une minute distendue où le phénomène remplaçait toute pensée" (*PE* 122). In this, the earthquake is akin to the sudden, surprising, instantaneous images that capture Matabei's gaze and incite his desire to paint, resembling the "distraction entière" that made Matabei forget the movement of his boat toward the blind monk on Lake Duji. Both reveal a blindness within the doubled perception of landscape and its image, which is their potential to be radically other than they appear, to be completely and utterly overturned. The scenes of the painter's eye, activated by captivating landscapes, are linked to the earthquake at the place of Lake Duji and especially in the movements of the bamboo forest. Matabei's notion that art comes down to the wind, to the impossibility of capturing the movement of the wind through the bamboo, identifies the same aporia, the same gap, the same unthought at the core of art that is manifest in the earthquake, which makes the bamboo clatter and rattle disharmoniously, as much as the wind elicits strange harmonies from it. Following on the heels of the suspension of thought comes "l'éventualité qu'un tel événement fut réel, soudain flagrante" and then the impression that "rien ne semblait avoir eu lieu" (*PE* 122). Here, the *post facto* realization of the reality of the earthquake and the sense of unreality that stems from this necessarily belated uptake magnifies what Haddad calls elsewhere "la fascination devant le réel", resulting not from the exceptional nature of an earthquake, but in the basic inscrutability of "un mystère sans démonstration dans le simple fait d'être rivé au sol."[305] This is why after the earth trembles and quiets, it transfers its trembling to Matabei's shocked body, who "se surprit à trembler à son tour" (*PE* 123), just as the

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[305] Hubert Haddad, "Un Mirage au fond d'une soif ancienne. Entretien avec Hubert Haddad.," in *La Nouvelle fiction*, ed. Jean-Luc Moreau (Paris: Criterion, 1992), 275.

narrative had previously transitioned from his vertigo to the earthquake. The shaking of the earth amplifies something that was already present in the encounter with the real. The text presents the reality and the irreality of the unthinkable moment that has just passed as the opportunity to think disaster in its evenemential and quotidian aspects.

Writing Disaster

As with other aspects of the novel, the earthquake and tsunami sit at the intersection of many ways of thinking disaster. Most striking for its correspondence to the parameters delineated by the text is Maurice Blanchot's *Ecriture du désastre* (and this despite Haddad's professed disdain of Blanchot as the avatar of a perceived hermeticism in academic literary criticism that has predominated in France).[306] In this fragmentary text, Blanchot considers writing in the broadest sense, as an all-encompassing concept for telling and transmission, in light of its loss of a metaphysical foundation. If the etymology of disaster links human misfortune to the movements of the stars, combining the Latin prefix *dis*- with the Greek word for star *astron*, Blanchot takes disaster as the loss of astrological certainty. If disasters have often been predicated on the actions of celestial bodies throughout human history, the ultimate disaster would be not just to fall victim to a bad star or to a star in decline, but to lose the ability to read the stars as the hidden order to catastrophe and a justification of seemingly-arbitrary and random inhuman violence. Thus, the fallen star for Blanchot is the one that previously allowed humans to predict the actions of a dangerous and unpredictable world. "Si le désastre signifie être séparé de l'étoile (le déclin qui marque l'égarement lorsque s'est interrompu le rapport avec le hasard d'en

[306] Hubert Haddad, *Comme un étrange repli dans l'étoffe des choses: expériences critiques* (Paris: La Bibliothèque, 2017), 5. Haddad's gripes with Blanchot reside primarily in the perception that Blanchot does away with style as an analytic of literature in favor of a concept of the *neutre*. Haddad, by contrast, is invested in style as a mode of literature's self-awareness, against a university-driven, Blanchotian

haut), il indique la chute sous la nécessité désastreuse. La loi serait-elle le désastre, la loi suprême ou extrême, l'excessif de la loi non codifiable: ce à quoi nous sommes destinés sans être concernés? Le désastre ne nous regarde pas, il est l'illimité sans regard".[307] Just as disaster irrupts into *Peintre* as the untranslatable *kireji* in its narrative haiku with no causal relation to the narrative that precedes it, Blanchot formulates disaster, no longer legible in the stars, as something humans are subject to that does not concern them or see them.

The temporality of disaster in Blanchot is that of a non-event: "*Avant qu'il ne soit là, personne ne l'attend; quand il est là, personne ne le reconnaît: c'est qu'il n'est pas là, le désastre qui a déjà détourné le mot être, s'accomplissant tant qu'il n'a pas commencé: rose épanouie en bouton.*"[308] The earthquake as well as the captivating scenes that retrace Matabei's relation to images, are always unexpected and instantaneous, such that they are only recognized after the fact: by the time the thought of the "possibility that such an event were real" occurs, it already seems "as though nothing had happened." This is the case, too, when Matabei first climbs the escarpment and views Mount Jimura. His hasty blood-ink drawing on a tissue always trails behind the sudden image, in the time it takes to make a small incision in his finger and draw slowly with the pace of his measured bleeding. So, too, in the glimpse of Osué's smile, which appears in a flash before his car, but only consolidates into an all-consuming an image as it haunts him afterward from Tokyo to Atôra. Already, always already, the disaster is no longer there. Blanchot's botanical image of the blossom within the rosebud is particularly apt here, since it directs us to think not just of the earthquake, but of the garden. Disaster lets Blanchot think something that is neither a simple nor has an opposite and is therefore completely alien to

impersonal writing.

[307] Maurice Blanchot, *L'Ecriture du désastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 9.

dialectics (but obviously not opposed to it): The paradoxical image of the bud of a rose in bloom is "un non-vrai qui n'est pas faux".[309] In Haddad's metafictional universe of ambiguous referents, the "non-vrai" becomes one of the principle powers of fiction.

This fictional power of the "non-vrai" allows Haddad not only to intermingle fictional and actual geographies and events, but also to create an encounter between different ways of thinking about disaster. The novel's engagement with disaster activates side-by-side a double lineage of its thinking, bringing Blanchot together with an Islamo-European concept of disaster developed in the Mediterranean and a Western understanding of Zen Buddhist concepts. Importantly, all these modes of thinking disaster are bound up in questions of language, especially in narrative, transmission, and translation. Just as Blanchot's *Ecriture du désastre* experiments with a fragmentary textual form to make possible a non-dialectical way of conceptualizing writing, disaster opens the unthought categories of the impersonal and the neutral between self and other, active and passive, as well as disaster between continuity and rupture, or everyday and event.

