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FRAYED MEMORIES AND INCOMPLETE IDENTITIES: THE IMPACT OF THE ALGERIAN WAR ON THE *PIEDS NOIRS*, ALGERIAN WOMEN, AND THE ALGERIAN STATE

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PREFACE

"Algeria's struggle for independence lasting eight years was one of the most bitter and bloody wars of self determination in history." [1] This Algerian War of Independence, as Martin Stone labels it in *The Agony of Algeria,* is one of history's most costly assertions of a people's attempt at establishing an independent nation in terms of the blood which was shed and which continues to be shed. In "The Algerian War and the Revision of France's Overseas Mission," the historian William B. Cohen puts the cost of the war in perspective.

> A quarter of a million Algerian were killed, two million were herded into detention camps, hundreds of thousands were tortured. Some 25,000 soldiers were killed, six governments fell over issues related to the war, and then the Fourth Republic itself was overthrown by a military coup triggered by events in Algeria. The war was a moral disaster for France. The use of torture became commonplace, making France the first democratic state to employ its citizens in such a systematic way. [2]

The war lasted from 1954 to 1962 and ended 132 years of French occupation of the country, but at a cost so terrible for the Algerians as well as the French that they are both still paying for it. As John Obert Voll, in *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World Independence Movement*, points out, modern Algeria's creation out of the independence movement has been particularly difficult because there had never really been an Algeria per se, just a stretch of land that was part of North Africa (or "the Maghreb" as North Africa is also known). As Voll himself put it, "In many ways, Algerian nationalism developed not as a movement to recover a lost national identity, but as a movement to create and assert a special identity in the face of the destructive forces of French colonialism."[3]

But the establishment of this special has remained problematic because it has faltered and failed to coalesce, given the violence occurring in the wake of its own birth. The guerilla tactics, terrorism, and torture used by resistance groups like the

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[1] Martin Stone, *The Agony of Algeria* (New York: Colombia University Press 1997),37.

[2] William B. Cohen, "The Algerian War and the Revision of France's Overseas Mission." *French Colonial History* 4 (2003), 227-239.

[3] John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World.* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 209.

Mujahadeen and FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) during the war made it one of the bloodiest conflicts of decolonization in the Cold War period. More troublesome is that the violence that created Algeria is the same violence that today continues to be destructive and keeps Algeria from finding an identity (or identities). Why? Because the violence used by Algerians to counter French violence only temporarily united people during the war, but once the war was over, the Algerian people splintered once again into warring factions. These factions turned on each other, fighting over what shape the new nation should take and who should control Algeria. And as this violence worsened steadily, by 1962, it tore apart the newly decolonized country.

Unfortunately, even after the Algerians evicted the French , they continued to victimize themselves by warring over who should control the country. Because of this continuing warfare, Algerians have been unable to coalesce into a unified, peaceful nation. Fighting France for independence gave the country a reason to unite, but as soon as this goal was realized, this temporary unity abruptly dissolved. As Voll states, Algeria's special identity was created by defining itself against French colonialism. As a consequence, Algerians rely on the memory of colonization to hold their identity together, an ironic situation. Even Algeria's independence war monuments testify to the country's dependence on the memory of France's colonial presence. For example in Oran, there is a particular monument which was, ". . . originally a French memorial to the dead of the colonial era, [which] was sheathed and converted into a memorial to the dead of independent Algeria." [4] In this way,

> Algerians authorities have, through this gesture,
> chosen to remain affixed to the memory of their enemy,
> to mix their dead with his, and more importantly , to enclose
> the symbols of sovereignty of the other within the envelope of
> their own symbolic body. To what impossible logic does the
> conquest of a proper memory have recourse, when it is negated
> in its very being![5]

[4]French memorials to their dead in the Algerian independence war are interestingly similar in concept to this monument in Oran. The names of soliders who died in Algeria are added to WWII monuments, at the bottom of the lists of dead soliders, mixing the dead of the two wars. Since the French lost the Algerian struggle, is this an attempt to place the soldiers of Algeria into a more glorious memory (a memory of a war that was won rather than lost)?

[5] Fethi Benslama, "Identity as a Cause." *Research in African Literatures* 30.0 (1999), 36-50.

In post-colonial Algeria, the independence war became what can only be described as a destructive foundational legend for the nation. On one hand, the legendary memory of the independence war keeps Algerians from severing their ties to their former colonizers. But its most terrible damage is that it has helped to spark a continuing civil war.

While the war was being fought, it motivated Algerians to fight together against the French, but currently its memory is doing just the opposite by causing strife and pitting various factions in Algeria against one another. This is the focus of this study. In post-colonial Algeria, each faction in the country remembers a different version of the independence war and the reasons for which it was fought. Most importantly, each group feels the Algeria it dreamed of never materialized and tends to blame the other groups for the failure of its Algeria to become a reality. Algerians cling to memory, preferring to hold to an Algeria which only exists in their imagination. The Algerian inability to move beyond memory acts as a barrier to the development of a clearly defined national identity. This thesis will explore this costly war's influence on the memories of Algerian people through three case studies:

(1) the *Pieds-Noirs* as exemplified by Albert Camus (1913-1960);
(2) the post-independence Algerian state as exemplified by the FLN;
(3) Algerian women as exemplified by Assia Djebar (1936-);

These three studies represent the most extreme and diverse examples of the troubled Algerian memory.

WHY ALGERIANS ARE SO INSISTENT ABOUT PRESERVING THEIR MEMORIES OF FRENCH COLONIZATION AND THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE: THREE CASES OF ERASED MEMORIES

Frantz Fanon, referring to the Algerian Independence War in his famous anti-colonial manifesto, *The Wretched of the Earth* wrote "But the war goes on and we will have to bind up for years to come the many, sometimes ineffaceable, wounds that the colonialist onslaught has inflicted on our people." [6] Thus wrote Frantz Fanon, referring to the Algerian Independence War in his famous manifesto, *The Wretched of the Earth.* In this opening statement in his chapter on "The Colonial War and Mental Disorders," Fanon made an accurate prediction about the ineffaceable psychological wounds that the Algerian Independence War would leave on the Algerian memory. The long years of healing foreseen by Fanon have not yet ended since Algerians are still facing the after effects of the war.

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (1965) are foundational works mainly read as examples of anti-colonial discourse. However, in this thesis, his works are used for their concentration on the psychological effects of the war on Algerians. His works are the inspirational groundwork for this study of Algerian memory disorders. In *Studies in a Dying Colonialism,* Fanon writes about the mental disorders of Algerian patients which he came across while working in a hospital in Algeria. After seeing so many mentally traumatized Algerians, Fanon understood well that though Algerians believed their woes would end with France's departure from their shores, they were only at the beginning of a new and even more painful struggle with memory.

It is difficult to say whether the Algerian Independence War from 1954-1962, which created modern Algeria and ended French colonization, was a moment of achievement or of tragedy for the country. Gaining sovereignty is usually a matter of pride for a country, but the slaughter and torture that ushered in Algeria's decolonization casts a pall over this memory.

More than this, the liberation war, rather than living up to its name, has introduced Algerians to yet a second form of enslavement by controlling their

[6] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 249.

memories and history. The memory of the war dominates the Algerian's past, overshadowing everything else in their history and keeps people chained to the period of 1954-1962. The reasons for and consequences of the Algerians' almost manic obsession with the Independence War will be explored through three case studies, revealing the detrimental effects of being unable to escape the years from 1954-1962.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

An introductory chapter will provide a historical background on the Algerian war. This section will examine the factors that led to the Algerian war and highlight the events that escalated the violence into full-blown warfare. In this section is also a short background of how the French have contributed to Algeria's memory problems. Sources on the colonization of Algeria as well as the Algerian War of Independence itself are numerous. Among them, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, a collection of Alexis de Tocqueville's essays edited and translated by Jennifer Pitts, provides an important perspective on the early years of colonization[7]. De Tocqueville's essays, written while colonization was actively taking place, give the most direct testimony of France's policies and political attitude towards Algeria. Some other sources that provide a more general history of the colonization of Algeria are Charles-Robert Ageron's *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*, Benjamin Stora's *Algeria: 1830-2000* (2001) and Pierre Bordieu's *The Algerians* (1962). Bordieu's work is of particular interest since it surveys and describes the characteristics of the various tribes in Algeria.

The postcolonial period in Algeria after 1962 is also quite well documented. The civil war created in the wake of independence was reported by French newspapers like *Le Monde*. But more recently, perhaps the most complete and up to date reference on the civil war and the political problems that led to its outbreak is *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002* by Hugh Roberts (2003).[8] Robert's work is additionally important as a study of the Algerian government's mindset. It is as close as one might come to a psychological study of the postcolonial government's attitude towards the Algerian War and how the FLN desperately tried to be the only controller of the war's memory.

Even with many well-researched works, this study of the way

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[7] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, ed. and trans. by Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[8] Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity* (New York: Verso, 2003).

memory has impacted the *pied noirs,* francophone Algerian writers, and the current Algerian government proved quite challenging. This war is constantly referred to as unspeakable -- a war that neither French nor Algerian men will speak of; this war also attempted to silence the Algerian women who participated in it as well as the *pied noirs* who were exiled twice over because of it. Such strong emotions are attached to this war that the memory of it is suppressed, distorted, or ignored. Thus, sources which catalog the psychological effects of this war on the French, the Algerians, and the Algerian state are not plentiful. However, much of the time, what was *not* being said by those affected by the memory of the war was more important than what they did say.

The goal of this thesis, inspired by the current trend in historical studies to look past the "main story line" is to find out what authors of Algerian history as well as Algerians themselves are not saying about the Independence War and why they remain silent. Cataloguing silence thus provides much of the research for this thesis. To do such a study involved looking into people's reactions to and feelings about the war and how this affected the way they remembered and described its history. This work is an attempt to create a psychological history of Algeria's decolonization. In other words, it is a study of the mental proceeses as well as emotional and bevioral characteristics of Algerians in relation to the memory of the Independence War. The mental and emotional relationship Algerians have to the Independence War memory affects their politics, daily lives, and concept of what the country should be. Though memory cannot explain everything about Algeria and its people, it has played an essential part in its the post-war decisions as well as the the current state of the country. Since memory is such a significant part of the post-war Algerian experience, Algeria and its history cannot be fully understood without it.

The first case study deals with the *pieds noirs,* or white French colonial settlers as represented by Albert Camus, who were encouraged to move to Algeria in droves in order to drive native Algerians off their land. The *pieds noirs* are another forgotten group erased from French memory because they were seen as low class and an embarrassment. Initially, the *pied noirs* represented the aspirations

of the French to continue their history of glory in Algeria. But once Algeria gained its independence, they were expelled from Algeria and became minority exiles of the war. Even more than indigenous Berber and Arab Algerians, they had reason to fear being forgotten because their part in Algeria's history was reviled and shunned by both the native Algerians and the French. The second part of the chapter on *pieds noirs* will focus on Albert Camus, who struggled with trying to be loyal to both his Algerian and French heritage during the war. What Camus found was that he could not find a way to bring into accord his *pied noir* memories and the memories of native Algeria without betraying one or the other -- or both.

The second case study will consider the politics of the regime established by the FLN after gaining independence and how, in trying to stay in power, the FLN played a significant part in Algeria's fixation with the Independence War. The FLN has imposed a specific memory of the Algerian war on its citizens. But this FLN-controlled memory has been weakened by challenges from military groups and by the general population of Algeria, who are now demanding to have their own memories recognized. This case study is mainly concerned with the uses and abuses of memory, especially the milking of the Independence War as a kind of national myth in order to cover up the difficulties left in the wake of decolonization. The main aim here is to explore the consequences of the government's attempted control of the population's memories, which involve projecting themselves as heroes of the liberation war, while persecuting other groups that had also helped to liberate Algeria from the French.

Finally, the third case study will look at Algerian women. Mainly using Assia Djebar's postcolonial literature as well as personal accounts from other women, this study will explore how the memory of the Independence War insinuates itself into the male and female psyche, be it personal, memory, or ancestral memory. The result is that Algerians often remember their history as a confused tangle, but a tangle which always loops back to the liberation war like an eternal time warp. To tell

Algerian women's stories, Djebar must work around the ever looming presence of the war. The result is that time is reordered in her writing.[9]

Though they must write about this history in jumbled pieces, Djebar and others write to counter the uncomfortable silence that surrounds the war and its memories of violence. As the literature of these writers will demonstrate, this is especially true in the case of women in the resistance movement who feel too ashamed to talk about the torture they went through at the hands of the French. Thus, Djebar and others write on behalf of women in order to give them a voice in their own silenced history. She and other women scholars use their writing as a way to prevent the loss of these memories and to keep women's voices from passing into silence.

These three case studies examine the specifics of why Algeria's memory troubles and amnesia are so deep. Amnesia is defined as the partial or total loss of memory caused by brain injury, or by shock, or by repression but it comes in many forms for Algerians.[10] It can be forgetting imposed by others, selective forgetting, forgetting in order to protect the self from painful and traumatic memories of war, and especially forgetting in order to protect a personal vision of Algeria. We will see examples of all of these forms of amnesia. The primary goal of examining these kinds of Algerian amnesia is to lay out whether the events of history have been intentionally or unintentionally obscured by Algerians. This means finding out who or what has caused the amnesia, whether it is the mentality of the group or whether others have influenced the forgetting, or whether the values of each group have led to distortions in how they remember and if so what they have forgotten.

At the same time, there is some hesitation in doing a history of the mind because of the sense that one is prying into private and sensitive feelings. This is especially true in the case of the Algerian War, which is surrounded by a thick wall of

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[9] Postcolonial literature is defined here as literature written in response to colonization but this study will show that it is much more, including a weapon to lash back against former colonizers, a voice for expressing inexpressible feelings left in the wake of colonization, and most importantly for this study, a means of searching for and exploring memories of the colonial past.

[10] David B. Guralnik ed., *Webster's New World Dictionary: Second College Edition.* (New York:Guld & Western Corporation,1980), 45.

silence. This silence prompts one to ask whether it is right to pry into the subjects people are deliberately avoiding.

Urvashi Butalia sheds light on this historical difficulty in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India* (2000). She is writing about a very difficult subject since during the partition of India "*. . . about 75,000 women are thought to* have been abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion.) Thousands of families were divided, homes destroyed, crops left to rot, villages abandoned." [11]

Writing about Muslim and Indian women and extreme violence at the end of and immediately after English rule during the clashes caused by the partitioning of India, she knows that she is walking a fine line when she attempts to break the silence that surrounds memories of violence. Butalia writes, "The dilemma remains: is it better to be silent or to speak? Or, for the researcher, is it better to 'allow' silence or to 'force' speech?"[12] When trying to heal old wounds left by memories, historians risk reopening and making these wounds worse. This is particularly true for Islamic women, whose terror of exposure to the outside world makes it so hard to discuss any topic. However, as Butalia continues to analyze the impossibility of working with silenced memories, she asks, "Yet was it not wrong then to present only a 'partial' picture? To hold back some of the 'truth' and make available another?" But on the other hand, when she does break the silence, she states, "When the question of rape and abduction of women came up, I asked myself, was it right to try and prise open their silences? Would my search for historical truth not mean another violation?"[13]

Butalia's musings on exposing historical raw spots help historians to realize that much of what we consider to be "history" is really just a partial picture, which is especially true in the case of the Algerian Independence War since so much seems to be deliberately unsaid or forgotten, as this thesis aims to prove. Thus, it is

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[11] Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India.* (Duke:Duke University Press, 2000),3.

[12] Butalia, 282.

[13] Butalia, 282.

important to seek out the truths behind the main historical story lines, though such research can at times prove to be a rough task in terms of trying to be respectful of the people involved.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION. A SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE WAR

Before looking at how the Independence War affected Algerians, the reader should know something about the Independence War itself. This section is a brief discussion of how French colonization led to the Algerian independence movement. The information provided in this chapter is by no means a complete coverage of the whole war on which volumes might be written and on which much has indeed been written.[1] In fact, from the end of the war to the mid 1980s, about a thousand works have been published on the war.[2] Instead, this short background will explain why, even though colonization in Algeria lasted for a century, it is the nine extremely violent years of the independence movement that keep resurfacing in the memories of our three case study groups -- the *pieds noirs,* the post-independence Algerian government, and Algerian women writers.

This chapter is also meant to be, as much as possible, a collection of historical facts and data without personal opinions. The purpose of this is to take the opportunity to look at the events of war without the strong emotions that war inevitably evokes. While it will become clear in the three case studies to follow that a "true version" of the Independence War is basically impossible to formulate because of the strong emotions Algerians attach to it, in this section, I will try to concentrate purely on the sequence of events leading to independence.

Algeria's colonization by the French began in the 19th century. French colonization and settlement of Algeria, which began in the 1830s, destroyed the traditional infrastructure of Algeria. During this period, French immigrants to Algeria, or

[1] Among the main authors and sources already mentioned : *Le Monde* articles provide the most current and constant coverage of the Algerian situation. However a search of any of the following authors should yield a large number of articles and books on the war: Frantz Fanon, Albert Camus, Benjamin Stora, David Prochaska, Martin Stone, Pierre Nora, Hugh Roberts, John Ruedy, and Charles- Robert Ageron.

[2] Richard I. Deriderian, " Algeria as a lieu de mémoire: Ethnic Minority and National Identity in Contemporary France," *Radical History Review* 83 (2002): 28-43.

pieds noirs, took over Algerian land, turning the country into a settler colony. The effect of the *pieds noirs'* arrival on Algerian society was dramatic. To make room for the European influx, native tribes were broken up and forced on to unproductive lands.[3] The loss of land and displacement resulted in the unemployment and poverty of many Algerians, who were then forced to seek job opportunities in France.[4]

The Algerians who did not immigrate to France were still surrounded by the French language, which was used in politics and the press, and "above all, [it was] the language of technology and modern economic management without any translation into Arabic. As a result, in 1923, Arabic was even declared foreign to Algeria because it was seen as an archaic language not useful for modernizing Algeria."[5]

For Algerians, the French language became the ultimate symbol of France's tyranny and of the permanent damage colonization would inflict upon their lives. Even after decolonization, the French language remained a permanent legacy, continuing to rule the lives of modern Algerians, who had no choice but to speak it, since they knew no other language. As Rachid Boudjedra, a Francophone Algerian, expresses in his novel, *LettresAlgériennes*, he may be living in a postcolonial age but he is not free because he is still ruled by his own French:

> Pour moi, Algérien, je n'ai pas choisi le français. Il m'a choisi, ou plutôt il s'est imposé à moi à travers des siècles de sang et de larmes et à travers l'histoire douloureuse de la longue nuit coloniale.[6]
>
> [For me, an Algerian, I did not choose French. It chose me, or instead, it was imposed on me through centuries of blood and tears and through the painful history of the long colonial night.][7]

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[3] John P. Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* (Boulder: Westview Press,986), 30.
[4] Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 3.
[5] Christine Souriau, "Arabisation and French Culture in tkhe Maghreb" in *Decolonisation and After: The British and French Experience*, ed. W.H. Morris-Jones and Georges Fischer in *Studies in Commonwealth Politics and History* No. 7 (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1980), 321.
[6] Rachid Boudjedra, *Letters Algeriennes* (Paris: Grasset and Fasquelle, 1995), 30.
[7] All translations appearing in this work are my own.

The French language was imposed on the natives because France did not view Algeria as just another colony. Instead, France sought to make Algeria an extension of France itself. Algeria, being just an ocean's crossing away, was referred to as the "Second France."[8] Algeria was so conveniently close that the French were aggressively motivated to "frenchify" it. Once the French decided Algeria would be "just another part of France," it followed that Algerians would be subject to French rules and taxation.

So in 1865, Napoleon III gave Algerian Muslims legal equality with the *pieds noirs,* but denied them full citizenship. They "could enter the French civil service, enlist in the army, and migrate to metropolitan France," but they could not attain French citizenship.[9] By 1871, any Algerian rebels who resisted colonization were defeated, and "Algeria became a 'small French Republic' in which only the interests of the French settlers counted. The voter's card became the title of nobility in this novel feudal system."[10]

Napoleon III's decision to give Algerians legal equality but not French citizenship formed the roots of the Algerian identity crisis: the French would always treat Algerians as quasi citizens with quasi-French qualities; that is, the Algerians were almost but not quite French. Islam, was, of course, the main reason to deny Algerians full citizenship. The only way for an Algerian to gain full citizenship was to renounce Islam. "Only several thousand were willing to do so." [11] The Algerian dilemma, which continues even today, is laid out in this policy. While Algerians want to have all the rights of every other French citizen, their refusal to renounce Islam has kept them from attaining full citizenship.

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[8] Francis Gouda, "Good Mothers, Medeas, or Jezebels: Feminine Imagery in Colonial and Anticolonial Rhetoric in the Dutch East Indies," in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism,* ed. and trans. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999),198.

[9] Entelis, 30.

[10] Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present,* ed. and trans. Michael Brett (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990), 53.

[11] Entelis, 30.

ECONOMIC DECLINE AND THE ALGERIAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The movement towards Algerian liberation from France came at the end of a long period of economic decline that began with the displacement of Algerian tribes in the 1830s and was then shaped by the two World Wars. The Algerian Nationalist Movement occurred roughly between the conclusion of the two wars beginning in 1919 after W.W.I and resulting in the start of the Algerian liberation war in 1954.[12] The two World Wars helped in general to weaken all Europeans' control of their colonies, but the French stubbornly remained convinced that Algeria was already too much a part of France to ever be lost .

But the economic decline in Algeria, which was worsened by the two world wars, gave the Algerians more incentive to start a nationalist movement. Ruedy explains: "The Algerian nationalist movement appeared and developed within the context of a progressively deteriorating economic situation which was caused by the conjuncture of negative world market forces, a series of bad crop years at home, and demographic pressures, all of which contributed to the growing desequilibrium within the economy as a whole." [13]

By the end of W.W.I in 1919, according to Ruedy, the war effort had caused major inflation; industrial prices were rising much more quickly than the prices of agricultural products, which were the base of the Algerian economy; surpluses of unsold grain were adding to the economic troubles; and in 1920, crops were failing as they had previously done in 1866-1870. To add to this, there was a postwar epidemic of a flu known as *la grippe espagnole,* which took a toll on the population.[14]

A typhus epidemic and additional shortages followed in W.W.II, ravaging the population once again in 1942.[15] Dire unemployment had already hit the country in between the two wars because of the worldwide depression of the

[12] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 115.

[13] Ruedy, 115.

[14] Ruedy, 115.

[15] Robert Aaron,*Les Origines de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Fayard: Paris, 1962), 81.

1930s. But World War II made Algeria's lack of the "most elementary industrial base painfully clear" as the country experienced shortages of energy and machinery.[16]

So Reudy suggests that economic frustration spurred the Algerians to fight for independence from France, but Robert Aaron, in "Des Émeutes Causées par la Famine?" [Riots Caused by the Famine?], asserts that the economic problems and famine in Algeria were not the true causes of the war. He says, "Certes, la propagande nationalist a trouvé un terrain d'élection dans la situation économique de l'après-guerre. Mais il ne semble pas pour autant que les émeutes soient due à la famine." [Clearly, the nationalist propaganda found an election platform in the post-war economic situation. But it does not seem inasmuch that the riots were due to famine.][17] Aaron's evidence for this is that it was the most prosperous areas of Algerian society that ended up rioting while the poorer sections remained inactive. Aaron instead believes that immigration of Algerians to France to work or become soldiers really led to the war because ". . . les musulmans on pris conscience de l'inégalité qui existait entre leur statut et celui d'autres catégories."[18] [. . . the Muslims became aware of the inequality that existed between their status and that of other classes.]

Algerian immigration steadily increased during France's occupation of Algeria, spurred by several factors. Initially, it was caused by the displacement of Algerians, especially those from Kabylia, who left to work on colonial farms, but many eventually moved to France. The shortages of W.W.I caused France to recruit workers from Algeria. After W.W.II, there were up to 350,000 Algerian men working in industrial jobs in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille, and the Independence War itself caused many Algerians to move to France to avoid the violence.

Thus, since the world wars forced many Algerians to immigrate to France for economic reasons, the increasing exposure to western rights in France allowed Algerians to see the inequalities between themselves and French citizens. Martin Stone, in *The Agony of Algeria*, like Aaron, says that "The First World War can be

[16] Reudy, 117.
[17] Aaron, 165.
[18] Aaron, 167.

taken as the true starting point of nationalist aspirations among the Muslim community in Algeria. It was around this time that Muslims who had been forced to immigrate to France became aware of democratic and egalitarian principles vigorously suppressed in Algeria, and of the emergent Arab nationalist movements in states of the Arab east."[19] So more than the hardships faced by Algerians, it was the comparisons between their lives and that of the French, which they were now able to make, that awakened the nationalist movement.

The fact that France also depended on Algeria during both world wars revealed to the Algerians that their colonizers were vulnerable and certainly not invincible. During the First World War, Algerians were conscripted into the French army, and though many Algerians willingly accepted service, at the same time, Aaron writes that they felt they deserved better treatment for their sacrifices. The Algerians had a list of what they wanted including:

> La suppression du code de l'indigénat et des inégalités fiscales.
> La diffusion accrue de l'enseignement.
> L'augmentation du nombre de représentants musulmans dans les assemblées élues.
> La citoyenneté française compatible avec la conseration du statut musulmam.
> Ces revendications paraissent outrées aux Européenes qui y voient des aspirations à l'indépendance et parlent de nationalisme musulman. [20]
>
> [The suppression of the indigenous code and of fiscal inequalities.
> The diffusion of teaching.
> The increase in the number of Muslim representatives in elected assemblies.
> French citizenship compatible with the preservation of Muslim law.
> These revindications seem outrageous to Europeans who see in them aspirations towards independence and who speak of Muslim nationalism.]

In short, the Algerians saw their service as an opportunity to ask for more rights from the French government.

As more Algerians pushed for full parity with French citizens, they formed stronger political factions. One faction was represented by Ferhat Abbas, who wrote the famous "Manifesto for the Algerian People," demanding a constitutional assembly for Algeria. Abbas believed in integrating Algeria into France and had

[19] Stone, 33.
[20] Aaron, 169.

formed the AML or *Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté* in 1944. The opposing faction was the PPA or *Parti du Peuple Algérien,* who wanted full Algerian independence. A third conservative religious party, the Association of Reformist Ulema, was run by Ben Badis. Finally, in 1945, demonstrations by the AML and the PPA in the town of Setif dissolved into a full-fledged clash with police in which 15,000 Muslims died. Abbas was arrested during the riots. On his release, he formed a new party, the UDMA or *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* , which advocated the formation of a secular autonomous state which might retain some form of political and economic ties to France, a full nine years before the actual start of the Independence War.[21]

In 1947, France tried a new tactic by attempting to establish Arabic as an official language alongside French and by giving Algerians a voice through a National Assembly. However, neither Abbas' more moderate group nor the MTLD or *Mouvement pour la Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (the renamed sovereignty party) was able to make headway. The assembly was a failure and had fallen apart by 1956. Aaron says that after the assembly's dissolution, Algerians had no incentive to try to do things the French way. "Aux yeux des partis nationalistes, la voie de la légalité avait échoué. It restait la violence." [22] [In the eyes of the nationalist parties, the legal route had failed. Violence remained.]

Violence became the choice of the frustrated members of the MTLD. In 1954, Mohamad Boudiaf, Mohamad Iarbi Ben M'Hidi, Moustafa Ben Boulaid, Mourad Didouche, and Rabah Bitat established CRUA, the *Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action.* Krim Belkacem, Ben Bella, Mohamad Khider, and Aït Ahmed also became a part of this party, which, in November 1954, changed its name to the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*).[23] During the war, the FLN was the most recognized revolutionary party calling Algerians to action against the French. The FLN's initiative in leading Algerian resistance during the war would allow it to take control of the government after the war.

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[21] Stone, 34-35
[22] Aaron, 287.
[23] Stone,36.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

According to John Ruedy, "Of the several violent independence struggles that accompanied the decolonization process in the years after World War II, that of the Algerians stands out as the longest, the costliest, and arguably the most poignant in terms of human issues it juxtaposed."[24] Both Reudy and Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth,* agree that the Philippeville massacres of 1955 marked the moment in which Algerian violence became endless. Previous to 1955, the FLN had banned attacks against European citizens, but the Philippeville massacres changed that. [25]

It was Youssef Zighout, head of the revolutionary branch known as the Wilya Two, and his second in command, who were responsible for the Philippeville massacre. (There were five *Wilyas* under the CRUA, *Comité révolutionnarie d'unité et d'action,* or Revolutionary Committee of Unity and of Action.) Zighout and Ben Tobbal, his second in command, decided to take the war from combatant to civilian targets. Thus, the Philippeville massacre was launched on August 20, 1955 when Zighout and Tobbal ordered an offensive against the town of Philippeville as well as twenty-six other locations including the capital. The worst attack occurred in El-Halia where guerillas killed innocent women and children, a shocking change that caused the rebellion to turn into all-out warfare. The French retaliated with brute force and what the FLN claimed to be indiscriminate persecution.[26] As Fanon describes,

> Terror, counter-terror, violence, counter-violence: that is what observers bitterly record when they describe the circle of hate, which is so tenacious and so evident in Algeria . In all armed struggles , there exists what we might call a point of no return. Almost always it is marked off by a huge and all-inclusive repression which engulfs all sectors of the colonized people. The point was reached in Algeria in 1955 with the 12,000 victims of Phillippeville, and in 1956 with Lacoste's instituting of urban and rural militias. [27]

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[24] Ruedy, 156.
[25] Ruedy, 162.
[26] Reudy, 157-163.
[27] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth.* trans. Constance Farrington (New York:Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 90.

It should be remembered that this was not just a two way conflict between the French and Algerians. The *pieds noirs* quickly became involved in the conflict. Governor-General Robert Lacoste thus added to the mounting violence in 1956 by bringing in troops and as Fanon remarks, "The Europeans of Algeria responded immediately to Lacoste's call to kill." [28]

Besides the buildup of the European militia called for by Lacoste, 1956 was a significant year in the war. In October, Lacoste's military carried out the famous kidnapping of the five FLN chiefs -- Ben Bella, Aït Ahmed, Khider, Bitat and Boudiaf. These men were imprisoned in France until the end of the war. More importantly, the Battle of Algiers, the war's most well known event, took place. It started September 30 when three young middle-class women bombed three different locations, including a local hangout called the Milk Bar and an Air France terminal. [29] This marked the beginning of significant terrorism by the FLN countered by extreme torture tactics by the French military. The fact that women were used as bombers was also crucial because the French began to target women in their counter-terrorism torture sessions. More significantly, the fact that women were sacrificed for the war effort caused a deep wound in the Algerian male psyche, as will be discussed later.

In 1957, another famous landmark of the Algerian war, the Morice line, ". . . a 200-mile fence erected along the Tunisian border, charged with 5,000 volts of electricity and flanked by barbed wire and lethal mine fields, was established. This huge barrier did much to exhaust Algerian resistance as the fighters tried without success to break through the line." [30]

But it was the election of General Charles de Gaulle in 1958 that really began the last period of the war. While de Gaulle understood little about Algeria, he was essential to ending the war because he became increasingly ". . . convinced of the inevitability of Algerian independence."[31] This made him very

[28] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 91.
[29] Ruedy, 168.
[30] Reudy, 169.
[31] Stone, 39.

unpopular with the *pieds noirs.* In 1960, he invited moderate FLN representatives to begin negotiations in Paris.[32] In 1962 the Evian Accords ended French colonization in Algeria, called for a cease fire, and established the FLN as the political representative of the people.[33] While the Evian Accords ended the war between France and Algeria, the violence in Algeria continued with a civil war between the FLN-established dictatorship and other militant Algerian groups that felt they had been denied a say in the new Algeria.

[32] Reudy, 177.
[33] Stone, 40.

THE QUEST FOR A GRAND HISTORY OF "LONG CONTINUITY" -- FRANCE'S PART IN ALGERIA'S CLOUDED MEMORY OF THE ALGERIAN WAR

The French attitude towards their defeat at the hands of the Algerians was that it did not fit into French history, a supposedly successful history. In order to exclude their defeat from history, the French became amnesiac with regard to this war, and in turn, their amnesia also affected the Algerians' memories of this war. Both the French and the Algerians are complicit in the cover-up because "[f]ollowing the war, the French and Algerian states fostered an official collective amnesia. On the French side, this amounted to an official non-recognition of the conflict as a "war" and its casualties as victims of national stature, as *anciens combattants*, with full veterans' benefits." [34] Through these attempts to minimize the impact of their losses, the French tried to save face, suppressing the memory of what was seen as an inglorious part of their history. [35]

The famous 19th century historian, François Michelet, presented his volumes on French history as a grand and romantic object to be admired by the public. Novelists like Victor Hugo used their great descriptive abilities to become literary "restorers" of French history. In his novel, *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), for example, Hugo revived the French people's love for the medieval era and therefore brought this history to the present. This 19th century love of restoration of ancient things stemmed from the French desire to make history into something grand and noble as well as smooth and continuous. The idea of a history of long continuity was especially important in the nineteenth century, given that it was an era preceded

[34] Silverstein, 207.

[35] After this introduction was written, a new law was issued in France on Feburary, 23, 2005 which is a "highly revisionist view of French colonial history" whose vision is meant to impose a "pedagogical stance to be taken with the national education system. Although "the law is remarkable above all for its complete lack of recognition for any negative aspects of colonialism . . .," it suddenly reverses France's previous refusal to acknowledge the memory of Algeria's colonization and of the Algerian War. It, in fact, states that France wishes to thank the men and women who participated in Frances "accomplishments" in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Indochina. It even establishes a foundation for the memory of the Algerian War. Thus, instead of taking an amnesiac stance towards the Algerian War, France is now trying to impose a positive memory of the war on the populace. Paul Sager, "New French law officially recognizes 'positive' role of colonialism." j.zizek@AUCKLAND.AC.NZ (accessed Wed, March 30, 2005),1-7.

by the French Revolution. During the Revolution, French society went through dramatic alterations: the monarchy fell, and many ancient buildings and artifacts were destroyed. In the 1800s, the idea was to rebuild and repair what had been damaged and to make it even better. This included French history. Because of the disruption caused by the Revolution, French history needed to be "put back together." Thus novels like *Notre Dame de Paris* reconnected modern French readers to a past they had been separated from by the upheavals of revolutionary change. Buildings damaged during the Revolution were also repaired and made even more glorious when possible.