Here, I will lay out these concepts, beginning in the Mediterranean and then moving to the East Asian context, and examine how they are taken up and transformed in the novel. My point of departure is the philological analysis of the word *disaster*, combining the Latin prefix *dis-* and the Greek noun *astron*, that *L'Ecriture du désastre* has in common with sociohistorical studies of disaster. Via a complex, branching genealogy, this etymology goes back to a medieval trans-Mediterranean context, where the concept of disaster emerges at sea in the open, intermediate space of the Mediterranean. While Blanchot focuses on the modern loss of

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[308] Blanchot, 62.
[309] Blanchot, 73.

astrological certainty and the declining possibility of reading human fate in the stars, the historian Gerrit Jasper Schenk returns to the Mediterranean seafaring mercantile context in which both astral navigation and the risks and hazards of sea travel made the possibility of reading one's fortunes in the stars so important. He traces the first recorded use of the Romance word *disastro* to thirteenth century Tuscany, where an anonymous translator used it to gloss the word *micieffo*, from either Occitan or Old French, in a version of the tale of the "Seven wise masters." Translating *micieffo*, meaning misadventure or literally something that ends badly, by *disastro* connects misfortune's befalling to the turning of the stars. According to Schenk, the evidence suggests that this new word originated among seafarers and merchants in the Mediterranean, sailing between the Levant, North Africa, Sicily, Tuscany, southern France, and Catalonia. Hailing from the corners of the Mediterranean basin and beyond, speaking a variety of different languages, these seafarers nevertheless shared in the frequent need for recourse to narratives of their hazardous experiences at sea, the risks they undertook, and the happy or disastrous endings they reached.[310] Indeed, it was around this same time that the words "risk"[311] and "hazard"[312]

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[310] Gerrit Jasper Schenk, ed., *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe* (New York: Springer, 2017), 16–17.

[311] From the Arabic *rizq*, meaning a divine provision. "Risk" (as *resicum* or *risicum* in Latin) first appears in twelfth-century Genoa and Pisa. Among a number of terms relating to uncertain outcomes, risk appears primarily and abstract and juridical contexts, in a conceptual cluster that is part of the genealogy of insurance practices, here related to the responsibility for the value of goods traveling by sea. Because of the legal context, scholars have come to favor an Arabic etymology, along with a number of other commercial terms borrowed from Arabic ("fondaco" from *funduq*, storehouse, "darsena" from *dār al-ṣināʻa*, place of production, or "duana" from *dīwān*, bureau or accounts), rather than a Latin one, from the verb *resecare*, meaning to cut and transferred to "risk" by designating rocky escarpments hazardous to ships. Sylvain Piron, "L'Apparition du resicum en Méditerranée occidental aux XIIème-XIIIème siècles," in *Pour une histoire culturelle du risque: genèse, évolution, actualité du concept dans les sociétés occidentales* (Strasbourg: Université de Haute-Alsace, 2004), 66–67. See also Omar Bencheikh, "*Risque* et l'arabe رزق *rizq*," *Bulletin de la SELEFA* 1 (2002): 1–6.

[312] From Arabic *al-zahr*, the name of a dice game, or possibly *yasara*, to play dice. Either usage would be a derivation from popular, rather than classical Arabic. Piron, "Apparition du resicum," 61. From a slightly different perspective, Clément Rosset cites a thirteenth century story about a crusader castle named Hasart in Syria, where games of chance were played. Clément Rosset, *Logique du pire: éléments pour une philosophie tragique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 9-10, 76.

passed into European languages from Arabic in similar contexts. The word *disastro* thus emerges not just because of an interest in horoscopes in late medieval Europe and the Middle East,[313] but in conjunction with a specific narrative desire born in the hybrid cultural and linguistic context of Mediterranean commerce and adopted into both literary and legal discourses.

It is therefore significant that the tale of the "Seven wise masters" or "Seven sages," whose translation occasions this first recorded use of *disastro*, has a similar genealogy. It is an offshoot of the so-called Sindbād cycle, whose origins lay somewhere between Greece, the Middle East, Persia, and India, appearing in many different versions and languages around the world over the last several millennia, including Romance, Latin, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions.[314] Most notably, a version of this story features in many editions of the *Thousand and One Nights*, although this Sindbād is neither a sailor nor a porter, like his better-known cousins, but rather a philosopher whose story falls under the "Seven wazirs" in the 1835

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[313] Since the early Islamic period, the popular Arabic *'anwā'* and *malḥama* genres have involved meteorological and astrological/prophetic prediction, respectively, based on the movement of celestial bodies. They may be based in Assyrian and Babylonian tradition, as well as the Hermetic tradition of Late Antiquity. Kristine Chalyan-Daffner, "'Natural' Disasters in the Arabic Astro-Meteorological Malḥama Handbooks," in *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe*, ed. Gerrit Jasper Schenk (New York: Springer, 2017), 207–24. Part of a *malḥama* text is included in the *Thousand and One Nights* in the 455th night, part of the "Conte de Tawaddud la jeune esclave (*Nuits 436 à 462*)" Bencheikh and Miquel, *Nuits*, 307–9. In the fifteenth century, the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī examines disasters in Islamicate history from the eleventh century to his present, along with the traditional accounts astronomical portents associated with them. These signified God's retribution against humans and earthquakes, in particular, signified divine will, if not a prelude to apocalypse. Juliette Rassi, "Several Natural Disasters in the Middle East (at the Beginning of the Eleventh Century) and Their Consequences," in *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of Disasters across Asia and Europe*, ed. Gerrit Jasper Schenk (New York: Springer, 2017), 72–74.

[314] Although many traditions assume an Indian origin for Sindbād the Philosopher, Benjamin Perry argues for a Persian original that itself took inspiration in the anonymous Greek *Life of Secundus*. Perry published versions of *Secundus* in a variety of languages, arguing for the story's influence not just on the *Book of Sindbād*, but also the *Thousand and One Nights*. See Ben Edwin Perry, *The Origin of the Book of Sindbad* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960), 80, 83-5, and *Secundus the Silent Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: American Philological Association, 1964), 1, note 1. While I am skeptical of Perry's eagerness to locate these vast and rhizomatic narrative traditions in the Hellenic cradle, his work nonetheless demonstrates how widespread and culturally embedded these story cycles became.

Būlāq edition from Cairo.[315] Thus, the "Seven sages" is, with the *Nights* and other story cycles, part of an entangled history of storytelling that cannot be assigned a territory of origin that corresponds to a contemporary nation-state, instead circulating and evolving in many directions across the Mediterranean, the Levant, and central Asia.

Peintre crosses these Mediterranean concepts of disaster with Japanese and Buddhist imagery of earthquakes and tsunami. In the novel, Matabei invokes the motions of the *namazu*, a giant catfish who shakes the foundations of the earth, rather than a fate written in (or erased from) the stars (*PE* 75, 121). The movements of the stars above and giant creatures below present some similarities, as both attribute the cause of disaster to something extraterrestrial, extraterritorial, not of the human plane of existence. However, the stars are observable and offer up *aléa* that may be read as having a certain logic, albeit not one that is plain to the uneducated eye. A subterranean catfish is hidden, which is to say illegible, no matter one's education or initiation into the secrets of the world. Whereas the stars offer a speculative, predictive apparatus, the giant catfish moves suddenly and without warning, appearing only in the image that is left behind after it shakes the earth. It is precisely as such an after-image that *Peintre* engages with disaster, in the same way that Matabei's painterly gaze sees the landscape doubled in its own potential image with its own temporality that separates it from immediate experience.

Like the Mediterranean translation of *disastro* for *micieffo*, the catfish emerges across a complex, mixed historical geography across East Asia that has strong resonances with other mythologies. Historically, the catfish became the object of popular woodblock print, called *namazu-e*, and newspaper depictions after a series of disasters in the nineteenth century

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[315] Perry, *Book of Sindbad*, 62. See the "Conte du roi, de son fils et des sept vizirs (*Nuits 578 à 606*)" in volume two of Bencheikh and Miquel, *Nuits*, 582–650.