No doubt much of the nineteenth century pride in French society and history was also inspired by Napoleon's grandiose vision of empire and when Napoleon's reign ended, France became all the more intent on trying to preserve its history's greatness. Especially in the 19th century, the history of France was cultivated as a treasured artifact, an artifact that ennobled and distinguished it from that of all other peoples and countries. These nineteenth century ideas helped France justify its colonization of Algeria. During the Napoleonic era, France drew on its Greco-Roman history, connecting its colonization of Algeria to the ancient occupation of Algeria by the Romans. In this way the French attempted to make a historical link between "imperial France and imperial Rome."[36] By claiming itself as an heir of Rome, Napoleonic France played up its classical history roots. As a classical society, it was justified in colonizing Algeria, an ancient territory of Rome.

Besides justifying Algeria's colonization through the link to Rome, the French felt that they were bringing history to a people who had none. Only the French, with their historical ties to Rome, could reestablish classical roots in Algeria. Classical history was Algeria's only legitimate history, and the barbaric society established by Muslim rulers was to be ignored. The French would loan their history to a non-nation full of backward races. For this, they would rely on another part of their history, the Enlightenment.

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[36] Patricia M.E. Lorcin. "Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria's Latin Past." *French Historical Studies* 25.2 (2002), 295.

While France's takeover of Algeria could be explained through classical history, its policies in subduing and ruling over the native Algerian population were explained through its Enlightenment history.The most prominent liberal using enlightenment principles to control the Algerian population was Alexis de Tocqueville. In one of his essays on Algeria, he proposed that any dangerously violent tribes in Algeria needed to be suppressed in order to end anarchy in Algeria and to help the rest of the Algerian population become educated and civilized. Tocqueville's policy was to separate those who were capable of being enlightened from those who were not. As an example of this he writes,

> The Moorish population deserves our consideration because of its peaceful character. But in the countryside they create problems without being useful to us. They cannot serve as a link between Arabs and us, as I have already explained, and they form a refractory element in the midst of our rural population that will never assimilate with the rest.[37]

Of course, it goes without saying that those who could not properly assimilate and hindered progress would need to be permanently removed from the picture.

THE MODERN ALGERIAN THREAT TO FRANCE'S HISTORY

Assimilation through Enlightenment ideals was promoted by De Tocqueville in the initial conquest of Algeria in the 1830s. But it would become increasingly important on the other side of the Mediterranean as Algerians began to immigrate to France. When Algerians began immigrating to France (as earlier stated as a result of colonial occupation and famine and also to become workers and soldiers during the two world wars and then in greatest numbers after the Independence War), Algerians were all the more obliged to blend in. The French were afraid that the presence of this "other" (a term for all nameless nonwestern foreigners) that was moving more and more into their midst would destroy the seamless continuity that had defined their unique "Frenchness" and the French nation-state.

Today, the French have a new source of fear for their national continuity. The Algerian presence has changed the flow of French national history. Currently, the

[37] De Tocqueville, 87.

presence of the "other" is ever growing larger, to the point where Algerians and other North Africans constitute such a large part of the nation that they can hardly be called "others." The Muslim population of France is now estimated at five million, constituting around five to ten percent of the population. And the recent banning of the headscarf (*hijab*) controversy in France shows that the French realize how much a part of France these immigrants and descendants of immigrants have become.[38]

The French cultivation of a past that flows purely without interruption to the present excludes the Algerians, who are seen as intruders in the "seamless" history of the French nation. Gerard Noiriel explains this another way in *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, "The 'national' phenomenon has a long history, whereas immigration is fairly recent."[39] The French view themselves as a very old culture with long-standing traditions, and the Algerians immigrants' coming, a fairly recent phenomenon, brings an unwelcome "newness" to French society. Algerian immigrants bring with them a history that is irreconcilable with the previous history of France. Immigrants are perceived as not just taking up physical space, but also as interrupting France's historical flow. There is no room for them in the ideal French nation-state either. Immigrants are a threat since they bring new practices, ideas, and customs which could ruin the society that the French consider to have been formed over thousands of years. The idea of a perfect, unhindered flow of French history, of course, also suggests the purity of the French race itself and the Algerians are clearly contaminants to this untainted blood.

Ironically, or maybe even purposely, the French have now forgotten that their history incorporates a diverse background of peoples ranging from the Gauls to the Greco-Romans and Normans. It was only when the Algerians began immigrating to France in large numbers after the Independence War that the status of the Algerians changed from that of an ancient peoples tied to Rome by colonization to that of being "new intruders." Ironically then, France today has forgotten this Napoleonic connection to classical roots.

[38] CBS News Online, "France's hijab ban," Sept. 7, 2004, http:// www.cbc.ca/news/background/islam/hijab.html /(accessed January 20, 2005).

[39] Gerard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Iden tity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 7.

The attitude of right-wing political activist Jean Marie Le Pen (known for his anti-immigrant sentiments and rumored to have tortured Algerians as a solider during the Independence War) shows how French nationalism is grounded in its medieval past when he claims that the French were born with the baptism of Clovis in 496. "Implicit in such a history, of course, is that Jews and Muslims cannot be 'real' French." [40] However, Le Pen is only repeating an ancient belief about French blood. " From the time of Clovis' conquest, France became quite legitimately the name of a country to which only a virtually imperceptible minority of Franks had come. In the tenth century, in the first *chansons de geste. . .* all the inhabitants of France were French." [41]

Allowing Algerian blood into the French population also carries with it the danger of half-breeds. French-Algérian children, known as *métis*, were physical proof of the danger Algerians posed to the French concept of nation-state. "It was assumed that the *métis [mixed blood]*, . . . automatically aspired to the rights of French citizenship." Looked down upon by both French and Arabs with no rights in either society, "the métis was likely to rise up in revolt." Further, "interracial sex might contribute to the degeneration of the white race." The "new history" Algerians bring is also unwanted because it is an uncomfortable reminder of France's failure to continue the glory of their nation through Algeria. Algerian immigrants not only reminded the French of their disastrous military loss but also of the fact that their best chance to establish a *Second France* had slipped away. Besides seeing their history as flawlessly continuous, the French also mythicized the glory of their nation's past. The end of the French domination in Algeria greatly compromised the French belief in a "glorious history." The greatness of the French empire, which previously had been traced as far back as Charlemagne all the way through Napoleon, was stopped in its tracks by this abrupt and blatant end of colonial rule:

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[40] Patrick Geary, "European Nationalism and the Medieval Past" in *Historically Speaking* Vol. III, No. 5, June 2002 , 2.

[41] Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 10.

> Plus fondamentalement, l'indépendance de l'Algérie, c'est la fin d'une histoire française, la fin d'un nationalisme qui se pensait sans le dire sous une forme impériale. . . . le nationalisme français, rétréci à l'Hexagone, entrait en crise.[42]
>
> [More basically , the independence of Algeria is the end of *a French history,* the end of a nationalism which, without it being said, thought in imperial terms. . . . French nationalism, reduced to the Hexagon, entered into crisis.]

The loss of Algeria was seen as the end of French history and nationalism in several ways. As was said, Algeria represented the continuation of French history through the expansion of the homeland overseas. It was also a blow to France's sense of its own ancient and classical history since French justified their claim to Algeria through the belief that France was Rome's heir and that Algeria was Roman because of its ancient connection to Rome.[43] It was France's most important colony because

> Algeria was regarded as France's valued possession. It was the gateway to its African empire: its springboard for control of the Maghreb, and from there to the Eastern Mediterranean. Of all of France's large territorial acquisitions, it was the oldest and the most precious. Its preservation was considered crucial to French greatness; its loss, De Gaulle stated (before he changed his mind) would produce a decline which could cost us our independence. To keep it . . . is to stay great."[44]

De Gaulle was right, at least, in believing the loss of Algeria would cause a decline. France's defeat by and loss of Algeria during the independence struggle spread its imperial power too thin and effectively ended French imperialism, reducing France back into a simple Hexagon.[45]

The Algerian immigrants were unfortunate reminders of this fact. After the French defeat in the Algerian War, Algerian immigrants in particular became live representations of France's lost empire. Losing Algeria was a dramatic point in a

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[42] Benjamin Stora, "Il ne suffit pas d'établir des vérités pour que les mémoires cessent de saigner," *Le Monde*, June 30, 2002, 1.

[43] Lorcin, 295-329.

[44] Cohen, 227.

[45] France is often referred to as "the Hexagon" because of its shape.

long period of diminishing French confidence. During this period, the French worried about the degeneration of their race.[46] Even before their defeat in the Independence War, the Algerian male had been depicted as a "signifier for a primordial masculinity no longer attainable by French men."[47] But after the loss of Algeria, France's feeling of superiority was even more severely shaken. Their defeat in Algeria in 1962 dealt a last humiliating blow, leaving the country with a feeling of complete powerlessness.

The last thing French citizens wanted was to be reminded about this final failure. Yet with Algeria in shambles after independence, there were more Algerian immigrants in France than ever, mostly males who had left their wives and families behind to find work. These men had no choice because " [i]t is estimated that up to 70 percent of the active male labor force was unemployed or underemployed by 1963." [48] Now every Algerian man in the streets of France was a constant reminder of France's lost "masculinity." And Frenchmen, especially those who had fought in the war, had to admit that the Algerian men (and even worse, Algerian women) had triumphed over their imperial might.

Both sides then, Algerian as well as French, have contributed to this process of forgetting. Historians often compare the Algerian syndrome to the Vichy syndrome, for it is like the silence that surrounds the period of France's fascist Vichy government. The parallels between the amnesia surrounding the Vichy period and the Algerian War are unmistakable David Prochaska, an Algerian historian who wrote *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920*, notes,

> And the more I read, the more I learned about what could be termed an 'Algerian syndrome' analogous to a 'Vichy syndrome,' both defining moments of twentieth-century French history, both historical blind spots, freighted combinations of willed forgetfulness, collective denial, misremembering, and, first for Vichy and now increasingly for Algeria, the return of what has been repressed, occluded, ignored, put away."[49]

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[46] Conklin,, 209.
[47] Conklin, 209.
[48] Ruedy
[49] David Prochaska, "That Was Then, This is Now: The Battle of Algiers and After," *Radical History Review* 85 (2003),133.

It is inevitable that one syndrome invokes the other as remarked by Prochaska. The Vichy period in W.W.II (1940-1944), which destabilized an already severely war-weakened France, helped to end France's imperial era and was a factor in France's loss of Algeria.[50] The chaos caused by the Vichy regime takeover gave Algerians the opportunity they needed to start a revolt.

Though the two episodes are connected in this one way, as noted by Henry Rousso, in *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944,* it is a mistake to overdo comparisons between the two wars as many French did during the outbreak of the Algerian war. Those who had also experienced the Vichy Occupation especially saw the Algerian war as a new *guerre franco-française.*[51] But Rousso cautions historians not to fall into the same trap because "[w]hen viewed in hindsight and with strict objectivity, the Algerian War has only a tenuous relation to the Occupation."[52] Thus, Rousso feels that historians should "ignore memories of W.W.II as a factor in the Algerian conflict." [53]

Though the memories of these two wars should not be tied together, what is important to note is that the process of forgetting that the French went through with the Vichy Syndrome was the same for the Algerians after the Independence War. Rousso relates that the Vichy Syndrome was created when post-W.W.II France constructed a myth around the Vichy period in order to cover up and to silence the time of France's Nazi occupation. He calls this mythicizing of the war *resistancialism.* First, says Rousso, the French tried to repress the memory of the Vichy period by downplaying the effect it had on French society. And second, the French proceeded to construct "an object of memory" in the form of the Resistance "whose significance transcended by far the sum of its active parts (the small groups of guerrilla partisans who did the actual fighting) and whose existence was embodied chiefly in certain

[50] The Vichy period, also known as the Occupation (1940-1944), occurred when the Allies failed to stop the onslaught of the Nazis into France. After signing an agreement with the Nazis, Phillipe Pétain was appointed head of the Vichy regime.

[51] *Guerre franco-française* or roughly translated, franco-french war, is yet another term to describe the fighting between leftist and rightist parties in France during the Vichy Occupation. (Rousso, 75)

[52] Rousso, 75.

[53] Rousso, 75.

sites and groups. . . "[54] The main danger of this was that a false memory of the incident was created. As Rousso states, "The problem was not just to bury memories of the guerre franco-française once and for all but to orient all future memory, to forge an official version of the past appropriate to the country's "grandeur."[55] Thus, the main cause of the "syndrome" was that this historical tinkering would be damaging when repressed memories returned with all the more vengeance. The French were left with a feeling of *malaise* [unease] about their history because the invented memory prevented them from facing their history. In his work, Rousso gives examples of how the repressed memories eventually came back in obsessive forms: for example, in the 1970s and 80s, when the extreme right party began to regain ground, its success reopened the Vichy Syndrome in the French populace.[56]

The Algerian Syndrome followed the Vichy pattern on both the French and Algerian sides. For their part, the French mythicized their defeated soldiers by glorifying their martyrization and even tying their deaths to soldiers killed in W.W.II (as described in footnote 4). An even more repressed memory was the cover up of the torture of Algerian prisoners. On the Algerian side, a myth of a "glorious Arab victory" was created by the FLN (this will be discussed later). For both the French and Algerians, then, the mythicizing and silencing of the war repressed people's memories and prevented them from confronting these memories, just as had been done in the 1940s. Over and over again in this thesis, we will see that the Algerian Syndrome has led Algerians to feel a strong *malaise* with their memory of the war just as the Vichy Syndrome led the French to suffer malaise because of the loss of their "grandeur."

For the Algerians, there have been very specific stages to the process of forgetting the Independence War. Four distinct phases emerged from the period of decolonization and continue today:

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[54] Rousso, 10.
[55] Rousso, 82.
[56] Rousso, 168.

> The first phase (1944-54) was one of "interrupted mourning" ; the second (1954-71) was that of "Repression" ("forgetting" and "amnesia") and was repeated during the Algerian War: the third, shorter phase (1971-74) was characterized by a "return of the repressed" and the start of questioning of the myths surrounding the war; the fourth phase -- which is the one we are going through today -- is on the order of an obsession . . . [57]

Thus far, I have tried to explain what troubles Algerians about the memory of the Algerian Independence War. As we have just seen, historians use the words amnesia and syndrome to describe what is wrong with Algerians' memory of the war. Historians may agree that there is a memory problem but a final consideration is whether *syndrome* and *amnesia* are truly the right terms to use. Richard L. Derderian's "Algeria as a lieu de mémoire: Ethnic Minority Memory and National Identity in Contemporary France" claims that historians have wrongly named Algeria's memory problems *amnesia.* Deriderian feels that there is no amnesia relating to the war. Instead he says that,

> Despite the considerable weight of official forms of amnesia, the Algerian War is not so easily forgotten. Benjamin Stora, the leading French historian on the memory of the war, argues that the conflict involved too many people to ever be forgotten. The real challenge of the Algerian War is to find ways to move beyond what Stora describes as its "cloistered remembering."[58]

Deriderian introduces yet another term to describe the memory of the war by calling it *cloistered remembering.* According to Deriderian, the memory of the war is cloistered because Algerians have developed a "limited and rigid recollection of the conflict," which is fragmented, shortened, mythicized, stereotyped, and skewed, because the groups involved "cling to narrow, unchanging, and mythologized constructions of the past"[59]

Deriderian notes the *pieds noirs* as an example of cloistered remembering, an idea which will be explored further in the *pied noir* case study. He cites the *pied*

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[57] Réda Bensmaïa, *Experimental Nations or the Invention of the Maghreb* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 41.

[58] Richard L. Deriderian. "Algeria as a lieu de mémoire: Ethnic Memory and National Identity," *Radical History Review* 83 (2002) 28-43, 29.

[59] Deriderian, 31.

noirs' form of cloistered remembering as their "mythical self-constructions as the dispossessed and damned people of Europe." He comments that they refuse to leave this identity behind, for"[s]elf-victimization can function as a powerful galvanizing form of identity that many groups will discard only reluctantly."[60] This is a major factor in Algeria's memory troubles, the tendancy to want to remain "the victim" keeps Algeria's various groups attached to past.

Besides this, Deriderian notes that, "Paradoxically, much of the attention given to the Algerian War has contributed to the perception of the conflict as a forgotten episode in French history. Stora explains that the war has been cast in films, documentaries, and academic studies as a site of perpetual rediscovery."[61]

While Deriderian makes astute comments about the memory of the war, it does not seem that his argument necessarily disagrees with historians who call the war a "syndrome" like Prochaska or others who feel it is a form of amnesia. Deriderian calls the problem *cloistered remembering*, but even though he uses a different term, the elements he points out are the same. What all terms-- *amnesia, syndrome*, and *cloistered remembering*-- seem to agree upon is that Algerians have imposed a form of forgetting on themselves.

Granted, this is not a natural amnesia, but it results in an amnesiac state nevertheless. What Deriderian says is true in that Algerian groups have chosen very selective memories or cloistered memories about the war which block out a great deal of what really occurred. This explains why there is actually a surplus rather than a lack of writings and discussions about the war and why the war is cast as a site of "perpetual rediscovery." Because of the legendizing and confining memories they have created about the war, Algerians do not remember properly. Historians like Deriderian can call this memory disorder what they like, but clearly, Algerians cannot simply give an account of the war if called upon to do so. This, then is a form of amnesia even though it is a complex one. Deriderian's points are well taken, and thus, for the purposes of this thesis and for simplicity's sake, I will still use the term *amnesia*.

[60] Deriderian, 32.
[61] Deriderian, 30.

In the end, like the Vichy period, the Algerian war is another piece of history that evades a proper articulation or recording. The key phrase here is that the war does somehow *elude being spoken about.* However, in keeping with Deriderian's comments, as we look further into the Algerian syndrome in the case studies of this thesis, it will become clear that it is not necessarily that Algerians always intentionally forget. Instead, the war eludes being spoken about because there are so many emotions and issues attached to it that it overwhelms the mind, short-circuiting Algerians' memorie. Hence, memorie of the war are impossibly multi-faceted and difficult to express or write about even when Algerian want to remember.

CHAPTER 2.
THE *PIEDS NOIRS*, ALBERT CAMUS, AND THE ALGERIAN TABULA RASA

Both the French and Algerians have contributed to the confusion surrounding the history of the Independence War. My first case study will examine the *pieds noirs*, Algeria's European settlers who exhibit both French and Algerian characteristics, but do not belong to either group. The first part of this chapter will look at the *pied noirs* as a people meant to give rise to a new French nation overseas and spread its enlightenment ideals. Then, I will examine Frances' most famous *pied noir*, Albert Camus, who clearly struggled with his loyalties to France and Algeria. Again, as with every subject related to the Independence War, each group and event has a complexity which could fill volumes. But the purpose of writing about the *pieds noirs* is to see how their French-Algerian status affected their reaction to and recollection of the war. Their position as settlers makes them difficult to place in Algeria's independence history. Of the three case-study groups, they have the most unusual social position and the most unique perspective on the Independence War.

Although back at home the French were affected by the loss of their colony, their feelings of loss were nothing compared to the bitterness of the European population of Algeria, the *pieds noirs*, the majority of whom were forced to leave the country after the war when France pulled out of Algeria. Having to leave was something French Algerians thought would never happen, for they considered themselves a permanent part of Algeria. The *pieds noirs* considered their departure unthinkable, for they "could never think of another land but Algeria" and "almost preferred to die than to leave Algeria" [62]

The *pieds noirs*, once the main colonizers of Algeria, became a reviled minority group upon their return to France. Though they were the supposed superiors of the Arabs, the French essentially treated them as expendable outcasts

[62]Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Les Français d'Algérie de 1830 à Aujourd'hui: Une Page d'Histoire Déchirée* (Arthème Fayard, 2001), 359.

and made them feel powerless. In essence, the pieds noirs felt as mistreated by the French as the Algerians did because while they were considered superior to the Algerian natives, they often found themselves and their needs ignored by the French government and the French metropole.

While no one disputes that these French settlers, were indeed colonizers, as their other nickname, *colon,* confirms, the question is whether they should be considered something more than this. In other words, they perhaps deserve to be put into a social tier of their own, somewhere between the French of the *métropole* and the Algerians. These transplanted Europeans must well be considered a distinct body unto themselves, a people that exhibited the behaviors of both a ruling class and a minority group. As a minority group, they were twice exiled, first as expatriates of France and then as expatriates of Algeria, their adopted country. As Martin Stone explains in *The Agony of Algeria,* the independence fight was not a straightforward colonizer/colonized battle. Instead, there were at least three participants in the Algerian War of Independence:

> To describe the war as merely a struggle between colonisers (the French) and colonised (the Muslims) would be misleading and incorrect. Parallels with South Africa are more appropriate as the conflict was principally between the *pieds noirs* . . .and the indigenous Muslims. . . The war also involved feuds and disputes between rival Muslims and between the *pieds noirs* and the French authorities. [63]

The two nicknames given to the French settlers, *colons* [short for colonists] and *pieds noirs* [black feet], suggest their unusual position in the colonial schema. The French came as one body to colonize Algeria, but the *pieds noirs* , who settled permanently in the country, became distinct from the colonial machine because of their emotional attachment to the land. As David Prochaska writes, "The chief demographic difference between a colonial city and settler city is that whereas the European colonizers tend to be temporary migrants in the former, they tend to be permanent resident in the latter." [64] The fact that these settlerls made Algeria their

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[63] Stone, 37.

[64] David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French:Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1990),23.

home dramatically distinguished them from the French of the homeland . Living permanently in Algeria, the settlers had different experiences, values, and needs and thus became "their own breed." This idea has been expressed by both authors of Algerian colonization and *pieds noirs* writers, especially Camus, who will provide a more specific example of the *pied noir* mentality in the next section of this case study.

Did the *pieds noirs*, as Prochaska suggests in *Making Algeria French*, constitute a new kind of society? Prochaska claims that the *pieds noirs* formed a particular kind of colonial society he calls a *settler society* in which ". . . all features of the colonial city are intensified and exacerbated. It is here that the parent European society is most fully replicated." [65] As pointed out by Prochaska, settler societies constitute the most intense kind of colonization since the colonizers mean to live permanently alongside the colonized. And in the case of Algeria, its geographic allure made it a perfect place to create a settler colony . Given the fact that Algeria was conveniently right across the Mediterranean from France, the French saw Algeria as a quick and easy means to extend their country and to make it a part of the French homeland.

In "Settler Capitalism Unsettled," Donald Denoon expands on Prochaska's concept of the intense nature of settler societies.[66] Denoon explains that because Europeans in settler colonies have uprooted themselves in order to live in completely unfamiliar surroundings, they have no desire whatsoever to try to make sense of the already existing culture and people of the country. On the other hand, European settlers have a compulsion to "make their new homes in the image of the old" by establishing a "metropolitan frame of reference."

Creating a replica of French civilization on Algerian soil was clearly France's intention in sending the colonists to Algeria. But we will find that France's plan fell apart when the colonists began to form their own opinions and ideas, and thus no longer had an interest in serving the metropole. So we will now have to highlight a

[65] Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 22.

[66] Donald Denoon. "Settler Capitalism Unsettled. "*The New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 29, No. 2. (October, 1995).

last and most important characteristic of settler colonialism. Denoon notes that his book, *Settler Capitalism,* neglected a second key characteristic of settler societies because he failed to make the distinction that the struggle of colonizer against colonized, though "unequal [is] not one-sided.[67]

Denoon's statement perhaps best explains why settler colonialism is "intense." Forced to live in such proximity and with such competition against each other, the colonized and the colonizer are constantly pitted against each other. This intense interaction forces both sides to make continuous readjustments to their values and identities. As Denoon states, "Every French advance was in some degree negotiated, even when it was also enforced by violence." [68] In other words, settler societies are intense for the colonizers as well because, in struggling against the colonized, the colonizers are also permanently changed. This is true of the *pieds noirs* who felt French but also felt their Algerian experience had made them into "superior Frenchmen," distinct from the French of the *métropole.*

The emotion of the *pieds noirs* for their new homeland did indeed "intensify" the colonial situation. Given that many *pieds noirs* were exiles from Europe, poor Europeans looking for a new start, people displaced by war, and even criminals, they knew they could never go back and didn't want to go back. This created a fierce pride in their newfound home and in working the land they had claimed. Their stubbornness made them fight all the harder if anyone tried to make them leave, whether it was angry native Algerians or the French government. On their arrival in Algeria, the *pieds noirs* were there to stay.

Tocqueville, writing during the early stages of Algerian colonization, states, "There are two ways to conquer a country: the first is to subordinate the inhabitants and govern them directly or indirectly. That is the English system in India. The second is to replace the former inhabitants with the conquering race. This is what Europeans have almost always done." [69] For Tocqueville, the English conquest is the typical image of colonialism in which a small number of people take over a

[67] Denoon, 131-132.
[68] Denoon, 132.
[69] De Tocqueville, 61.

country and its government. In colonization, Europeans are not necessarily interested in living on the land of the colonized. However, the effect of colonization is that it aims at changing the identity of the colonized, westernizing them and changing them into the image of the colonizer. In the second form of conquest laid out by Tocqueville, the characteristic English form of colonization does not hold true. Conquest through settlement , in contrast, involves a huge number of colonizers taking over the land, who wish to get rid of the inhabitants rather than try to dominate them psychologically or through government.

At the heart of what made Algerian colonization more intense was that it involved a double-fronted assault on the native peoples, which explains the terrible violence that it engendered as well. It may be called a combination of settlement and colonization, for it displayed the properties of both, and therefore, it was indeed an "exacerbated" form of colonialism. The suggestion here is that indigenous peoples encountering invading Europeans usually either experienced colonization *or* settlement but not both at the same time. The unique (and unfortunate) experience of the Algerians is that they were hit with both.

The French, intent on extending their country through Algeria and making it a new part of France, tried to fill the country with as many settlers as possible. The *pieds noirs* were to be the flag-bearers of France's great national history on Algerian soil, reminders of its successful past. And Algeria's location made the movement of an even larger number of Europeans possible since Algeria was just a hop and a skip over the ocean. But the latter form of conquest took on a whole new meaning in Algeria, for the huge number of people France sent over was a deadlier weapon than any mechanical one. The settlers attempted to crowd out the Algerians, and they also took over the best land in Algeria and displaced numerous mountain tribes. "The majority of Muslim Algerians were engaged in agriculture, raising barley, wheat, figs, and olives on the least productive lands of the interior rejected by the *colons*." [70] Tocqueville himself recognized how the permanent presence of the settlers

[70] Stone, 84.

exacerbated the situation between the Europeans and the Algerian natives, for he goes on to say,

> . . . . what most worried and irritated the natives, reasonably, was to see us take and cultivate their lands. This irritates not only those we dispossess but the entire county. For three centuries the Arabs have been accustomed to being governed by foreigners. As long as we take over only the government, they are well enough disposed to let us do so, but the moment the laborer appears behind the solider, they will conclude that we mean not only to conquer but to dispossess them. The quarrel is no longer between governments, but between races. It is possible then, that the province of Bône, now so tranquil, will become agitated the day a European plow touches the soil. [71]

THE SETTLERS: THE OTHER "*OTHER*"

Finding enough people to send over to Algeria created an ironic situation. The very people France used to fight against "the others," that is, the Algerians, were sent to Algeria in the first place because the French considered these people "others" within France itself. In other words, the French sent their own social outcasts to Algeria and, separated from France, these outcasts only strengthened their feeling of being different.

There were two reasons a person might leave France for Algeria and neither of these involved a strong interest in helping out the homeland. Often, the colons were either extremely poor or were unwanted members of society. Many of the colonists who came over were lured by the promise of free land. "The first colonists emigrated mainly in order to have a better life than they had had in France." [72] Many of these immigrants had little to lose in France, being on the bottom of the social ladder, but had a chance to be the elite class in Algeria.

Unfortunately, this also meant that the settlers had all the more reason to treat the native Algerians as an inferior class. They owed their elevated status to the existence of the Algerians. They needed to suppress these people all the more in order to prove their superiority. "Le Colon, même pauvre, est un privilégié, vu qu'il existe un Indigène. La mentalité démocratique du Français, placé en France dans un tout autre contexte social, lui est étrangère et odieuse." [The *colon*, even poor, is

[71] Tocqueville, 83.

[72] Pierre Bordieu, *The Algerians*, trans. Alan C.M. Ross (Boston:Beacon Press,1962), 130.

privileged, as long as there exists a native. The democratic mentality of the Frenchman, placed in France in a whole other social context, is foreign and odious to him.] [73]

Thus, the settlers had a reputation for being racists. [74] Remarkably, the French looked down on the pieds noirs as being more racist and less democratic than themselves. But it was not that the *colon* was less democratic; it was that they desperately needed to ensure that the Algerian natives remained in a social position below their own, which, of course, was very low in France. One major source of *pied noir* immigrants , for example, was the Alsatians, refugees from the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), who had been displaced in the land dispute when Germany took over a significant portion of French territory. The Franco-Prussian war had also added to the French's urgency to find a new place to expand into since it had lost out so badly in the war. Other colons were deliberate exiles. Napoleon III saw Algeria as a convenient place to send political opponents and yet others were "straight from state orphanages or were prison offenders."[75]

Mixed into the variety of French immigrants were many Mediterranean immigrants. Amongst them were "Italians, Spanish and Maltese," who together constituted the "European colonies within the French colony." [76] These settlers added another layer of complication to Algeria's colonial system. The non-French contributed to Algeria's unique population make-up, creating a unique mix of French-Mediterranean blood. They were further evidence that the settlers were no longer just an extension of the French people of the homeland but had indeed become specifically Algerian-Europeans. These Algerian-Europeans formed yet another social tier; they were not French and were therefore considered below the French-blooded *colon* while still being above the Algerian native.

Although the southern Europeans were looked down upon, in a way, they helped to confirm the strength of the *pieds noirs,* as well. Their Mediterranean

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[73] Lanza Del Vasto, *Pacificatioinen Algérie; ou , Mensonge et Violenceki* (Bollène:Vaucluse,1960), 51.

[74] Noël Moncade, *Les Français d'Algérie: Leur Oeuvre, Leur Imprévoyance, leurs Privilèges* (Paris: L.Soulanges,1964), 43.

[75]Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (Westport: Greenwood Press,1976), 28.

[76] Prochaska, 124.

origins only helped back up the claim that the *pieds noirs* were better able to work in the heat of the Algerian climate. If nothing else, at least Mediterranean blood did seemingly have this one advantage over French blood since the French had to adapt to the hotter climate while the Mediterraneans fit right in.

On the other hand, Charles-Robert Ageron points out that other waves of *colons* were not all the "beggars of popular myth." He writes of these waves:

> Most were proprietors or well-to-do leaseholders, who had come to seek their fortune. Individual cases apart, the land of Algeria was less a frontier for the pioneer than an opportunity for the investor or speculator. The *colons* never entirely rooted themselves in it; for them agriculture was more a business than a way of life. [77]

The Algerian settlers then, again displayed their hybrid colonizer / pioneer quality. Some historians saw parallels to the settlers in America and Canada, writing that, "L'Algérie paraissait devenir une colonie de peuplement comme les Etats-Unis et le Canada l'avaient été deux siècles plus tôt." [78] [It seemed Algeria was becoming a colony of settlement like the United States and Canada had been two centuries before.] But Ageron argues that the French Algerians were not truly "pioneers" in the American or Canadian fashion. American and Canadian colonization had happened two centuries before, and the lack of communication and transportation between Americans, Canadians, and France and England made a big difference in forming the pioneers' individuality.

As Frederick Jackson Turner, the noted 19th century historian, asserted in his frontier thesis, an isolated environment was essential for the formation of true pioneers.[79] The pioneer mentality emerged in the forest where settlers were cut off from the administration of the homeland and had to live in rugged conditions, using their own resourcefulness. The French settlers, on the other hand, were plied with land and money in order to get them to settle in Algeria and were even protected by the presence of French soldiers.

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[77] Ageron, 60.

[78] Claude Martin, *Histoire de l'Algérie Française: 1830-1962* (Paris: Éditions des 4 fils Aymon, 1963), 161.

[79]Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." American Historical Association. Chicago Worlds Fair. Chicago, 12 July 1393.

True, the Algerian settler farms were often attacked by anti-colonial groups as the American pioneers were attacked by Indian raiding parties, but they were not living on a truly isolated frontier. The location of Algeria, as has been said, made all the difference. Since Algeria was right next door to France instead of being separated by an entire ocean, the *colons* were not given the opportunity to adequately extricate themselves from the hold of the *métropole*. The French government easily filled Algeria with officials and soldiers. There were no vast expanses of land with thick forests as in America, which isolated the pioneers from British influence and made the settlers much harder to govern and watch over. Also, as Ageron believes, not all *colons* were there just trying to survive. They do not fit the image of the pioneer who barely managed to squeeze out a living. Instead, they were running businesses and were known for their vineyards. These winegrowers were interested in more than just survival and were trying to turn a profit.

In the end, the communities created by the French reflected the double form of domination that the Europeans brought to Algeria: colonization and settlement. The number of settlers, who concentrated in certain areas, caused uneven distribution of the races, and resulted in two kinds of communities. In the first kind of commune, *communes de pleine exercice,* Europeans were more plentiful. In some *communes de pleine exercice,* like the town of Bône, Europeans actually outnumbered the Algerians.[80] These towns were basically French cities on Algerian soil. In the second kind of community, the *communes mixtes*, the opposite was true. Algerians were the majority and "an appointed Administrator was in charge."[81] Thus, the Europeans in towns like Bône dominated by numbers, but where they could not dominate by settlement, they still sent out colonial administrators.

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[80] Prochaska, 140.

[81] David C. Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria* (London: Oxford University Press,1966), 17.

THE *PIEDS NOIRS'* BELIEF IN THEIR SPECIAL CULTURE

The pressures of this more complex form of colonization thus defined the identity of the Europeans of Algeria. The identity of the *pieds noirs* was threatened on two fronts. As colonizers, they were pitted against the Algerians, and as settlers, they struggled against the control of the motherland. Therefore, to defend and preserve their society, they began to claim that they were their own distinct group. Many of the *pieds noirs* believed their group was the beginning of an even greater European race, a hardier group that would replace the weak and old blood of France.

To begin with, from the start of colonization in the early 1800s, the French government had promoted the idea that Algeria was to be a new extension of France. It was looked upon as some sort of massive suburb rather than a foreign country. Building upon this idea of Algerian settlers as a continuation of French society, it was not much of a stretch for the *pieds noirs,* looking for ways to elevate their status, to mythicize the newness of their society. They suggested that it was Algerian settlers and not the French who would be the new hope for the future. It was even suggested that the *pieds noirs* were a new race that was smarter and more energetic than the French of the *métropole.*[82] [*Métropole* literally meaning *metropolis* but in this case meaning a country or state in relation to its colonies and overseas territories.] The *pieds noirs* saw France as a symbol of "listlessness" while Algeria represented a new French *ésprit* of replenished strength. The *métropole* had initiated expansion into Algeria because it was decaying and without energy. This meant to say that someday, French Algerians, who symbolized the hope for a new start, might take over for the declining French nation.