(including earthquakes and outbreaks of disease).[316] The catfish image is traceable to the seventeenth or maybe sixteenth centuries, but the images of a giant creature, perhaps an insect, dragon, or serpent, associated with earthquakes may be dated to fourteenth century Japan[317] — most notably, via haiku dictionaries, which list groups of words with related meanings — and much earlier in China.[318] Across the centuries, the *namazu* appears as a legendary sea creature, the instrument of a deity wishing to shake up society, or a symbol of the imbalance of yin and yang energies in the earth. Such images are not isolated to East Asian mythologies, either. Some analogous images of the subterranean causes of earthquakes exist in Arabic culture. An anonymous report on two 1759 earthquakes in Damascus cites three popular beliefs about the causes of earthquakes. One is that the earth sits on the back of a whale, who is sometimes bothered by an insect crawling in its nose and starts to shake. Another claims that God may shake the roots of a mountain that supports the earth in order to shake or destroy a certain region. A third, derived from Aristotelian tradition, associates quakes with the pressure of steam under

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[316] The classic study on *namazu-e* is Cornelius Ouwehand, *Namazu-e and Their Themes: An Interpretive Approach to Some Aspects of Japanese Folk Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1964). For the nineteenth century context, see Gregory Smits, "Shaking Up Japan: Edo Society and the 1855 Catfish Picture Prints," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 1045–78; Gregory Smits, "Warding off Calamity in Japan: A Comparison of the 1855 Catfish Prints and the 1862 Measles Prints," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 30 (2009): 9–31. The latter explains the sudden and widespread adoption of the *namazu* image as a manifestation of popular discontent with the Tokugawa bakufu in the wake of famines in the 1830s and Admiral Perry's visits in 1853 and 1854, culminating in the 1855 Ansei earthquake, as the motion of a deity literally shaking up a world that had stagnated and required rectifying. In the early twentieth century, the catfish image becomes associated with profiteering after the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake. See Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Laughing in the Face of Calamity: Visual Satire after the Great Kantō Earthquake," in *Disaster as Image: Iconographies and Media Strategies across Europe and Asia*, ed. Monica Juneja and Gerrit Jasper Schenk (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 125–34.
[317] Anna Andreeva, "The 'Earthquake Insect': Conceptualizing Disasters in Pre-Modern Japan," in *Disaster as Image: Iconographies and Media Strategies across Europe and Asia*, ed. Monica Juneja and Gerrit Jasper Schenk (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2014), 82–85. These composite, indeterminate beasts appear in schematic maps of Japan, encircling its islands.
[318] Gregory Smits, "Conduits of Power: What the Origins of Japan's Earthquake Catfish Reveal about Religious Geography," *Japan Review* 24 (2012): 46–48. Smits emphasizes the symbolic nature of the *namazu* image, standing for the release of built-up yang energy in the earthquake escaping and causing earthquakes (rather than a mythological catfish itself). He sees the origin of this image in the mythical Chinese *ao* sea creature.

the earth's surface.[319] Whether divinely ordered, the whims of an irritable beast of burden, or a natural process, these chthonic images share in their unpredictable, instantaneous release of disastrous forces.

It is in the interval between the unthinkable experience of the earthquake and the realization of its reality after the fact that the narrative desire that impels *Peintre* emerges out of these hybrid concepts of disaster. In the novel's frame story, imminent death compels the recounting of a life story, which takes the form of the novel, and the transmission of a life's work, whose incompletion blocks any possible narrative closure. In the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami, the erasure or displacement of all the signs that defined the landscape of Atôra is mirrored in the destruction of the garden and the fans, inducing Matabei to re-create them, even though he can only do so by creating them anew in new images, texts, and relations among them. This underscores the potential for change always present in the everyday work of maintaining the garden in the first place. Thus, the novel joins this quotidian aspect of disaster as the constant possibility of interruption with the specific natural hazards of life in Japan, like the dangers of Mediterranean seafaring, to drive its narrative, which attempts again and again to give expression to this potentiality, just like fan painting is supposed to capture the wind in the bamboo.

Situating *Peintre* in these traditions sketched out by historians and sociologists of disaster shows how a novel may weave together the transcultural aspects of those studies in fictional forms not open to scientific writing. Before returning to the text, I want to shift from the history of how disaster has been thought to a theory of disaster based on futurity. This will illuminate

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[319] Verena Daiber, "The 1173/1759 Earthquake in Damascus and the Continuation of Architectural Tradition," in *Historical Disaster Experiences: Towards a Comparative and Transcultural History of*

some of the literary and philosophical questions at stake in a novel so focused on how the relation of art to territory may transform over time, whether in human acts of maintenance and transmission that attempt to preserve a particular relation or in their fundamental exposure to disaster.

What if disaster, however, were not so much the contingencies that interrupt maintenance and transmission so much as the failure of the procedures of maintenance and transmission themselves? Questioning the commonplace notions of disaster as an event or an agentive force, Wolf R. Dombrowsky argues that disasters are "principally man-made," occurring not in an earthquake or a nuclear meltdown *per se*, but rather in the "collapse of cultural protections" against such events.[320] Such cultural protections are necessarily future-oriented, speculating or predicting on the basis of a logic of probabilities rather than a "logic of facts." Because the probabilities themselves can be no better than the information they rely upon, which can only be tested against their future failure, disasters that collapse cultural protections are "the only falsifications we have to prove the truth, i.e., the empirical correctness of our theories."[321] Disaster is the limit of a technology of predicting and managing risk, a horizon that, whenever it is broached, will ultimately become folded back into the predictive apparatus. Disaster as a concept thus appears to be out of sync with the time of modernity, continuing to proffer "a premodern expression and false causal attractions: 'Des Astro,' 'evil star,' 'bad luck' and 'blind faith.'"[322] Reappropriating these lingering pre-modern remnants to a properly modern practice of positivist science, Dombrowsky dissolves the evenemential character of disaster entirely,

Disasters across Asia and Europe, ed. Gerrit Jasper Schenk (New York: Springer, 2017), 274.
[320] Wolf R. Dombrowsky, "Again and Again: Is a Disaster What We Call a 'Disaster'?," in *What Is a Disaster? Perspectives on the Question*, ed. E. L. Quarantelli (London: Routledge, 1998), 25.
[321] Dombrowsky, 30.
[322] Dombrowsky, 19.

rendering disaster tautologically as that which confirms the human intellection that conceived it in the first place, rather than a super- or extra-human force that ruptures the frames of human experience. At the same time, those same heterogeneous, non-modern notions that Dombrowsky tries to eliminate return surreptitiously in a positivist guise in the form of probabilistic science, which still seeks to predict human fortunes.

This future-oriented concept of disaster returns us both to the philology of disaster and its uptake by Blanchot. If, as Schenk argues, the word *disaster* originally designates the possibility of misfortune at sea, signified through a cosmological or astrological relation to the heavens, it also contains within itself from the beginning mechanisms of probability and an apparatus for predicting future outcomes based on the movements of celestial bodies as observed from Earth or increasingly complex astro-nomical and -logical models. Disaster in Blanchot is inaugurated by the collapse of this relation: the collapse of system of cultural protection from catastrophic misfortune. This collapse is not itself an event that has come and gone, like the extinction of a star or the burning up of a meteor, but the impersonal condition of exposure to disaster. This impersonal face of disaster, always turned away from us, speaks to both the natural forces that seem to strike as agents of catastrophe and the predictive technologies meant to contain them, to prevent them from ever manifesting as disaster. This is, in a sense, what Blanchot means when he writes that "*Quand tout est dit, ce qui reste à dire est le désastre, ruine de parole, défaillance par l'écriture, rumeur qui murmure: ce qui reste sans reste* (le fragmentaire)."[323] Like the wind in a fan painting, what any particular predictive apparatus or discourse on disaster cannot know is the very object that will rupture its horizon. The challenge that Blanchot identifies is not the positivistic task of improving forecasting technologies, but the possibility of thinking the limit

itself, of thinking what remains unthought, what cannot be thought, within thought itself.