The "true" French of the metropole saw the *pieds noirs* as being of such base stock that they were only suited for the manual labor they were sent to do in Algeria, but the *pieds noirs* turned their manual labor into their claim to superiority. The *pieds noirs* countered by saying that the reason they were energetic and able

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[82] Julia Clancy-Smith , "Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria" in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*,169.

to do hard work was that they were stronger than the homeland French. In Algeria, hard work under the hot sun had formed them into a physically sturdier race.

The Europeans, unadapted to the heat of their colonial territories, saw the sun as an enemy. Tocqueville states, "Everyone knows that what most afflicts the European's health in hot countries is manual labor, outdoors and during the summer."[83] But Algerian settlers, having survived the hardship of heat, disease, and attacks on their farms could be proud of the strength their experiences gave them. In the end, the *pieds noirs* started to believe in the idea of *Nous Algériens* : "We the Algerians." They felt that "European Algerians constituted a cultural race distinct from both the inferior Muslims and the racially degenerate, even effeminate French in the metropole."[84] Working under hard conditions, they had survived in an environment in which the soft French would have perished. France, after all, is reputed for being the "garden" of Europe, i.e., a gentle and bountiful environment where everything grows easily. In the eyes of the *pieds noirs*, France's environment thus promoted laziness and complacency, whereas they survived the desert, struggling to raise their crops, and became better and stronger for doing so.

The *pieds noirs* saw the old French towns as backwards and even unclean compared to the new *pieds noirs* towns. In *Les Français d'Algérie,* one Algerian colonist remarks that each time his fellow *pieds noirs* visited France, they were only more convinced that their own society was better and even more truly "French" than actual French society:

> Entre les viex villages de France, sans aucun confort, et les villages flambants neufs d'Algérie, avec de beaux jardins, fontaines, etc. .... il finirent par se persuader qu'ils étaient vraiment supérieurs aux Français. Combien de fois, surtout ces dernières années, sans idées, ne m'at-on fait remarquer que les Français n'avaient pas d'hygiène puisqu'ils n'avaient pas encore de cabinets dans tous les vieux immeubles (ce n'est malheureusment que trop vrai. . . . [85]

[83] Tocqueville, 176.
[84] Clancy-Smith, 155.
[85] Moncade, 40.

> [Between the old villages of France, without any comfort, and the flaming new villages of Algeria, with beautiful gardens, fountains, etc. . . . they finished by convincing themselves that they were truly superior to the French. How many times, especially these last few years, without ideas, has one remarked to me that the French had no hygiene since they still didn't have [wash closets] in all the old buildings (this unfortunately is too true) . . . .]

As the quote demonstrates, the *pieds noirs* appeared to feel that everything about them was *new* and *fresh* and this feeling extended from their race to their towns. The *pieds noirs* took great pride in all that they created on Algerian soil, all the things they had "built by hand" from scratch. By suggesting, then, that they worked harder, were more resourceful, and were even cleaner than the average Frenchman, the Algerian settlers tried to reverse the racism directed against them. To turn the tables on a group that had spurned them in the first place, they celebrated many of their everyday achievements, for not only had they managed to build everything they had, but they managed to do it better than the French. "Les sociétés neuves procurent un sentiiment de puissance à des métiers qui sont devenus routiniers dans une vieille société. [86] [New societies acquire a feeling of strength in jobs which have become routine in an old society.] The *pieds noirs* felt that the French had become self-complacent, while in Algeria, they strove to better themselves.

The *pieds noirs'* great pride in their society and its originality also convinced them that they were bringing benefits to the Algerian people. They believed that Algeria was their own creation and they discounted anything that had been there before they came.

> France needed to learn that what took place in 1830 was not so much the conquest of Algiers as the creation of the first page of the 'French magnum opus in Algeria.' This grandiose phrase signified the Algeria created by the settlers over the past century: a new land of modern agriculture and industry, roads, railways, and docks, of well-built cities, good schools, and other beneficial institutions. Integral to the idea of Algeria as a French construction was the belief that before 1830 there had been nothing but decay and chaos. [87]

[86] JeannineVerdes-Leroux, "Le Français d'Algérie, oubliés et humiliés de l'Histoire" *Le Monde*, March 22, 2002, http://www.lemonde.fr

[87] Yaël Simposn Fletcher. "Irresistible Seductions: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria Around 1930," in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, 195.

This belief gave the settlers free license to plow ahead with their "improvements" on Algerian land without hesitation or worry about the tribes they displaced, for they told themselves that in the end Algeria would benefit from the changes brought by colonization. But more than this, since they truly believed that they were assembling or creating Algeria, they even felt that the Algerians should be grateful to them for having done so. Their strong conviction that they were doing good in Algeria actually led them to be puzzled when the Algerians appeared to be ungrateful.

Some *pieds noirs* were even convinced they were better conquerers than previous ones in Algeria. For example, Noel Moonfaced, a *pied noir*, called on the indigenous Algerian population to examine their consciences. He asked them to admit that their previous rulers, the Turks, had been shabby rulers, who had left Algeria poor and without any facilities. He said to the Algerians,

> Les Algériens pourront se rappeler que les Français firent exactement le contraire. Ils ne se contentèrent pas d'occuper l'Algérie, et de la laisseé telle qu'elle était, ils décidèrent de la développer et de la mettre en valeur. . . . Donc, au lieu de retirer de l'argent de l'Algérie, comme le faisait la Turquie, la France envoya de l'argent en Algérie, beaucoup d'argent, pour pouvoir payer tous ces travaux. [88]
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> [The Algerians may recall that the French did *exactly the contrary*. They were not content with occupying Algeria, and to leave it as it was, they decided to develop it and give it value . . . Therefore, instead of shrinking Algeria's money, like Turkey did, France sent money to Algeria, lots of money, to be able to pay for all these improvements.]

Thus, even when the French settlers admitted that they were conquerers, their line of reasoning was that they were at least beneficial colonizers. People like Moonfaced truly felt they were good conquerers with better intentions than previous Algerian invaders. As another *pied noir* argues in *Pourquoi Je Suis un Pied-Noir en Colère*, the Algerians were not a sovereign nation to begin with (having been conquered by the Turks and other groups,). He writes, "Non, l'Algérie n'était pas, en 1830, cet État-nation soverain dont la superiorité de la France détruit les structures. Elle fut donc une prise facile pour le conquérant."[89] [No, Algeria was not, in 1830, that

[88] Moncade, 52.
[89] Moncade, 52.

sovereign nation-state whose structure was destroyed by French superiority. She was therefore an easy target for the conquerer.] Since these people had not been free in the first place, the French had changed nothing essential about the country's structure. In his address to the Algerians, Moonfaced expected them to admit that the French colonizers brought them improvements and money.[90] But he failed to recognize that the natives mostly did not benefit from those improvements. The tribes had been pushed out of the way to barren, unfertile lands to make way for French settlements and became terribly impoverished as a result. In fact, the more money poured in, the more the Algerians' poverty increased. Even as late as the 1980s, more than twenty years after the end of the bloody Franco-Algerian War for Independence, some former *pieds noirs* were still insisting that their presence in Algeria was missed and that without them, the Algerian people were suffering. In a 1988 *Le Monde* article, "Algérie, Tristesse des pieds-noirs," another *pied noir*, Georges Morin, complains that, " . . . vingt-six ans après notre départ les Algériens sont de plus en plus malheureux, privés de libertés, confrontés à la pénurie, voire à la misère, et la jeunesse à l'ennui et au désespoir.'[91] [. . . twenty six years after our departure the Algerians are more and more unhappy, deprived of liberty, confronted with punishment, witness to misery, and [our] youth to worry and despair.]

The terrorist actions of the FLN against the *pieds noirs* as well as their own people (Algerians themselves were attacked if the FLN deemed them to be traitors) were cited as chief examples of how barbaric the Algerians were and how they needed the civilizing influence of the settlers to keep them from falling into turmoil once again. The rationale of bringing the Algerians liberty was also used to justify uninhibited violence against the Algerian resistance, including torture. "When the French soldier was charged to commit this additional brutal and destructive act [torture], the banner of the civilizing mission helped bury his conscience."[92] Thus, the

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[90] Georges Morin, "Pourquoi je suis un pied-noir en colère," *Le Monde* (June 24, 2000) http:www.lemonde.fr

[91] Jacques Roseau, "Algérie: Tristesse des pieds-noirs," *Le Monde* (November 30, 1988) http:www.lemonde.fr

[92] Rita Maran, *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (New York: Praeger,1989),16.

French managed to tell themselves that every act of colonization, even extreme violence, was for the good of the Algerian people because it assisted in their liberation from the restrictive and terrible conditions of their own society.

From their perspective, the *pieds noirs* felt mightily abused. They painted their history as one of sorrow and of being misunderstood. "Non les pieds-noirs n'étaient pas des exploiteurs: exilés politiques de 1830, 1848 ou 1871, réfugiés alsaciens, antifascistes italiens ou antifranquistes espagnols, pasyans pauvres du nord de la Méditerranée, innombrables petits fonctionnaires. . . .que seul le malheur collectif sut rassambler."[93] [No, the pieds-noirs were not exploiters: political exiles from 1830, 1848, or 1871, Alsatian refugees, antifascist Italians or antifrankist Spaniards, poor peasants from the north of the Mediterranean . . .] It is to their bewilderment and frustration that few people recognized their sufferings and instead wrote them off as the villains. Clearly, some *pieds noirs* who came as exiles did have a legitimate reason to claim that they did not come deliberately as exploiters since they were forced to move to Algeria by the French government.

Already exiles from the start , the final insult came when the *pieds noirs* were forced to leave Algeria after 1964 when the Algerians won their independence from the French. The *pieds noirs* living in France do understandably feel a deep bitterness about having to return to a country that they never thought they would have to see again. Finally, they ended up being rejected twice, once by the French and then again by the Algerians. Both the Algerians and the French did their best to erase the *pieds noirs* from their national memories. The Algerians hated them as colonizers; the French were ashamed of them.

On top of this, they were condemned by both the French and the Algerians for the crimes committed by colonization. Still, the *pieds noirs* refuse to be solely responsible for the sins of the past . They point out that ". . . . c'est la France tout entière qui en porte la responsabilité et non les seuls Français qui vivaient en Algérie." [. . . .it is the whole of France who is responsible and not only the French who lived in Algeria.] [94] The European settlers after 1964 joined the mass of Algerian immigrants

[93] Morin, *Le Monde.*
[94] Morin, *Le Monde.*

who left their country in the wake of the poverty, devastation, and continuing attacks of the FLN. Back in France, they again lost the status that they had gained in Algeria and were considered part of the crowd of refugees. But in some cases, because the *pieds noirs* were white Algerians, they were seen as even more unnatural than Arab Algerians and were more reviled than the native Algerian immigrants themselves. In other words, native Algerians were simply seen as Arabs whereas the *pieds noirs* were feared because they were even more unidentifiable than the Arabs. They were neither French nor Arab.

The surviving *pieds noirs* continue to have reunions and participate in organizations in which they reminisce about the "good old days of Algeria" as evidenced by their websites which assist *pieds noirs* to reunite. The melancholy about the great loss they experienced has become a tool in preserving their distinct identity. They have also built up the image of their former homeland. "In exile, the typical colon looks back upon Algeria as something of a lost paradise." [95] With the mass displacement they experienced, their identity issues, and their nostalgia for a lost homeland, the *pieds noirs* do behave much like immigrants as native Algerians do in France.

Ironically, the *pieds noirs* may behave even more like foreigners than Algerians do in France. The *pieds noirs* were forced out of their homeland unwillingly while many Algerian immigrants left willingly for France to find work. Poverty pushed these Algerians to leave, but the *pieds noirs* left unwillingly and their feelings of nostalgia and betrayal have continued. The *pieds noirs* feel wronged by the great lack of sympathy for them. There is some element of truth in this since the focus is on the sufferings of the Algerian immigrants while the *pieds noirs* are forgotten even though they are immigrants in their own right. This immigrant group ironically is overshadowed by the very group they caused to immigrate in the first place: the Algerians.

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[95] David C. Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria.* (London:Oxford University Press,1966), 212.

ALBERT CAMUS AND THE PROBLEM OF BEING A MORAL *PIED NOIR*

To explore more deeply the conflicts of memory within the *pied noir* group, I will now turn to Albert Camus (1913-1960), whose controversial writing on the Algerian Independence War generated strong criticism from both French and Algerian intellectuals. Of the three studies on memory, Camus' struggle is perhaps the most deeply individual one. For while Algerian women in the next case study suffer as an oppressed group unable to express their memories and while the FLN uses memory as a political tool, Camus' troubles with memory came from his own philosophy on life and morality. But it will be argued that Camus' intellectual suffering resulted as he realized that he could not reconcile his memory of Algeria with his philosophy of Algeria.

Camus' complex social background infused depth and beauty in his writing. However, as war broke out in Algeria, childhood memories of his "*pied noir* Algeria" prevented him from readily accepting Algerian independence while other French intellectuals were pushing for it. Camus truly believed that the *pieds noirs*, through their hard work on Algerian soil, had permanently incorporated themselves into Algerian history and could never be erased from it and he was never swayed in this belief. Camus' refusal to accept that the *pieds noirs* would be forced out of Algeria was based on his view of Algerian land as *tabula rasa*. Algeria was an untouched land which the European settlers had cultivated, implanting "roots" which could never be ripped out. However, in making Algeria a *tabula rasa*, Camus wiped out the memory and achievements of all who came before the *pieds noirs*, namely the native Algerians.

In order to make the *pieds noirs* into natives, Camus had to suppress the memory of the native Algerians. In this way, Camus tried to resolve the problem of legitimizing his group's much more recent presence in Algerian history. But as an Enlightenment-based intellectual, this was a moral conflict for him. He essentially recognized that the Algerian people and their history had been suppressed by the

French colonization of Algeria. This bothered him even though he was absolutely unwilling to give up his own *pied noir* memories of Algeria.

CAMUS' CHILDHOOD AND THE FORMATION OF HIS INTELLECT

> Algeria, I don't know whether or not I can make myself understood, but I have the same feeling on returning to Algeria as I have on looking at the face of a child. And yet I know that all is not pure.[96]

This is what Camus wrote twelve years before the outbreak of the war in the Paris, November 1943 entry of his notebook. At this point, he was still optimistic about Algeria's future, though he admitted "all is not pure" Camus knew much was not pure in Algeria despite his love for the country. He recognized the country's dark side : poverty, inequality, racism, violence, and the clashes between Arabs and European settlers. These impurities of Algeria, such as murder and racism, are expressed in *The Stranger* and *First Man.* Since Camus died in 1960, he would never live to see the outcome of the war in 1962. In a way, it was fortunate that Camus did not live to see the end of *pied noir* life in Algeria, for in this quote, his words reveal the childhood nostalgia and pride for his homeland that he carried with him unswervingly to the end of his life. But when Camus stated that he might never be able to make this deep feeling for Algeria understood, he didn't know how true a prediction he was making. Camus was never able to explain to the public what Algeria meant to a *pied noir.* He was clearly proud of his heritage and believed it was the pieds noirs' mission to expand France's enlightenment ideals overseas. The poverty he experienced as a child served to reinforce his belief in the enlightenment principle of universal equality.

Camus grew up a poor *pied noir* in the Algerian neighborhood of Belcourt in Algiers. Both his mother and grandmother were uneducated, and the family barely got by. Though he came from a family of extremely limited resources, his grade school teacher, Louis Germain, recognized that he was an exceptional student and

[96] Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1935-1951* (New York: Marlowe & Company,1998) ,150.

helped him on his way to his writing career. [97] Camus felt that "[h]is childhood taught him a singular understanding of misery, which made his empathy with the disempowered genuine." [98] This professed universal empathy for all of the disempowered would be called into question during the Independence War. A life of poverty tempered Camus with compassion for those less fortunate, but more than this, it brought Camus closer to the Arabs around him . In the first place, the common poverty of all citizens of Belcourt was a unifying element. "Arabs, Jews, Neapolitans, Spanish, Corsicans, and people from Marseilles were all accused of stealing jobs. Xenophobia flourished, with a kind of solidarity between Arabs and the poor." [99] Arabs and poor *pieds noirs* were at least in this one respect brought together through the link of poverty. When he got an opportunity to see the "richer" area of town, his pride in the humble background he came from was hardened even more since he was surrounded by the rich.

> This frail fatherless boy suddenly found himself surrounded by the sons of wealthy *colons* , of high officials, and of notables. They were a spoiled lot, well fed and dressed, and their fathers had all the prejudices of superiority based on caste, race and money that are so deeply rooted in most of the non-intellectual European bourgeoisie, and even more ingrained in Algeria than in mainland France. Then there occurred, in Camus, a crystallization of intellectual and emotional attitudes that he would never give up. . . . [100]

So perhaps the richer *colons* of Algeria would never have deigned to rub elbows with Arabs, but poorer *colons* like Camus considered themselves to be more racially open and accepting. "The racially mixed character of Belcourt with its Jews, Europeans, and Muslims, whether Camus understated the degree of tension between them or not, surely provided him with his cosmopolitan outlook. It also helped create in Camus a hatred of intolerance, especially the arrogance and racism of the French in regard to the Arabs." [101]

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[97] "Camus expressed the love he had for Germain in his novel *First Man*. When Camus was awarded a Nobel Prize, thirty years later, he dedicated his speech to Germain." * Pierre Rubé and Kenneth Douglas. "Who Was Albert Camus?" Yale French Studies, No. 25, Albert Camus (1960) 3-9.