Conceptualizing disaster as the empirical falsification of cultural theories of disaster implies an endless cycle of repetition, reflected in the phrase "Again and Again" in Dombrowsky's title. New intensities or manifestations of disaster can only be known (and thus predicted and prevented) after they have ruptured the limit meant to maintain disaster outside sphere of human existence. This suggests a gradual approach toward a *telos* from which the very possibility of disaster would be excluded. This de-agentification of disaster ultimately serves to reassert the experimental agency of human cultural protections, of which disaster is properly the object rather than a subject in its own right, thus reasserting a dialectical thought in which technology may perfect itself by testing itself against its own limits and reinscribing its failures into its predictive apparatus. Blanchot, on the other hand, figures disaster as something complete alien to dialectics that repeats as the unverifiable, an unwilled, non-agentive phenomenon. Thus, the repetition of disaster in the novel, or rather its constant recurrence in both everyday and spectacular manifestations does not build toward better, more final iterations, as one garden or painted image is destroyed and a better one takes it place. Instead, it marks the necessary incompletion that impels the creation of images, their transmission and circulation, and the narration of the novel itself.

After Disaster: "Ce qui reste sans reste"

Ni tourment ni deuil
sur les roses du jardin
dispersez mes cendres"
— haiku on Osaki's last fan (*PE* 52)

Disaster is therefore not the event that ruptures the continuity of the quotidian. It is the

[323] Blanchot, *Ecriture du désastre*, 58.

constant interruption of the present, an ever-present risk. It is something absent in every image. Like the art of fan painting and gardening in *Le Peintre d'éventail*, the thought of disaster creates a frame for managing chaos, especially in the predictive and evaluative images deployed to anticipate disaster before the fact or justify it afterward. With Blanchot, however, *Peintre* develops a way of thinking the outside of that frame, the unknown possibilities beyond its own horizon of thought. Disaster, in the novel, is what calibrates the ordinary and the extraordinary and the inside and the outside, recasting oppositional geographies in a-centric, asymmetrical territories. What was unthought in *Peintre* before the earthquake that emerges out of disaster? What even remains for Matabei to pass on to Hi-han in the final scene? The labor of a gardener and a painter continues, even if it has transformed. The garden has become a cemetery, the fan collection a palimpsest wiped of its last text, and Matabei a Buddhist monk.

Matabei, who survives the disaster on the high ground around Lake Duji, slips away from the refugee center where he is initially taken and returns to the guest house. He finds only "un terrain vague, une boue informe" (*PE* 135), which will require a different kind of labor. His vocation as a gardener will serve him as an undertaker, digging up the bodies of dame Hison, the adulterous couple, Aé-cha, and Monsieur Ho. The garden takes on a new relation to the body as "les entrailles des morts remplaçaient soudain les fleurs et les feuilles", just as the gardener's gestures must adapt to new tasks: "Dénouer des membres, croiser des mains, fermer des paupières, travestir l'horreur criante de la suffocation et de la noyade sous la physionomie du sommeil" (*PE* 137). In the destruction, the garden has transformed, but not disappeared entirely, even as it no longer resembles its previous form. So, too, is someone still needed to tend to it. No longer an allegory of Beauty or a metaphor for a woman's body, the garden now has become the bodies of the dead. The careful maintenance it required while green and flourishing continues,

albeit in a different form of care: “la putréfaction équivalait au déploiment parfumé des lilas. Rien d’autre n’avait lieu qu’un déplacement d’atomes” (*PE* 171). The smell of rotting that has replaced the scent of lilacs signifies that something has been transferred from the garden to the victims’ bodies in the flood. Ultimately, the atomic displacement (gesturing to the radioactive fallout) has changed the garden in form but not in nature. Thus, as Matabei prepares the bodies for last rites and cremation, he works to undo some of the dismemberment wrought by the tsunami, just as he would have repaired the garden after a heavy rain. He wraps the body of a young boy found in town while searching for Enjo to hold it in one piece, secures Monsieur Ho’s entrails with a silk covering, and reconstructs Aé-cha’s disfigured face with plaster (*PE* 170-2).

Just as fans and gardens are linked in their creation, so are they still in their transformation — and possible restoration — in the disaster. If Matabei first perceived the fans as a mystery that he eventually resolved, the enigma has now been renewed in the mass of water- and mud-logged paper they have become. The *aléas* of interpretation that were at work in the gardener’s musical dance between plants and fans play their full role in this re-reading (that is also a re-creation). After the tsunami, the state of the fans is similar to that of the garden, which has become a formless mass of mud. In the cabin, Matabei finds that “[u]n torrent de boue avait emporté les cloisons” and “une pâte de papier grisâtre témoignait tristement de ses nuits d’étude” (*PE* 148). As for the bamboo armoire containing the fans, “l’eau de mer avait inondé l’intérieur. Détrempées, les éventails du vieux maître avaient perdu toute apparence. On ne distinguait plus que de vagues taches décolorées [….] toute l’œuvre d’Osaki Tanako était abolie: n’en demeurait qu’un fond d’empreintes, un brouillard indéchiffrable pour quiconque n’en eût gardé souvenir” (*PE* 149). Suddenly, instantaneously, the fans that Matabei had endlessly studied to decipher their relation to the garden become an inscrutable enigma again, or very nearly so, since he is, of

course, the only one who would have any memory of their previous state. This is the only possible opportunity from which they might emerge more than an "indecipherable blur". Matabei's act of recreation, though, is ambiguous in its fidelity. His memory may produce an effect of recollection that is not, in fact, faithful to the lost original. Matabei's memory therefore stands out for the role it plays as a new partner in the dance between garden and workshop as he tries to solve the enigma anew, this time not of what the fan reveals about the garden and vice versa, but how to render legible the traces of ink on washed-out, mud-encrusted paper.

To begin with, the disaster calls for a new way of classifying the fans. The former three-part encyclopedia divided into views of the garden's plants in their ideal sizes and colors, anecdotal sketches, and elaborate scenes that provide an overall blueprint has been mixed together and its paintings washed out beyond recognition. Matabei has them "à nouveau rangés et classés selon leur degré d'altération" (*PE* 156). The only criteria for sorting them now is by the extent of the damage they have suffered. Then begins the painstaking, ever-unverifiable work of restoration. A few traces remain for Matabei to work with: "l'esquisse d'une branche, les pierres d'un sentier, la première arche d'un pont, et quelques caractères, rarement un mot entier" (*PE* 149). Far from sparking specific memories, these minimal traces are first and foremost occasions for (re)interpretation in the guise of remembering. Reconstituting haiku based on based on his memory and the few legible marks poses endless problems of interpretation: at night, just as he used to study the fans to grasp the secret of their relation to the garden,

> il passait et repassait en revue les feuilles de papier de riz décolorées en s'efforçant de ressusciter d'absentes merveilles. Un *kanji* sauvé, même en filigrane, donnait lieu à des efforts singuliers de mémoire. Le caractère à peine lisible signifiant *endroit calme*, par exemple, n'était-il pas plutôt un cheval et fallait-il l'associer à celui d'univers? Comment choisir entre iris et *kakitsubata*? Les traits en partie dissous autorisaient tant d'interprétations, qu'à la fin, l'unique qui fût à exclure s'imposait: *Seul endroit calme / dans cette ruée de mondes — / la remise aux selles* (*PE* 156-7).

The polysemy of Japanese *kanji* means that even identifiable characters retain multiple meanings and generally lack the context to decide for one over another. No matter how deep Matabei delves into his memory, following the smallest trace of ink or color as far as it will take him, the original order and content of the fans has passed into the realm of the imperceptible. Instead, the labor of comparing, of ordering and reordering, produces something new. It forces Matabei to admit, "Il ne se souvenait d'aucun dessin en particulier, d'aucun haïku d'Osaki Tanako, seulement d'une impression profuse faite de liberté et de grâce, laquelle eût atteint à la perfection si l'art n'était au contraire, *halte sur des chemins oubliés*, l'inachèvement suprême" (*PE* 177). In this movement, by forgetting memory, Matabei transforms his own process of recreation into a new kind of fidelity to master Osaki's oeuvre. He need not strive for perfection because the perfection his master attained was that of incompletion, of a constant inversion of perspectives that puts off any closure or completion.

It is this same work of incompletion that he passes onto Hi-han, who spots a journalist's photo of a haggard Matabei Reien in a tabloid magazine and heads north from Tokyo to find out what has become of his old teacher. Even as Matabei asks him to finish the work, he knows that the point is that it is never completed. The page may always be wiped clean and written over again. Across the disaster, a labor of maintenance persists, not just against the extreme destruction of an earthquake or a tsunami, but in the face of the ever-present risk of entropy, decay, and damage. This risk is not just external, but present within the work of maintenance itself. This is the question that Matabei reckons with after Osaki's death: "pouvait-on repiquer, transplanter, tuteurer, bouturer, diviser, aérer, buter, attacher, éclaircir, pincer, pailler, et même arroser, sans perdre insensiblement la juste mesure et l'harmonie, ne fût-ce que de l'expression de tel angle facial, d'un détail répété des linéaments, de l'aménité indéfinissable des parties à

l'ensemble?" (*PE* 65). In other words, the very act of cultivating the garden, to try to preserve it, is to change it. Impermanence is the rule of creation. This is the form of disaster that is present within quotidian continuity. The extreme disasters that seem to rupture continuity reveal themselves to be the amplification of a gap already in the ordinary, not just a spectacular irruption.

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Hiver de l'hier
l'air est chargé des cendres
de ceux qu'on aima
(*HP* 123)

And what becomes of the gardener and painter Matabei himself? Matabei follows a path of illumination initiated by his first encounter with the blind monk on Lake Duji. The earthquake completes Matabei's *de facto* initiation as a Zen Buddhist monk. Where the blind monk came to perform Osaki's funeral rites, Matabei, by necessity, becomes a priest capable of carrying out those rites at the guesthouse. He uncovers, cremates, and buries the remains of his fellow boarders killed in the tsunami, transforming the garden made a mass grave by the flood into a cemetery. Just as the old monk had allowed himself to expire in an extended meditation following the disaster. Matabei will embrace death after passing on his story to Hi-han. Thus, he, too, dies in a kind of meditation: having recounted his tale to Hi-han and entrusted his former student with the surviving painted fans, both restored and unfinished, Matabei sets fire to his mountain retreat, which was itself originally a shelter for meditation. Matabei's meditation is that of narration. It is a meditation on his life, his story, and his work, as well as on the quality of life

in general, defined alone by its contingency and fleetingness. In this, his initiation and cremation rites differ from typical monastic rule, which seeks to transform a disordered quotidian into an orderly daily practice that aspires to the extraordinary: to contemplation of the divine. In this, Matabei's rites are the exception that is the utmost realization of the rule. His monastic disciplines are painting and gardening and the object of his meditation is the ephemeral nature between art and landscape. In his death, he accomplishes the incomplete ("accomplir l'inachevé"), leaving partial works and a partial story with a definite (but open) ending. He does not die so long as the story remains, but once it approaches the present and returns to the fans (thus to a repetition, to the past, to an unknown and now destroyed origin, before catastrophe), its incompletion is complete and death seals it with a blaze that scatters it to the wind.

While Matabei's death marks the end of his story, it also repeats the opening of the possibility of narration in general. *Peintre*'s frame story, like that of the *Nights*, is indefinitely generative. If legend has it that anyone who reads all of the *Nights* will die, *Peintre*'s readers are in no greater danger: it is impossible to read all of the *Nights* because it is a dispersed, exploded book that ends only with the death of its readers.[324] The instant of death abides in instance in narration,[325] in writing that has neither beginning nor end.[326] What remains at the end of the novel? Xu Hi-han presents himself as an art historical expert on the work of Matabei Reien, despite the latter's claims that all his haiku and paintings are really the work of Osaki Tanako.

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[324] Kilito, *Œil*, 9–10.

[325] Blanchot's short story about a young man in France who escapes execution by a Nazi officer at the end of World War II ends with an abiding sense of the instant of death in abeyance that marks his life to follow: "Seul demeure le sentiment de légèreté qui est la mort même ou, pour le dire plus précisément, l'instant de ma mort désormais toujours en instance." Maurice Blanchot, "L'Instant de ma mort," in *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, by Jacques Derrida, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 10.

[326] "Si le livre pouvait pour une première fois vraiment débuter, il aurait pour une dernière fois depuis longtemps pris fin." Blanchot, *Ecriture du désastre*, 62.

Yet the narrative that Hi-han transmits to the reader, ostensibly from Matabei's own mouth to Hi-han's cell phone, but really through the intermediary of the text, shows that the fans, as well as the gardens and landscapes they said to document, are palimpsests many times erased and written over. Even should Hi-han complete Matabei's work of restoration, as he has been charged to do in the dying man's last wish, he will have only prolonged the work of recreation that makes the original fans and the original garden (both of which were only "original" in a relative sense) increasingly unrecoverable. This asymmetrical, a-centric system of image-making offers no point of origin or return, only an endless spiraling in no particular direction at all.

Peintre's a-centric, asymmetrical territory is crafted in the relation of art to landscape, where a third element always intervenes to displace binary tension: fan, haiku, and garden; the everyday, the event, and disaster; self, Other, and others; domestic, foreign, and orphan; France, the Maghreb, and Japan. It is through its concept of disaster that the novel modulates among these categories, amplifying intensities instead of opposing models. Thus, while the novel sits at the intersection of different historical and conceptual traditions of imagining Japan from elsewhere and of understanding disaster, it traces a territory of entangled relations, delimiting a set of things that may be compared, without then undertaking a comparative practice. Instead, the novel returns to the link between narrative and disaster cultivated in the milieu of the medieval Mediterranean and recast with Japan as another pole, de-centering the oppositional geography of European and other shores. It both narrates what has been unthought in previous images of Japan as well as the disastrous turn that many of those images made, turning back on the self in opposition to an absolute Other faraway in the east.