[98] Stephen Eric Bronner, *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1999), 3-5.

[99] Oliver Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, trans. Benjamin Ivy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,1997), 101.

[100] Rubé, 5.

[101] Bronner,4.

Besides his exposure to racial diversity, Camus' fondness for his childhood as a *pied noir* and his attachment to the land strongly affected his writing and political views. He was always filled with a nostalgia for the Algeria of his childhood. In "Albert Camus and North Africa," Georges Joyaux states that "Camus' childhood and adolescence in Algeria marked him deeply with certain attitudes toward man, life and the world," [102] the result of which was that his "emotion preceded intellect." Joyaux concludes that "North Africa led Camus to an immediate enjoyment of life, to a kind of voluptuous, never sated epicureanism. . . . " [103] So as an intellectual, Camus carried with him high ideals of morality combined with a fierce pride and nostalgia for the memory of his youth in Algeria. The tempation is to see Camus' formation as representing the cliché characteristics of the two cultures he straddled: "intellectualness" of the West and the so-called "emotionalness" of the East.

Nevertheless, Camus rejected the idea that his culture and society were in any way cliché. Camus did not even consider the *pieds noirs* of Algeria to be a traditional Mediterranean culture but the start of an entirely new society. Newness would be achieved specifically in his kind of neighborhood, Belcourt, (and not in rich *colon* neighborhoods) where Arabs and Europeans hacked out their daily living side by side.

> Camus's Belcourt neighborhood quite recognizably typifies the 'new culture' and his own political allegiance. With its projected antitotalitarian, democratic future, it is depicted in contrast to the monolithic, authoritarian society of the North. In that 'new culture,' the Westernized Arab and the Algerianized Europeans would meet: Lands without a past, lands of the imagination' : this formula evoking the Mediterranean 'homeland' raised some displeasure among the Muslims, well aware of their past. [104]

But there would be no meeting of Europeans and Arabs through a new culture as Camus had hoped. Instead, the newness of a "land without a past" that Camus felt in Algeria, would only insult the Arabs' pride in their past .

Camus' Algerian-French background would indeed distinguish him from other writers but in ways that put him at odds with his peers. Camus, as a scholar, was

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[102] Georges Joyaux, "Albert Camus and North Africa" *Yale French Studies* No. 25, (1960), 11.
[103] Joyaux, 11.
[104] Betina L. Knapp, *Critical Essays on Albert Camus.* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988), 91.

destined to be different from his completely French counterparts. His intellect would inevitably be tempered by his emotion over Algeria. The 'new culture' that Camus believed he came from encouraged him to follow his own emotions and ideas. Germaine Brée, another critic of Camus, attributes his originality and also his naïvété to his tendency to do things his own way. She writes, "Camus is thus astonishingly free of the intellectual attitudes which most Frenchmen inherit from their long historical past and the milieu into which they are born. For Albert Camus, this very 'innocence' has been, in a sense, both a problem and a strength. It explains in part his tendency to consider each question from scratch. . . . "[105] That Camus acted on the impulse of his emotions and stood out from others was a matter of pride for him, but it would also cause Camus to lose close friends like Jean-Paul Sartre.

Camus had built his intellectual reputation as a proponent of liberty, but his attitude towards the Algerian war baffled many in France, who felt he had reneged on his own principles. The most noted break caused by Camus' views was with Sartre. The falling out between Camus and Sartre began with a disagreement over communism, for both belonged to the Communist party until Camus became disillusioned with what it stood for, believing that the communist were only serving their own ends in Algeria.[106] Camus left the Communist party while Sartre remained. Their disagreements continued over Algeria. Leftists like Sartre supported the FLN's efforts to achieve Algeria's independence, but Camus felt that Sartre blindly supported the independence movement without consideration of the white minority's rights.[107] Camus was soon abandoned by both French and Algerian intellectuals and left alone in his opinions. In the eyes of his French peers, Camus had betrayed them, and they turned their backs on him as a lost cause and a traitor. Even later literary critics of Camus like Conor Cruise O'Brien, who wrote *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa*, accused Camus of being two faced. For "[u]nderneath the mask of the almost universally admired Camus -- humanist, moralist, 'just man' and 'godless saint' -- O'Brien repeatedly finds the face, voice, and

[105] Germaine Brée.*Camus.* (New Brunswick:Rutgers University Press,1972), 6.
[106] Todd, 309.
[107] Bronner, 111.

conflicted identity of the left-wing colon." [108] O'Brien thus chooses to take a sinister view of Camus, claiming that what the public saw in him -- a man of justice and high moral ideals -- was only a cover and that at heart he was just another *colon* with all the racist trappings.

As he became alienated from some of his friends, Camus felt increasingly abandoned. Living in Paris, these feelings were magnified by his constant worry about his aging mother and family still in Algeria. "The worsening Algerian crisis made the year 1957[109] a terrible one for Camus. Isolated from his family, he said he suffered for Algeria the way one suffers from a pain in the lungs." [110] The loss of his former friends and supporters and the constant possibility that his family would be killed were tough blows for the writer. O'Brien likens Camus' position to being in an inescapable limbo and forced to choose between his mother and morality, both of which he held dear. "Torn between justice and his mother, Camus was drawn into a long hesitation which seemed to many like neutrality. Eventually, with the decision to put his mother first, he came, by 1958, to support everything that was fundamental in the French government's position."[111] Camus' worry over his mother hence became a common jibe against him, for it was said that he had chosen "mommy over morality."

Even so, Cruise O'Brien goes a little too far with the accusation that Camus supported everything the French government did. He was assuredly no mere flunky of the French as his vehement opposition to the torture and mistreatment of Arab prisoners by the French reveals. In many aspects, Camus' critics as well as the friends who thought they knew him, like Sartre, had misunderstood him and had made the mistake of thinking of him as just another French intellectual. Nothing in him had really changed; instead, the part of him his colleagues had not previously recognized or had purposely ignored was suddenly brought to their attention. This

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[108] David Carroll, "Camus's Algeria: Birthrights, Colonial Injustice, and the Fiction of a French-Algerian People." *MLN* Vol.112, No.4, Special Issue: Albert Camus, Sep., 1997, 520.

[109] A rather ironic statement by Todd since Camus also won the Nobel Prize for literature in the same year on December 10, 1957.

[110] Todd,362.

[111] Conner Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus* (London: Fontana, 1970), 101.

other Camus quickly became an exile. But no matter how many friends and colleagues now abandoned him, Camus had always been alone in his own mind.

> Perhaps Camus' most abiding and painful exile was that which played him at odds with *himself* . . . . there were two contrasting personalities in play, only one of which was understood and appreciated by his colleagues. When during the Algerian conflict, he tried to explain the other part and hence his own pained ambivalence, few understood: ' the Mediterranean separated within me two universes, one where memories and names were conserved in measured spaces, the other where the traces of man were swept across great distances by the sandy wind.' [112]

What are these two memories of which Camus speaks? Is the memory of "measured spaces" Camus' personal childhood memories while the memory of "man's traces" in the desert the civilizations of Algeria which rise and fall so quickly (blown away by the sand)? Whatever the case, we understand that being a *pied noir*, Camus' memories will always be scattered and divided. As a *pied noir*, he is forced to be disloyal to either one or both sides of his memory at all times. He cannot accept that Algeria has already had a long history without invalidating the short-term *pied noir* history.

To be fair to Camus, whether or not his actions appeared hypocritical to others and to critics like O'Brien, the contradiction within himself had always been a part of his *pied noir* nature. "From his point of view there had been no evolution, simply a gradually increasing tension between his private needs and his public image, a pressure that boiled over on the sensitive issue of Algeria where his personal and political sentiments could no longer be kept apart." [113] Perhaps, then, from this perspective, Conor Cruise O'Brien's accusation that Camus could not be both a man of principles and a colon at the same time is too harsh as well as not quite accurate. Camus, in his way, did try to be true to his own concept of justice. Georges Joyaux agrees that it is regrettable that unlike Sartre, Camus "did not use his high moral authority to condemn, openly and unmistakably, undeniable misconduct on the part of some French elements in North Africa." Yet he also understands that Algeria and all of its tragic violence and human suffering is to

[112] Judt, 103.
[111] Bronner, 20.

Camus, "only part of that larger 'plague' which assails man, the disease which makes questionable the future of man himself." [114]

What those who criticized Camus too often failed to recognize was that he did not feel he was taking sides in the war at all and felt no strong allegiance to either the French or the Algerians. After all, "[t]o be a French Algerian in Camus's Algeria is to be in part unfaithful to both France and Algeria." [115] His was a lonely path because by his own words, his *pied noir* status already made him an "exile within himself" and at odds with himself. But now what he had always felt as a *pied noir* was made public, putting his morals on trial. "Camus found himself in growing disagreement with virtually all parties in the Algerian conflict. The intolerance of the opposing sides, the political errors and crimes of French and Arabs alike, the growing evidence of the impossibility of compromise, brought him from reason to emotion, and from emotion to silence."

Even in his silence, Camus was trying to be consistent in his morals. For "underneath his self-imposed silence regarding French misconduct in Algeria, there is a clear, total condemnation of man's inhumanity to man."[116] Since both sides in the war refused to stop their inhumane acts, he no longer had anything to say to them and his famous silence lasted two years from 1956-1957. [117] Camus would not emerge from this silence until 1958, when his *Actuelles III, Chroniques algériennes* was published.[118] But unfortunately, his refusal to speak did nothing to improve the opinion of his critics. Instead, they seized on his withdrawal into quietness as a lack of concern for the situation in Algeria. Yet Camus found little he could say to either side. For their part, the French had shattered his faith in enlightenment and in democratic tenets with which he had been engrained by teachers like Germain. It was now clear to a disappointed Camus that the *pied noir* destiny of renewing the enlightenment in Algeria was never to be since Camus could not deny that through

[114] Joyaux, 18.
[115] Carroll, 8.
[116] Joyaux, 19.
[117] Jean-Jacques Gonzales, "Une utopie méditerranéenne Albert Camus et l'Algérie en guerre" in *La Guerre d'Algérie: 1954-2004, La Fin de l'Amnésie* , eds. Mohammed Harbi and BenjaminStora (Paris:Robert Laffont: 2004), 598.
[118] Gonzales, 616.

the Independence War, France had brought torture, poverty, and misery to Algerians. So "Camus, more perhaps than any other intellectual, was deeply disillusioned by the failure of France -- its government and its people -- to fulfill its role." [119]

Camus strongly condemned the torture methods used by the French, though he was given little credit for doing so by those who could not forgive him for being opposed to independence. On the other hand, Camus was just as disgusted with Algerian methods of combating the French, writing, "The cause of the Arab people of Algeria has never been worse served than by terrorism against civilians, now practiced systematically by Arab movements." [120] So, if not in other ways, Camus tried to be consistent in his denouncement of the crimes of violence he saw on both sides. And Camus' simultaneous attacks on both French and Algerian acts of violence did at least manage to shake up the colonial/ anti-colonial system. Not sure how to react to his in-the-middle-of- the-road stance on Algeria, the press was as equally silent as Camus. His position and language were too different for the press to comprehend and thus they remained paralyzed with silence, unable to respond to Camus' writing.

> Il faut s'interroger sur ce mutisme quasi unanime de la presse, sur ce silence devant Camus sur l'Algérie. C'est que Camus donne à entendre une dissonance inécoutable, qui ne date pas de cette année 1958, qui vient briser le cercle reposant, simplificateur, convenu et mimétique des pro- et des anti-colonialistes. Quelque chose échappe et fait signe dans les textes de Camus, dont la presse ne peut rendre l'écho. [121]

[119] Joyaux, 17.
[120] Todd, 363.
[121] Gonzales, 601.

> [One has to question the almost quasi-
> unanimous muteness of the press, on this silence before
> Camus on Algeria. It's that Camus creates an intolerable
> dissonance, which does not date from that year of 1958 (the year that
> broke Camus' silence with the publication of his *Actuelles III*)
> which comes to break the unmoving, simplified, conventional ,
> and mimetic circle of pro- and of anti- colonialists.
> Something escapes and beckons in Camus' texts, of which the
> press cannot return the echo.]

Camus thus appeared to speak a language unlike any other [122] with a "mysterious something" that baffled the press and kept them quiet. And clearly, it was not just the press that was bothered by the mysteriousness of Camus' writings on Algeria. The large amount of frustration expressed by both French and Algerian critics of Camus seems testament to the fact that most people simply did not know how to receive Camus' views on Algeria and were all the more angered by his ambiguity. Not knowing how to categorize him or where to place him quickly led people to label him a traitor and a hypocrite.

Camus stuck unmovingly to what he felt was moral, but even those who do not see him as hypocritical still fault him for his shortsightedness. Oliver Todd writes, "Indeed, just because he was disgusted with the fanaticism of *both Algerian* national self-determination and French imperialism, his *primary ethical aim* should have led him to embrace the side with the best chance of ending the blood shed." [123] Eric Bronner in *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*, also sees the same moral naïvété in Camus:

> Camus approached the Algerian crisis with the good faith of a moralist.
> But that does not excuse his blindness to incompatible interests, existing
> constraints, or the basic political issues at stake. Symbolism displaced politics.
> Camus sought autonomy for Algeria within the confines of the French
> Empire, but the aims of the FLN were based on the vision of independence.
> He supported the anti-colonial strivings of the Algerian people but he refused to
> recognize the FLN as its legitimate representative. [124]

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[122] French-Algerian (and vice versa Algerian-French) writers seem to speak a language that those who have not lived Algeria cannot understand for Derrida and Assia Djebar are accused of the same thing. (See Chapter 4, 82-83).

[123] Todd, 365.

[124] Bronner, 109.

Camus' rejection of the FLN betrays his fundamental feelings about Arabs because when it came down to being forced to make a choice between one side and the other, Camus is still prejudiced in favor of France as the slightly better side. Though he was in love with neither side, he felt that "[h]ope nonetheless resided exclusively in the Western camp" because even though the West was full of trespasses and imperfections, Camus stated that the French were "the only people who hold that power of improvement and emancipation which resided in the genius of freedom."[125]

But no matter what was said against him, Camus could not give up his political position on Algeria, for "symbolism had indeed displaced his politics." He was too taken with the idea of his symbolic Algeria -- a moral and nonviolent Algeria -- to be practical about politics. Instead, he lamented the loss of his idealistic Algeria, an Algeria that was now just a memory for him. Camus even admits to being "nostalgic to a fault" about his childhood homeland. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1957, he confesses,

> I have never been able to renounce the light, the pleasure of being, and the freedom in which I grew up. But although this nostalgia explains many of my errors and my faults, it has doubtless helped me toward a better understanding of my craft. It is helping me still to support unquestioningly all those silent men who sustain the life made for them in the world only through memory of the return of brief and free happiness.[126]

Thus, Camus becomes our first case-in-point of a victim of Algerian memories, albeit a willing victim since in his speech he says he is willing to be "one of the silent men" who clings to the happy memory of Algeria. He felt he was one of the only people, if not the only person, who remembered what the real Algeria had been stating: "Algeria is not France, it isn't even Algeria, it is that unknown land which a cloud of blood hides from its incomprehensible natives, bothersome soldiers, and exotic Frenchmen. Algeria is the absent one, whose memory and abandonment pain the hearts of a few people" [127]

[125] Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Camus, Algeria, and "The Fall" Vol.13, Number 6, October 9, 1969, 44.

[126] Albert Camus, "Albert Camus' Speech at the Nobel Banquet at the City Hall in Stockholm," (December 10, 1957) Nobelprize.org, 3.

[127] Todd, 332.

In his preoccupation with his own lost memory of Algeria, though, Camus had forgotten that he had created his memories by building over the Arab ones in the first place. Camus' memory was destined to fall apart. David Carroll's essay, "Camus's Algeria: Birthrights, Colonial Injustice, and the Fiction of a French-Algerian People," specifically studies Camus' work, *First Man*, and how it attempts to establish for the *pieds noirs* a "belated firstness"[128] In other words, Camus acknowledges that the *pieds noirs* were not the first settlers in Algeria, but because they were starting a new and different form of society, they had reestablished themselves as the first people there once again. This means that Camus negates all of the memories and accomplishments of those who had existed in Algeria before the *pieds noirs*. "The history of Camus' Algeria thus consists of a repeated forgetting or destruction of the past, of the disappearance of the traces of all predecessors and even of their memory." [129]

In order for the *pied noirs* to have a legitimate history in Algeria, Camus has to discount all of native Algerian history. As a result, no matter how much Camus professes his belief in the equality of Arabs and Europeans, there is no way this can be achieved in the realm of memory. Native Algerian memory and *pied noir* memory can never coexist. All Arab accomplishments must be thrown out as forgotten traces of man that have left no mark on the land. The erasure of the Arab population is evident in Camus' novels, so, despite Camus' professions of a strong connection to the Algerian land, the Arabs living on it are strangely missing, for "Arabs hardly ever appear in his books."[130]

Cruise O'Brien makes this one of his main complaints in his reviews of Camus' books. Talking about *The Plague,* O'Brien explains that "[s]ince he wanted to situate his fable in a city which he knew, Oran, and since that city contained a large Arab population, these Arabs had to be removed in order to make that notionally French city a really French one." [131] So in his books and in his politics on the Algerian

[128] Carroll, 540.

[129] Carroll, 540.

[130] Isabelle De Courtivron, "Rebel Without a Cause," *New York Times* (December 14, 1997, Sunday).

[131] Conor O'Brien, 55.

War, Camus recognized that there was no way for the *pieds noirs* to leave their own traces of history on the Algerian landscape without the disappearance of the Arabs.

In an earlier quote, Camus stated that his Mediterranean mind was divided between "memories of measured spaces" and "traces of man swept by the sandy wind." [132] But his measured memories have been constructed on the rubble of Algeria's past, the ancient traces of man "swept by the sandy wind." Camus' *pied noir* heritage of "belated firstness" is thus built on a shaky foundation that is sure to crumble since it is built on the ruins of the native Algerian past. Now it is clear why the two parts of Camus warred with each other and why he struggled to find a way to make them fit. Bringing the two parts of his identity together revealed the extreme fragility of the *pied noir* identity. Through his own belief that all Algerian societies are destined to fall anonymously to the wind, Camus predicts the demise of the *pieds noirs*.

Camus was proud of his obscure background because he explained, "Anonymity guarantees the originality and integrity of each generation . Most important, it is not just the consequence but also the privilege of poverty.[133] So Camus and his fellow *pieds noirs* paid a high price for the privilege of their poverty and anonymity. The benefit of uniqueness he gained as a *pied noir* could not last, though he wanted it to. During the war, Camus seems to have forgotten his own philosophy of the inevitable fall of Algeria's cultures, insisting that the *pied noirs* would always be part of the country. Yet to know the fate of the *pieds noirs* in Algeria, he might have reminded himself of his closing lines of *The First Man* . He is essentially speaking about himself when he writes,

[132] Judt,103.
[133] Carroll, 540.

> [He] had been born in a land without forefathers and without memory, where the annihilation of those who preceded him was still more final and where old age finds none of the solace in melancholy that it does in civilized lands [illegible word], he, like a solitary and ever-shining blade of a sword, was destined to be shattered with a single blow and forever, an unalloyed passion for life confronting utter death....[134]

The war in Algeria hastened the inevitable slide of the *pieds noirs* into forgotten history. But if, as Camus believed, Algerian societies are more glorious because of the shortness of their existence, then the pieds noirs' time in Algeria sets them apart as Algeria's as well as colonialism's most fascinating groups.

[134] Albert Camus, *The First Man*, trans. David Hapgood (New York: Vintage Books,1995),284.

CHAPTER 3.
ALGERIAN MEMORIES, MULTIPLE HISTORYLINES, WARRING FACTIONS, AND THE SUBSEQUENT PARALYSIS OF THE COUNTRY

Camus and his fellow *pieds noirs* provide us with one example of the obstacles Algerians face when trying to define what the memory of the war means to them. As a *pied noir*, Camus was unable to create a unified memory for himself since he could not fit the ancient Algeria of the Arabs together with the new Algeria of the *pieds noirs*. Still, the *pieds noirs* are just one example of Algerians trying to come to terms with memory. Like Camus, the FLN-backed government of Algeria also faces a memory dilemma. The Algerian government has had to control memory in order to remain in power. In doing so, it has created a whole new set of amnesia troubles. While it is true that Algeria was permanently scarred by more than 200 years of French occupation, it is also true that the choices made by the Algerian state since independence have deliberately prolonged Algeria's problems. What is clear is that the Algerian government has refused to be accountable and continues to redirect blame for current problems on the colonial past. In other words, keeping the memory of colonial rule alive has become the FLN's political and psychological weapons for retaining its legitimacy.

This retreat into memory is a kind of amnesia that the French and Algerians share in common. The French are known to have amnesia about "the kinds of events that most distressed the intellectuals. . . --the violence and torture, whether by the FLN, the OAS, or the French army and police." [135] In *Memory as an Instrument of Foreign Policy*, Valerie-Barbara Rosoux says that the failure of the Evian Accords (signed at the end of the Independence War on March 18, 1962)[136] to bring about a rapprochement of the two enemies is evidence that "both countries were apparently blocked by the weight of the past." It must be qualified that this is an amnesia that sometimes multiplies memories rather than obscures them. The more

[135] David L. Schalk, *War and the Ivory Tower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 175.
[136] Ruedy, 185.

the French and Algerians try to forget, the more these memories fester. At times, amnesia related to the war leads to general neurosis.

Like the Algerians and the French, societies that have experienced extreme violence are equally blocked by repressive amnesia and the dilemma over how to remember an event that defies being expressed in words. Holocaust survivors provide a prime example since many never brought themselves to speak about the war. Those that did, like Primo Levi, only braved their memories pained with survivor's guilt, which eventually overwhelmed him.[137]

Another example can be seen in the behavior of South Asians towards the massacres that occurred during Partition. This behavior most directly parallels that of the Algerians towards the massacres and violence of their Independence War. Modern India, like modern Algeria, faces the same issues since it was also formed by a bloody conflict. Urvashi Butalia, studying the Partition victims in India in *The Other Side of Silence,* explains,

> In India, there is no institutional memory of Partition: the state has not seen fit to construct any memorials, to mark any particular places -- as has been done say, in the case of holocaust memorials or memorials for the Vietnam War. There is nothing at the border that marks it as a place where millions of people crossed, no plaque or memorial at any of the sites of the camps, nothing that marks a particular spot as a place where Partition memories are collected. Partition was the dark side of independence: the question then is, how can it be memorialized by the State without the State recognizing its own complicity? It is true that hundreds of thousands of people died as a result of Partition. A half century later, you might well be able to read them as martyrs to the cause of forging a new nation. But alongside there is also the other, unescapable reality that millions of people were killed and in many families where there were deaths, there were also murders. How do you memorialize such a history? What do you commemorate? For people, for the State, what is at stake in remembering?[138]

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[137] Most believe Primo Levi, who was interned in Auchwitz, eventually comitted suicide out of despair. (information from Professor Ross Chambers, *Témoignages* class taken during Bryn Mawr Summer Program 2000.) It is common knowledge that, at age 67, he was found at the bottom of the stairs of his home but it is not clear how he died. He died in Turin on April 11,1987. (http://kirjasto.sci.fi/primo.htm.)

[138] Butalia,286.

India and Algeria have in common this "dark side of independence," so Butalia's questions for India can equally be applied to Algeria. The FLN-founded Algerian government has hidden its own complicity by continually blaming its colonial past for Algeria's modern ills. Memory is used by Algeria's political regime to legitimize its own agenda. But to use memory in this way is also to self-punish because it keeps Algerians in the role of constant victims continually re-living the oppression of colonial times.

This deliberate kind of self-punishment is described in Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember.* Connerton explains that there is a state in which the subject displays "an inability to remember the prototype of their present action in a situation where they deliberately but unconsciously put themselves in distressing circumstances and in this way compulsively repeat or act out , a prior and causally determining experience." [139] Algerians fit into this kind of memory disorder, compulsively re-living their distressing memories of French oppression. France's ferocity is eternally revived so that Algerians have an outlet for their current frustrations.

In Algeria's current political chaos, the government benefits from cultivating Algeria's painful colonial memory. This is because colonialism created a sense of nationalism and Pan-Africanism in Algeria. However, this nationalism was an "accidental by-product of colonialism," and it "was not a positive but a negative one, arising out of the sense of anger, frustration, and humiliation produced by the oppressive, discriminatory, and exploitative measures and activities of colonial administrators." [140] Thus, the nature of Algeria's nationalism requires negative and angry emotions to constantly sustain it.

Algerian memory is also distinct in form because it is not commemorative but interactive. Algerians have an ongoing active relationship with their past and this is why the term "anamnesis" is often used in discussions on Algeria. In *Narrative Remembering,* Barbara De Concini describes the specifics of "anamnesis." She

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[140] Adu A. Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987),98.

makes the distinction that "memory connotes something which is past and absent now brought to mind, whereas in the Greek, 'anamnesis' conveys the re-calling or re-presenting of something not as absent but as presently operative by its effects." [141] The term *anamnesis* seems applicable to the way Algerians remember the war. Their memory of the war is not commemorative. Instead, the memory of the war is something still operating strongly in their lives. Algerians, it seems, need to

> . . . rendre présent le passé douloureux afin de le domestiquer. L'oubli commence par l'évocation de la souffrance qui, peu à peu, prend un autre statut ne relevant ni de l'ordre de l'absence ni de celui de la présence , ni de l'inadvenu, ni du vrai. Le peuple juif n'existe que dans/ par la mémoire de la shoah. Que sont les Algériens sans la guerre de libération nationale? Bien sûr ici et là nous avons parfois de l'hypermnésie tout aussi nuisible, mais la mémoire de la douleur est nécessaire. Elle n'est pas que répétition et conservation, elle est également reconstruction. [142]
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> [. . . render the painful past "present" in order to tame it. Forgetting begins with the evoking of suffering which, little by little, takes another form revealing neither the order of absence nor that of presence, neither of the imaginary , nor of the true. The Jewish people only exist within/by the memory of the shoah. What are the Algerians without the national liberation war? For sure, here and there we sometimes have some hyperamnesia that is just as harmful, but the memory of pain is necessary. It is nothing but repetition and conservation, it is equally reconstruction.]

Is the Algerian "nation," if indeed it is a nation, nothing more than the sum and total of the Independence War? If the memory of pain has become so necessary to Algerians that they cannot carry on without it, then trying to domesticate the past in this way has not proven to be a very wise policy for reconstruction. Let us examine what the Algerians' attitude towards history has meant for their social and national progress since independence.

Even while the Independence War was being waged, the foundations for Algeria's fixation with its past colonization were being laid down by writers and revolutionary thinkers like Frantz Fanon. Fanon's writings helped to rally Algerians to the independence cause, but at the same time, "Fanon was also denying colonized

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[141] Barbara DeConcini, *Narrative Remembering* (Lanham: Universitiy Press of America, 1990), 59.

[142] Abderrahmane Moussaqui, "La concorde civile en Algérie: Entre mémoire et histoire" Paper presented at Memory and History: Remembering, Forgetting and Forgiving in the life of the Nation and the Community: An International Conference (Capetown, August 2000),10.

people any history but that of oppression, and ambiguity to the ways they might confront and appropriate the intrusions of colonizers."[143] The belief that oppression is the only history of Algeria is key to understanding Algeria's modern situation. By allowing themselves no other identity but that of the oppressed, Algerians keep themselves in a mode of helplessness and are unable to concentrate on what they need in the present. Today, by choosing to be victims of their past, Algerians cause themselves to live in a very ambiguous present. Algeria may have passed into a postcolonial era, but it has of its own accord not allowed itself to be psychologically decolonized.

Reliving confrontations with the French has become all the more important after the French were expelled from the country. The power of remembering fighting the French could only grow after the war because "memory has the power to exert a significant effect long after the original event, and most importantly, the power resides in the memory and not in the original impression." [144] Recalling the memories of colonization and the Independence War has become a cover story, a master narrative to hide the truth that Algerians have made the past into something they *will not* leave behind. By trying not to move beyond their colonial past Algerians can avoid taking responsibility for their own actions. In this chapter, we will see how Algerians have become so used to falling back on the past to explain all their woes so that they feel naked without this past.

While blaming the western world and the coming of modernity for their nation's lack of advancement, Algerians have made certain choices that signal they are not ready to stop being victims of their own past. As Frederick Cooper states in "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," "The crisis of African states is not attributable to too much modernity or too little; uncovering its origins and its meanings requires a much deeper probing of pathways taken and pathways missed, of possibilities and constraints in global systems that are

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[143] Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History" in *History After the Three Worlds: Post-Eurocentric Historiographies*, ed. Arif Dirlik, Vinay Bahl, and Peter Gran (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2000), 175.

[144] Deconcini, 121.

themselves changing and contested." [145] In keeping with Frederick's idea, Algeria must ask itself which pathways it has missed on purpose.

DEJA VU: THE DOUBLE WAR

Even Algeria's inability to solve its current state of political turmoil and warfare can be attributed to issues of memory since memory empowers Algerian politics and the current regime has yet to prove that it can stand without using the past as a crutch. Modern Algerian regime's political methods may shed more light on the benefits of prolonging memory. The same use (or abuse) of memory can be found in both Algerian politics and literature, so an examination of the political attitudes in Algeria also illustrates why Algerian writers have such an attachment to postcolonialism and subaltern studies.

The regime system that has controlled Algeria since its independence was originally established by the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) and its first leader, Ahmed Ben Bella, who himself came to power by suppressing other rivals such as the UGTA party, an organization of urban workers, and even Mohamad Khider, the Secretary-General who had helped him suppress the UGTA. [146] The FLN's main purpose during the Independence War was to organize militant action against the French and perform guerilla warfare and acts of terrorism. Yet even though the French are long gone, Algeria's government still conducts itself as though the Independence War against France never ended and this is partly because it has to do so to explain why it should remain in power. Hugh Roberts, who published one of the most recent books on Algerian politics, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002*, states plainly that the violence has continued far longer than the Independence War (from 1962 to the current period).[147] This means it is becoming increasingly less plausible for the Algerians to blame all of their political woes on the damage left behind by the French, so the Algerian government has had to find a new way to

[145] Frederick Cooper, " The Dialectics of Decolonization: Nationalism and Labor Movements in Postwar French Algeria" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 428.

[146] Reudy, 198-199.

[147] Roberts, general theme throughout this book.

keep itself from being accountable for its nation's problems. Renewing colonial memories serves this purpose by finding a spectral scapegoat in France's past domination of Algeria.

The FLN were supposedly victorious heroes who had fought against France during the Independence War for Algerian rights. But there is no denying the fact that Algeria's successive government regimes have proven to be a huge post-independence disappointment. As concluded in *Algeria's Impasse*, a summary article of a conference on Algerian politics, "The state copied the hypercentralized French-imposed state while attempting to realize the aspirations of the Algerian people for a unified nation in the face of a profound colonial threat." [148] Rather than providing effective political leadership, Algerian leaders have mostly busied themselves by trying to stamp out their political rivals. And to this end, in order to maintain complete control over power, Algerian regimes have become a renewed embodiment of the tyrannical colonial order. To shut out rivals, the Algerian government has embraced the political hypercentralization of the French and added its own violent twist. Towards the 1980s through 90s, the FLN jealously guarded its power. Secretary-general Chaldi Bendjedid tried to secure the FLN's role as sole political party. And it was not until February 1989, in the wake of problems caused by the Chaldi regime, that the FLN was stripped of its special status as Algeria's only legal party. Even though this only caused further fighting since, "Henceforth, it [the FLN] fought a rearguard battle against opponents who blamed it, often unfairly, for the decades of misrule conducted in its name by bureaucrats and army officers. [149]

The period of civil war that followed Algeria's independence has given rise to what has been termed the "Second Algerian War." David Prochaska writes, "What is clear is that in Algiers in the 1990s the government's security measures and tactics during the second Algerian war evoked memories of the Battle of Algiers during the first Algerian war . . . ." [150] The FLN came to power during the Independence War,

[148] Abdellah Jammoudi and Stuart Schaar, *Algeria's Impasse* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, 1995), 4.

[149] Stone, 143.

[150] David Prochaska, "The Other Algeria: Beyond Renoir's Algiers" in *Renoir and Algeria*, ed. Roger Benjamin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 127.

but it and its successors have never converted out of their independence war-mode mindset. None of the successive regimes has ever broken out of this cycle of violence because such tactics play an important part in sustaining each regime's power, but these tactics have also kept the Algerian rulership from trying anything new.

Recalling the days when Algeria won its independence supplies a fall-back whenever local issues are too difficult to discuss. Since the Algerian regimes from the time of independence have failed to achieve a stable and working nation, (this thesis is not saying that the nation has to be a unified one but at least a functioning one) the government has taken to wearing the history of the Independence War on its sleeves like a red badge of courage, using the bitterness of the past as a distraction from the failures of the present. In *Battlefield Algeria: 1988-2002*, Hugh Roberts claims that the current Algerian regime justifies itself by keeping Algeria in a continued state of emergency:

> The violence has now lasted for longer than the war of national liberation. The longer it has gone on, the less it has had to do with the national political objectives of the initiators of the rebellion -- indeed, the less it has appeared to be oriented by intelligible political purposes of any kind. . . . . It should be noted that the violence in itself serves to justify the annual renewal of the state of emergency, and that the regime may be considered to have an interest in maintaining the restrictions on opposition political activities which the state of emergency authorizes. [151]

Roberts notes several dissident military groups that have caused the government worry since independence, among which are the FIS or Islamic Salvation Front, the *Organisation des Jeunes Algériens Libres*, the MIA or Armed Islamic Movement, and the *Groupe Islamiqe Armé* or GIA, which is composed mainly of veterans from the Afghan war and is known for using extreme violence. The ironic existence of these military groups must be underlined since these groups learned their fighting skills from serving under the French. As Adu A. Boahen explains, "Another political legacy bequeathed to independent African states was the professional army. . . . And what a legacy these military groups have turned out

[151] Roberts, 269.

to be! In retrospect, they have become nothing but a source of instability, confusion, and anarchy . . ." [152]

To combat these military groups, the government needs to keep a "second Algerian war" going, justifying the fighting by claiming that anarchy needs to be eliminated. Oddly enough, though, both the government and the military groups are helping to re-enact the original war because both are using the methods they developed under French rule. The government fights as if it is still resisting the French and the military groups fight as if they are still serving under the French.