Such turns may in fact be inevitable. No matter the novel's narrative practice, its publication in Paris by a Franco-Tunisian Amazigh Jew in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake

invites questions of resemblance and difference, of locating a certain vision of selfhood and belonging in relation to an other, whether by marveling at images of their stoic suffering or wondering at the beauty of their landscape.[327] When asked in a 2015 interview why so many of his novels took place in conflicts around the world, he responded, "je suis traversé par l'Histoire, par une certaine Histoire, du fait de mes origines judéo-arabe et de la dévastation de mes appartenances."[328] Haddad thus points to the disasters that have beset the Jewish, Amazigh, and Arab peoples from whom he is descended as decisive for his frequent recourse to conflict settings for his novels. Yet his works themselves, as *Peintre* demonstrates, are irreducible to a simple identitarian claim. Rather, in this formulation, "la dévastation de mes appartenances" indicates both the political, religious, and social devastations that mark Judeo-Arab history as well as a disruption inherent to Haddad's sense of belonging to such a community. Belonging to the diaspora of a community that is itself defined by its fragmented exile throughout the world is to experience belonging as separation and unbelonging. In a community constituted by disaster, belonging is always at risk because the community itself is at risk. One of the recurring themes in Haddad's work is the self becoming other, through amnesia, mistaken identity, or uncanny

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[327] The mediatized image of suffering plays a key role in *Peintre*, albeit for a domestic audience: the image of Matabei among the ruins of Atôra is what brings Hi-han to his aid from Tokyo. However, media of Japanese responses to disaster, often of the same genre as the magazine photograph featuring Matabei's haggard but resolved visage, also circulated far abroad. These often function to reinforce preconceived images of Japan, even as they may contain elements that break with those stereotypes, but that often remain invisible to viewers. See Kay Kirchmann, "Constructions of Otherness: Images of Pain, Suffering, and Stoicism during Japanese Disaster 2011," in *Disaster as Image: Iconographies and Media Strategies across Europe and Asia*, ed. Monica Juneja and Gerrit Jasper Schenk (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2014), 145–54. At times, they also occasion a reiteration of local issues and concepts through the frame of Japan. Thus, the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī wrote an elegiac poem entitled "Tokyo" on the occasion of the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, lamenting the destruction and death in Tokyo and Yokohama, while reprising the apocalyptic themes associated with natural disaster in previous Islamicate writing. See Sugita Hideaki, "Japan and the Japanese as Depicted in Modern Arabic Literature," *Kiyō Hikaku Bunka Kenkyū* 27 (March 1989): 31–33.

[328] Hubert Haddad, Anne Segal, and Gérard Cartier, "Entretien," *Secousse* 17 (November 2015): 70.

resemblance.[329] In *Peintre*, disaster operates in this undecidable region between identity and difference, without returning to either one.

Conclusion: The Thought of Trembling

How does one live with the ever-present possibility of disaster? When Matabei survives the earthquake and the earth's shaking lingers on as a trembling in his body, the novel suggests that this not simply a physical manifestation of fear, but a question of rhythm, like the sometimes harmonious, sometimes dissonant sound of the wind in the bamboo or the gardener's musical dance between the garden and the workshop, the plants and the fans. In the trembling that transfers from the earth to Matabei's own body on the heels of the earthquake, a Japanese *tremblement de terre* in Haddad's novel encounters what the Martinican writer and philosopher Edouard Glissant's "pensée du tremblement". From a Caribbean archipelago exposed to hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, Glissant takes up the same task of thinking how art relates to geography, offering a foil to *Le Peintre d'éventail* from the other side of the globe and thus further opening up its reconfiguration of literary territories between France, Japan, the Maghreb, and beyond. Whereas the likes of Roland Barthes turned both Japan and the Maghreb back on French modernity in an attempt to think outside of Platonic and Christian metaphysics, Glissant approaches the question of community formation from a different geographical trajectory that begins with the immanence (and sometimes imminence) of disaster.[330] *Peintre*

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[329] This is the case, for example, in *Palestine*, where Cham, an Israeli soldier, loses his memory during a Palestinian assault on the West Bank outpost where he is stationed leaves him captive and amnesiac. A young woman and her mother take him for their long-lost brother and son, Nessim, whose identity Cham adopts.

[330] When Jacques Derrida and Edouard Glissant joined in dialogue on the question of *tremblement*, their discussion was marked by a fundamental misunderstanding. For Derrida, tremblement could only be a Kierkegaardian response to fear of the divine; one trembles before God, out of fear of God. Glissant had something more earthly in mind. See Jacques Derrida and Edouard Glissant, "Fragments d'une

makes a similar geographical gambit, beginning and ending in Japan, with no outsider-*cum*-participant observer mediating a new anthropology of the endotic and exotic, à la Perec.

The thought of trembling is a way of confronting exposure to disaster (both extraordinary and everyday) that does not collapse into fear: it is "l'intuition de la manière dont le monde à l'heure actuelle s'organise pour nous, quel que soit l'endroit de provenance ou d'atterissage de ce 'nous'."[331] This "us," caught on a line of flight between its origin and its destination, names communities that form in and by the intuition of a common experience of the way the world is organized around it at a given moment. Similarly, the object of the world itself only coheres in this same moment. Like the unexpected vantage points that Matabei suddenly discovers throughout *Peintre*, the moment in which "we" and "the world" mutually form one another is as unpredictable as an earthquake: "nous ne pouvons concevoir le monde que sous le biais de l'imprévisible."[332] Once again, this "us" is bound to its unthought limit. Like the endless possible relations between the garden, the fans, and the landscape, earthquakes are the product of a set of forces and relations so complex and entangled that simple causes and effects cannot be discerned either retrospectively or predictively. Glissant calls this "le champ absolument effrayant de complexité de ce qui se passe dans le monde."[333] Contemplating this fearful complexity occasions trembling, not out of uncertainty, but out of knowledge of immanent complexity and unpredictability, the *aléas* of interpretation.

For Glissant, literature participates in this exposure to the unpredictable, as itself "risque,

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discussion," *Annali della Fondazione Europea del Disegno (Fondation Adami)* 2 (2006): 105–12.
[331] Edouard Glissant, "La Pensée du tremblement," *Annali della Fondazione Europea del Disegno (Fondation Adami)* 2 (2006): 82.
[332] Glissant, 82.
[333] Derrida and Glissant, , "Fragments," 111.

confrontation à la mort",[334] or one way to move in rhythm with trembling before fearful complexity. In an homage to the Algerian novelist and playwright Kateb Yacine, Glissant recounts that he was to introduce the former's play *Cadavre encerclé* at its 1958 performance in Brussels, where right wing terrorist supporters of French colonial rule in Algeria had threatened that "le premier qui rentre en scène sera descendu".[335] In this situation, the world offers a particularly organization to Glissant and Yacine, an unforeseen complication that changes their personal history and, for that moment, their experience of time itself. In that moment, as Glissant would say, the world takes on a new rhythm that one may approach through the *pensée du tremblement*. This thought of trembling has as much to do with mortal fear as it does with ordinary anxieties for Haddad, who states in an interview, "Quelle est l'origine de la plus légère inquiétude? Elle vient de la peur catastrophique de la dévoration et de la mort, alors même qu'il s'agit vraiment de la plus légère des inquiétudes".[336] Both the catastrophic and everyday dimensions of trembling are at play in the novel. Matabei's *pensée du tremblement* is a rhythm, like the musical interpretations of the *aléas* in the garden and the fan paintings, or like the noise of the wind in the bamboo, a bodily trembling in response to the trembling of the earth but also a practice of living in accord with the new rhythm of life after the earthquake. In the absence of any political or religious "notion globale" in him, erased by the disasters of Hiroshima, Japanese atrocities, Osué's death, and the earthquakes, Matabei develops a localized response to the sometimes trembling, sometimes quaking rhythms of Atôra.

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[334] Zineb Ali-Benali, "Edouard Glissant au Maghreb: Le dit du monde," *Littérature* 2, no. 174 (June 2014): 66.
[335] Edouard Glissant, "L'Epique chez Kateb Yacine," in *Hommage à Kateb Yacine*, ed. Nabil Boudraa (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 25.
[336] Haddad, "Mirage," 273.

The Multiple East

Thus, Haddad's apparent foray into *japonisme* overturns the cartography of thought that made *japoniste* aesthetics operational in modernism as a means to address an internal alienation through the floating signifier of the exotic, to return to the endotic by way of wonderment at the other's everyday existence. *Peintre* demonstrates what Glissant, writing from that East in the West that is the "West Indies," calls the "présence de l'Est multiple".[337] This multiple East indexes both the way Orientalizing discourses and gazes collapse non-Western cultural difference and the potential to reactivate that difference against to rethink the cardinal and geographical vectors of thought, especially those established by European imperialism, to show in return that "l'Occident n'est pas à l'ouest. Ce n'est pas un lieu, c'est un projet."[338] The multiple East contests the imperial political project that naturalizes itself in its own cartography, in the name "Occident," and its westward vector. Thus, for example, from the perspective of indigenous people in the Caribbean, their "Western" conquerors came from the East, to a West that they mistook for their own East (the West Indies).[339] Then there is Africa, to the Caribbean's East, and the Maghreb, which is a Western Orient to Europe, and the East Indies, both of which were territories of origin for innumerable enslaved persons on European-run Caribbean plantations. This historical and territorial plurality unsettles the conceptual geography of "East" and the "West" and the differential modes of reading it prescribes for the familiar and the foreign or the self and the other.

Le Peintre d'éventail activates these other dynamics that also traverse the Maghreb,

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[337] This is the name that Glissant gave to the work of art that his friend the Martinican ceramicist Victor Anicet created for Glissant's tomb. See Valérie Loichot, "Edouard Glissant's Graves," *Callaloo* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 1020.
[338] Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 14, note 1.
[339] Glissant, "Pensée," 86.

which are often occluded by the predominance of the Maghreb-France imperial and postcolonial circuits. Taking a tangential line of flight to Japan, the novel breaks away from the Mediterranean's gravitational force based on a territorial consistency formed by historical and political relations within a foundational geographic and geological framework, from Fernand Braudel to the current migrant crisis and from the siege of Algiers to Emmanuel Macron's recent visit.[340] If this turn eastward follows in the footsteps of European modernist avant-gardes, Ottomanist, pan-Arab, and Islamic reform movements in looking to Japan for alternative models or materials for political and cultural modernization, *Peintre* stages and transforms the historical and conceptual stakes of these traditions. It returns to them and turns away from them, revealing both the historical significance of writing about Japan from elsewhere and the scrambled, entangled vectors of literary geography and historiography that both enable and overturn that significance. The cardinal directions of East and West so often used to map out Europe's relation to the rest of the world has yielded an "Orient" that stretches from the "Far East" of Japan to that East in the West, the "West Indies", by way of the Maghreb, itself already geographically further West than much of Europe and, by its very name, a West in the East, naming the western end of Islamdom but a part of the "Orient" to European Christendom's "Occident".

When Haddad declares that "il y a deux mondes, le monde protégé et le monde catastrophique", he is at first blush evoking the unequal geography of "development," which divides the world between the developed West and the underdeveloped zones of the Orient or the Global South; but the possibility that "l'un peut s'inverser dans l'autre" also hints at the global

[340] Glissant tends to differentiate the cultural geography of the Caribbean and the Mediterranean for precisely such reasons. He argues that the Mediterranean concentrates human activity within and around itself, while the Caribbean archipelagos relay action across a diffuse network without a center. Glissant, *Poétique*, 46.

possibility of catastrophe irrupting into a world that seems calm on the surface.[341] In *Peintre*, the discovery of the latent potential of disaster within the everyday also speaks to the doubling of the real by fiction. It is precisely in the creation and disruption of relations between the landscape, the garden, and the fans that this disaster manifests as the suspension of relation, as the non-representation within every image. Once they are all disfigured by the earthquake and the fans no longer resemble the garden and the garden no longer resembles the landscape, we can see how there was always a non-resemblance at the core.

What does it mean, then, for a novel about Japan to also be Maghrebi? The ambiguous referents of Haddad's metafictional "Japanese" universe lay bare the fundamental undecidability of literary reference. The relation of text to territory is never determined *a priori*, only ever in the determinations a text encounters as it circulates in the world. *Peintre*'s ambiguous mode of being "about" Japan, as a Maghrebi novel, demonstrates the basic instability of "Maghrebi" literature's relation to the Maghreb. Reference flashes up as an image, always the double of a text or of the world, one that the reader must evaluate with Matabei's painterly eye, weighing its volumes and its proportions, without therefore ever being able to decide the priority of one image over another. *Peintre* thus offers Maghrebi literature — or any other corpus — a different way of looking at itself. In the writing of disaster and the thought of trembling, tradition is always breaking with itself, genealogy passes among orphans, and community forms from unbelonging. If this is a post-modernism to literary modernity, it is in the dissolution of the everyday and the event into different intensities of disaster, of familiar and strange into an a-centric territory whose vantage point offers a doubled perspective, always shifting closer and further away in a spiral motion through its asymmetrical coordinates.

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[341] Haddad, "Mirage," 274.

Conclusion: Literary Subjects

The subject of literature emerges in relation to territory, insofar as belonging to a given territory implies a corresponding mode of subjecthood: literature as a subject of expression that is itself subject to certain laws, norms, and expectations in the range of subjects open to it for literary inquiry. Reading for text and territory in the Maghrebi novel has meant first a critique of how texts called "Maghrebi" become subject to various geopolitical, historical, linguistic, and other territorial formations and, in turn, how they map virtual territories of their own. On one side is a system of literary subjection and subject-formation, which as much the field of power relations as any other domain of the social. Territories are not merely neutral or objective sets of contextual information that allow us to divine the truth of a text. They prescribe readings that reproduce the inequalities of power relations in the literary field. On the other side are novels that displace themselves temporally and spatially from the Maghreb and its established literary historiography. Through them, another subject of literature has emerged. This is the *hors sujet*, which constitutes Maghrebi writing as an ex-centric literature, one that goes beyond the territory to which it appears to belong. Ex-centricity is a vector that moves away from centers of cultural gravity with the unpredictability of an irregular, eccentric orbit.[342] In the novels studied here, this has taken the form of a remnant in history and biography that can only take literary form in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*, futures past inassimilable to the Maghrebi present in Jamel Eddine Bencheikh's *Rose noire sans parfum* and Driss Chraïbi's *La Mère du Printemps* and

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[342] Hakim Abderrezak's *Ex-Centric Migrations* uses this term in a similar sense in a different context. He examines Maghrebi and diasporic cultural works that deal with migration across the Mediterranean, contending that migration patterns have become ex-centric in a shift away from France as the obvious destination for Maghrebi migrants and eccentric in the means by which migrants travel, often with perilous conclusions. In both his usage and mine, ex-centric denotes a shift present but unrealized in cultural production. Hakim Abderrezak, *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 2–4.

Naissance à l'aube, and a Maghrebi novel about Japan in Hubert Haddad's *Le Peintre d'éventail*.

In each case, the text follows its ex-centric trajectory via the gap between it and its territorialization that is the *hors sujet*. Through these displacements, from the denaturalized westward vector of history encoded in the terms *maghrib* and Occident to the multiple Easts that emerge between the Maghreb and Japan, the cartography of Maghrebi literature is dis-Orient-ed. This calls for approaches to literature that are sensitive to its potential difference from the world. Otherwise, modes of valuing texts by locating them in a globalizing world canon will risk reifying the very unequal valuations they seek to redress.

Realism in Question

An implicit thread through all of these readings has been the interrogation of realism, whether it a testimonial imperative in response to political states of emergency, a peculiarly Maghrebi version of the historical novel, the novelistic reworking of archival documents, or a modernist tradition that seeks to derive a glimpse of the real by borrowing from a non-Western metaphysics through the fragmentary aesthetics of the haiku. None of these texts could be described as realist in the classic, Balzacian sense. Yet realism, broadly construed, is undeniably a critical vector by which Maghrebi literature has been subject to territorial determinations. This ranges from a naive realism meant to transparently render biography and ethnography in novel form, to a social realism giving account of political engagement or testifying to the historical traumas of colonialism, to what I might speculatively call a postcolonial realism that allows virtually any text to be read in terms of its Maghrebi affiliations. By focusing on the ways that Maghrebi novels disclaim or disrupt the claims that this realism makes on them, I have attempted to bring out the specifically literary way that fiction always suspends function of reference.

My purpose has not been to invalidate realism as a literary project *per se*, but to show how realism can be mobilized to maintain literary hierarchies. There thus remains a need to talk about the "real" or "realism" beyond the horizon of thought passed down in Western genealogies. This is especially so in the case of modernist realism's affinity with ethnography and its tendency to appropriate cultural difference as a trope for speaking to internal estrangement. While the mode of realism has proven productive for revealing the entanglement of modernity in France with its colonial project and experience of decolonization, this same gesture also tends to turn back inward, as in Perec's new anthropology premised on the difference between self and other and favoring the study of the former, or Barthes's illuminating discovery of cultural difference within the domain of semiotics through his encounter with Khatibi that ultimately turns into in an inward journey for Barthes. Thus, realism may sometimes, as Kristin Ross argues, "offer a voice to those who live in a different temporality, who follow a pace of life that is nonsynchronous with the dominant one", but it may also just as well obscure those multiple temporalities.[343]

Going forward, then, this project may develop by looking more to other ways of conceiving literature's relation to history, particularly through writing in Arabic and other languages, and to other histories of literary modernity, as in the multilingual milieus of the Mediterranean periodical press. This is not simply to replace one genealogy with another, but to always recall the gap between a literature and its territory. I will close by reflecting on a few of the authors and texts I have studied imagine that gap through two figures that often come to mediate the real in literature: the journalist and the detective. Haddad, whose *Peintre* partakes the most of realist aesthetics among the texts I have discussed, notes that many of his protagonists

[343] Ross, *Fast Cars*, 13.

are reporters or journalists. His realism is therefore a pragmatic one, the stance that one must take when faced with the givenness of the world: "on ne peut qu'interroger le préalable, autrement dit ce mystère, et de toutes les façons. Il faut donc accepter l'apparence donnée, sans doute problématique et transitoire, c'est-à-dire le réalisme."[344] This is only ever a provisional realism, one that is subject to change. He admits that over time it will doubtless come to appear as fantastical to readers as medieval romance does to many today. It is no surprise, then, that he endows the journalist with a peculiar mythos: he calls the journalist "le dernier argonaute du monde moderne", a world that he sees as fundamentally divided by inequality and doubled by its possibility to radically transform at any instant; the journalist-as-argonaut becomes precisely "celui qui passe la frontière, le témoin, et le passeur."[345] This is a realism that is always liable to become fantasy, that contains more mystery within it than it does certainty.

If Haddad's journalist departs from the well-trod streets of Balzacian realism for the fantastic, fictional double of the real world, what of the figure of the detective? After all, the *agents de police* in Balzac's world, as D. A. Miller observes, resemble the novelist, since both have the insight to penetrate the surface of social relations.[346] In a similar way, Kristin Ross reads recent French detective fiction as the best diagnostic that of contemporary racism's origins in the twin postwar moments of modernization and decolonization, even as these two stories tend to be kept separate in other cultural spheres.[347] Yet Driss Chraïbi's Inspecteur Ali, the protagonist of a half dozen novels from the latter part of his career, is less an investigating machine who models a discerning gaze that transforms the mystery of the real into its rational

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[344] Haddad, "Mirage," 276.
[345] Haddad, 273–74.
[346] D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 23.
[347] Ross, *Fast Cars*, 8–9.

explanation, but rather "le grain de sable qui fait dysfonctionner n'importe quel système."[348] Ali's adventures generally lead to the parodic send-up of all forms of authority and of established linguistic and cultural hierarchies, such that the final book in the series ends with him killing the author who created him. The textual universe takes over its putative origin in the real world. We are thus left as at the end of Perec's *Revenentes*, where the thieves locate the hidden gems through a reference to Poe's "Purloined Letter," one of the emblematic texts of detective fiction: "je le décèle ézément: Te rémembères les 'Lettres Menqentes': le meyer recette de céler est de sembler lesser en éveedence!"[349] From the reader's perspective, it is not the jewels that appear to be hidden in plain sight. They are, in fact, stashed in boxes in drawers in a locked credenza. There were no clues that the reader could have interpreted to discover their hiding place and no great reveal of the concealed order of reality in the story. Rather, what is hidden before the readers' eyes are literally the "missing letters", all the vowels other than "e" that have been excluded from the text, often by severe orthographic distortions and linguistic borrowings. The mystery within reality here, as in the Inspecteur Ali's fatal blow to his author and creator, is the text itself.

Haddad's journalist and Chraïbi's detective bring to the fore the way that fictional reference may operate in disjunction with the world that a realist aesthetics would have it represent. It is therefore essential to analyze how texts construct literary territories and locate themselves. The impulse to name and locate needs to be reconsidered from the perspective of the texts as they establish (and at times exceed) such boundaries. This is a form of contingent literary knowledge that cannot be reduced to its context at any given place or time. This is not to deny

[348] See the October 12 episode of Assouline, "Driss Chraïbi."
[349] Perec, *Revenentes*, 639.

that literature has any historical relations, but rather to indicate that there are limits to reconstructing those relations. Even if the historical and political forces at play in a text could be exhaustively reconstructed, should that become the normative reading? I have argued instead for the need to account for what happens in the dis-location of writing across time and space, in both its productive and reductive effects, for the Maghrebi novel may not be about the Maghreb.

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