In the end, if anything, the government of independent Algeria has only added insult to injury by copying the methods of the French while increasing the bloodshed to new levels. Valerie-Barbara Rosoux asks, "The question is actually to wonder whether the use of memory leads to an escalation of violence or contributes to the rapprochement of former adversaries." [153] In Algeria's case, the answer is clear, since using memory has caused unimagined levels of bloodshed.

So as Roberts suggested earlier in *The Battlefield Algeria* , the government had and still has strong motivations to keep a perpetual war going by yearly renewing the state of emergency, claiming that the nation is still under attack, except now the enemy has become other Algerians. Perpetual warfare preserves the image of the government as military heroes and protectors of the populace. And by making itself into the military defenders of the population as the FLN had been during the Independence War, the Algerian regime excuses its monopoly on power and its refusal to negotiate with the dissident factions that threaten its authority. Proclaiming other militant factions to be a danger to the Algerian nation and people gives the regime an excuse to continue its warfare against them. The government is unable to move past warfare because by "presenting violence as the only language of Islamist groups, the regime is looking to restrict the political choices of citizens. The military that monopolizes power wishes to advance the idea that the only choice open to the population lies between security (the army) and

[152] Boahen, 99.

[153] Valerie-Barbara Rosoux, Memory as an Instrument of Foreign Policy," Paper presented at Memory and History: Remembering, Forgetting and Forgiving in the life of the Nation and the Community: An International Conference , Cape Town, August 9-11, 2000, 4.

violence (the Islamists). In so doing, the regime masks its own hideous violence." [154] To secure its domination, the Algerian government has made obvious choices to suppress rival factions which continue the tyranny begun by the colonizers. In any case, according to Hugh Roberts, it has become increasingly clear that "[the] Algerian state is weaker than at any moment in its history since 1962.[155]

THE FAILURE OF THE INDEPENDENCE WAR TO SPUR ARABISATION

So the regime established by Ben Bella and the ailing FLN party of more recent times desperately cultivated the FLN"s role in the Independence War, attempting to promote a glorious memory of the FLN victory over the French [156] that was meant to divert from the reality of Algeria's political failings. This served as a flimsy cover for the party's ineffective leadership and did little to save the FLN from losing favor. But this falsely created memory also had a second negative effect. The memory of the FLN victory was promoted as an exclusively "Arab memory." Ben Bella wanted the Independence War to be remembered as a battle of Islamic Arabs against the threat of westernization by the French, and he sought to unify the people as a race of Islamic Arabs. This all-Arab memory which the government tried to force on the Algerians (an essentially non-Arab population) would eventually have disastrous results. The failure of democracy in Algeria can be understood as a result of the population's fear of complete Arabisation of Algeria.

Trying to force the country to be Arab was a major political faux pas of the Algerian leadership. Ben Bella took the first steps to Arabize the country. Under him, the Constitution of 1963 made Arabic the official language and Islam the official religion.[157] After Bella was overthrown in 1965, the new president, Houari Boumedienne, was even more aggressive in promoting an all-Arab image of

[154] Jammoudi and Schaar,14.
[155] Roberts, 160.
[157] Ruedy, 200.

Algeria. He decreed that Algerians were both Muslims and Arabs.[158] Thus, under Boumedienne, "the regime also proceeded with the Arabisation programme established under Ben Bella, the objective of which was the full transformation of a Maghrebi-European society into a purely Arab one.[159]

Yet the political leadership under Boumedienne forgot to remember that Algeria could not be casually incorporated into the Muslim world as just another Middle Eastern country. Even though Algeria was a Muslim North African country, it consisted of indigenous North African tribes that were by no means Arab. This meant that "[e]ven Algerians who are not, say Tuaregs or Kabyles are very often culturally and as it were, ethnically, Berber, more than anything else. The whole society has its own flavour in which Berber is an important component." [160] The Arabisation movement embraced by the Boumedienne regime was tied into the worldwide pan-Islamic movement that swept Muslim countries in the 1970s. But since Algeria was a country where an Arab minority took over a Berber majority, this policy had strong repercussions, for the Berbers refused to be erased from Algerian history. The violence that followed the failure of democracy was proof that the governments under Bella and Boumedienne had built the post-independence nation on a false Arab memory which claimed that Algeria had always been Arab and had been freed by Arabs. The later fall of the FIS in the 1990s only served to show that this foundational memory was extremely weak. Contrary to what the FLN wanted the population to believe about independence, there had never been an "Arab" victory at all and the revolt of non-Arab Algerians against the FIS made this clear. "In the 1990s, government suppression of elections in Algeria that Islamists were sure to win triggered years of massacre, whole villages with their throats cut; here too the death toll reached the tens of thousands."[161] As a consequence, the FIS was banned and left to become an errant military group among others and the

[158] John Howe, "The Crisis of Algerian Nationalism and the Rise of Islamic Integralism," *NLR* 19b. (1992), 91.

[159] Stone, 52.

[160] Howe, 91.

[161] Thomas W. Simons, Jr., *Islam in a Globalizing World.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 54.

dissatisfaction with making Algeria an Arab country has also sparked a Berber oppositional movement against the established government . [162] Currently, there is a backlash against Arabization and a call for Algeria to return to its Berber roots.

> Within the Berber cultural movement in Algeria and France, various engaged activists and intellectuals continue to make a concerted effort to portray Berberity as the true, originary identity of Algeria, the Maghreb, and the southern Mediterranean as a whole . . . . They decry the Algerian state's adoption of the *salafi* reformist efforts to project a transhistorical Algerian nation united in Arab culture and Islam (9 Merad 1967; McDougall 2003) as Arabo-Islamic (or even "Arabo-Ba'athist") imperialism, as a denial of the Algerian people's essential Berber identity. They view the disunity of Algeria, embodied most poignantly in the civil war that claimed upwards of 100,000 lives between 1992 and 2002, as resulting from an 'identity crisis' that has left the Algerian people utterly disoriented in an increasingly globalizing world, willing to grasp at the first strong organizing principle to arise – in this case Islamic fundamentalism. They thus propose a return to Algeria's true identity -- Berberity -- as the requisite solution to the crisis. [163]

Overall, the imposition by the government of a memory that did not suit a majority of the population left the national identity in chaos. Because the population was ill-equipped , the government only succeeded in further confusing the youth of the nation with its policies. "Large segments of the youthful population began suffering from cultural disorientation. The State responded with a developmentalist discourse and then added to this a discourse that stressed the need to restore Algeria's Arab-Muslim identity. Many Algerians had no sense anymore of what the future held." [164]

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[162] David Prochaska, "The Other Algeria: Beyond Renoir's Algiers" in *Renoir and Algeria*, 127.
[163] Silverstein, 75.
[164] Jammoudi and Schaar, 7.

THE UNCOLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE NATION

While the government wishes to use the Independence War as the main narrative for the nation, not everyone agrees that this should be the case. As has been discussed, there are many groups in Algeria that wish to push their own political platform. In "*La concorde civile en Algérie: entre mémoire et histoire*," Abderrahmane Moussaqui shows that part of the problem of not being able to move past memory is that Algerians do not even agree on what the nation's memory should constitute. Thus, it becomes clear that the problem with the Algerian nation is that each group feels it has been failed by what it hoped to gain from independence and decolonization. No group is willing to abandon its obsession with the past because each group is still clinging to the past in hopes of addressing the wrongs of the past it wants to have redressed.

> Les islamistes ne se souviennent plus que de l'arrêt du processus électoral qui les a spoilés leur victoire en 1991. Les dirigeants au pouvoir ne veulent se souvenir que de la guerre de libération nationale dont ils étaient les principaux acteurs. Ils se sentent victimes d'une non-reconaissance de dettes de la part d'une jeunesse frondeuse. Les populations martyrisées par huit années de tragédie en veulent autant à ceux qui les terrorisent qu'à ceux qui n'ont pas su les protéger. Chaque partie se sent victime d'un ostracisme et de torts qu'elle espère voir redresser un jour.
>
> [The Islamists remember nothing more than the end of the electoral process which took victory from them in 1991. Those in power only wish to remember the national war of liberation in which they were the principal actors. They see themselves as victims of a non-recognition of debts on the part of an ungrateful youth. The population martyrized by eight years of tragedy want as much from those who terrorize them as from those who didn't know how to protect them. Each group perceives [themselves] as victims of an ostracization and of wrongs which it hopes to one day redress.] [165]

Abderrahmane Moussaqui's quote explains in clearer terms why the Algerian independence movement has failed to unify the nation's memories. Each group in Algeria refuses to give up its own version of the injustices of the past. The past cannot be put to rest until a proper ending is reached for each group's story. But since each group has a different vision of what a proper ending to the history of

[165]Moussaoui, 9.

decolonization should be, no one can progress beyond the point in history that it has chosen to represent its group's politics.

A REVOLUTION THAT NEVER REALLY TOOK PLACE?

The postwar Algerian nation's lack of progress is cause to question what the Algerian Independence War indeed managed to accomplish. To review, the overthrow of French rule was to be a major revolution for Algeria, but the resulting vacuum of power was replaced with a dictatorship that has mimicked that of the former colonizers.

There was no consensus or cooperation among the different groups that make up Algeria. This inability to work together cooperatively suggests that the Algerian uprising failed to achieve its goal and that Algerians lacked a proper revolutionary mindset. (That is, if a revolution is defined as an event which manages to change a country's situation and move it forward). In other words, though the Algerians finally revolted against their colonizers, they were not ready to form their own nation or to run it. They failed to settle on a firm vision of the form that nation would take. John Ruedy has pointed out that " . . . Algeria alone among France's North African possessions failed to develop a broad-based nationalist movement capable of articulating national goals or coherent strategies for achieving them. . . . . The Algerian insurrection was less an expression of a national consensus than of frustration with the national inability to forge a consensus." [166] Since many Algerians seem to feel that they are more or less in the same place they started from after independence, did the Algerians simply imagine a revolution that never occurred?

In *Spectral Nationality*, Pheng Cheah suggests that there is such a thing as a revolution that occurs only in the head. Perhaps by his definition, Algeria is an example of one such revolution. In reading Cheah, an unsettling accusation that comes to mind is that decolonization has only been an illusion for the Algerian population. Has living in the memory of their victory over the French simply kept Algerians in a dream-like state in the present? Secondly, is this dream-like state

[166] Ruedy, 180

keeping Algerians from realizing that theirs is a revolution that has not resulted in revolutionizing their society?

Cheah writes that the postcolonial nation can be a self-defeating proposition even when the population thinks it has achieved victory. The Algerian people attempted to create a sovereign postcolonial nation, but Cheah says that the danger of the postcolonial nation is that the state, once created, has the potential to completely escape its creator's grasp. [167] As he explains,

> Decolonizing nationalism is an organismic process of becoming that is perverted in the aftermath of independence when the postcolonial nation becomes possessed by the state it thinks it *controls*. Anderson evokes this possession and stultification of the living national body by official nationalism via images of the ghostly technical infrastructure of a house and suffocating anachronistic garb that are reminiscent of Fanon's images of the palace as a brightly lit empty shell and the flag as a hollow symbol of the nation. [168]

If the term " revolution" is to be considered in the sense of the people rising up against an oppressive authority and winning victory, then the Algerian Independence War is again not revolutionary. Clearly, many westernized Algerians who aspired to the supposed enlightened French ideals of liberty awaited a French-stye revolution. The middle class in Algeria never saw its postcolonial victory because "[b]y 1980 the Algerian state had already excluded most of the middle class from political participation." [169]

Instead, the Algerian people, as Cheah discusses, appear to have lost control of their own creation and it has instead turned on them. The state which they believed they would control has taken control of their national ideals. The State, as we have seen, has even taken control of the people's memories, using the Independence War as a national memory that justifies the government's power. So the population is kept hostage to its own past, through its own doing but also in large part because the government wishes this to be so.

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[167] Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 227.
[168] Cheah, 226.
[169] Jammoudi and Schaar , 7.

CHAPTER 4.
WOMEN'S LITERATURE AS THE REPOSITORY OF RECONSTRUCTED MEMORY: ASSIA DJEBAR'S *FANTASIA*

One might conclude from the previous chapter that postcolonial Algeria is caught in a power struggle over memory or more accurately, a struggle over whose is the correct memory. With the state and so many other groups in competition to impose a specific memory on the nation, history has become tangled by many versions of the past. We have seen two examples of how specific memory can be for each group -- Camus never gave up on his ideal of the nostalgic Algeria he remembered from his childhood while the State tried to force an Arab history on the country, ignoring the Berber identity of its people.

The mess of memories is essentially responsible for the civil war in Algeria. However, the last case study will highlight the psychological cost of these conflicting memories and nothing better expresses the fractured memory of the people than Algerian literature. Francophone Algerian writing is a perfect expression of the disjointed emotions and memories that haunt Algerians. Schizophrenia is already apparent in the label Francophone Algerian, or French-educated Algerian, since a majority of Franco-Algerian authors are citizens of France writing about Algeria, though they have never lived there and did not really live through the Independence War.

Consider first Jacques Derrida, France's supreme deconstructionist, who just passed away at age 74. He was, in fact, a native son of Algeria born in El Biar in 1930. Like Camus, he was a *pied noir.* Like Camus, Derrida also felt a strong and obsessive nostagia for Algeria which he called a "nostalgeria." [170] But unlike Camus, Derrida was also Jewish, born to a Sephardic Jewish family. He went to school under the Vichy regime and was expelled from school at age ten. Because of the extreme racism he experienced from his French teachers and other French

[170] Hédi Abdel-Jaouad, "Derrida's NostAlgeria: or Autobiography in the Language of the Other," http://africa.wisc.edu/ala2004/seminars/memories/abdel-jaouad-english.pdf, 2.

supremacists who considered themselves superior to his *pied noir* - Jewish background, he eventually moved to France in 1949 to escape this unfair treatment.[171] Through Deconstruction, Derrida found a way to articulate his early life experience in Algeria as a theory. Derrida's deconstruction theory exemplifies Algerian life and its fracturedness. Because of his Algerian background, Derrida has layers of identities -- Algerian, *pied noir,* Jewish, and French. His deconstructed writing reflects his impossibly complex identity. "If Derrida speaks French (neutral, unaccented, intellectual Parisian French), he writes, however, in Franco-Maghrebian, an unreadable, accented, and spiced idiom . . ."[172] Derrida's language is unreadable because his history and background cannot be conveyed through any existing language.

Was Deconstruction Derridas' way of reconciling his own complex background? Additionally, did being Jewish perhaps add another layer of complication to his identity, another "Other" with yet another memory of its own? Other Algerian immigrants like Derrida also live and remember in a deconstructed way. Drawing on the irreconcilibilities of their immigrant status and multicultural lives, these writers, among them Assia Djebar, are the main focus of this chapter. Their writings reveal the fractured memories of Algerians.

In an interview with *LA Weekly*, Derrida's response to the question, "With sufficient understanding of the Other, could the impulse to kill be erased?" does seem to suggest so. He explains, "When I write, there's an element of aggression in that activity, but I attempt to transform that aggression into something useful. I can kill the Other without putting an end to his or her life, and can be aggressive in a way that's not despicable." [173] Through deconstruction, Derrida had the power to unify all the warring "Others" within his own mind.

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[171]Elaine Ganley, "Jacques Derrida, 74, noted French philosopher," Chicago Sun-Times.October 10,2004,http://www.suntimes.com/output/obituaries/cst-nwe-xderr10.html

[172] Abdel-Jaouad, 28.

[173] Kristine McKenna, "The Three Ages of Jacques Derrida: An interview with the Father of Deconstructionism," LA Weekly, November 8-14, http://www.laweekly.com/ink/printime.php?eid=39753

Consider now the literature of Francophone Algerian women, the final case study. The rising violence in Algeria of the 1980s and 1990s prompted Franco-Algerian writers to look "to the other side of the Mediterranean" for their works. [174] As explained in the previous chapter, the "Second Algerian War" had unsettling parallels to the first war. The Second Algerian War consequently inspired Franco-Algerian authors to produce novels about the older generation's participation in the Algerian war.[175] Assia Djebar is one major author who came out of this movement. And like Derrida, Assia Djebar may speak French, but she writes in her own unique language. If Derrida writes in an unreadable, spiced, Franco-Maghrebian language, Djebar takes that language and makes it her own by adding a feminine twist to it.

Novels written by Djebar and other Franco-Algerian writers of the 80s and 90s exemplify the fractured memories of much more than just Algerian women. Of the multiple voiced novel, *Hikayat Zahra,* by Lebanese woman writer Hanan al-Shaykh, Sabah Ghandour, a literary critic, says that " . . . the question of history is in fact a question of narrative" that depends on "whose history prevails and becomes dominant in the whole novel." [176] Algerian literature is fractured because no group's narrative has been able to prevail; thus, the people and the country's historylines are still too much at war with one another for the country to be able to write one unified history. And until all are satisfied with their history's telling, the past will continue to control their lives. The diversity of people and ideas in Algeria, then, contributes to the syndrome of making the past into an everyday reality in the present. To explain further:

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[174] Silverstien, 208.

[175] Silverstein, 208.

[176] Lisa Suhair Majaj, Paula W. Sunderman, Therese Saliba eds. *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels.* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 245.

> In Africa, the encounters of the past are very much part of the present. Africa still faces the problems of building networks and institutions capable of permitting wide dialogue and common action among people with diverse pasts, of struggling against and engaging with the structures of power in the world today. Africa's crisis derives from a complex history that demands a complex analysis: a simultaneous awareness of how colonial regimes exercised power and the limits of that power, an appreciation of the intensity with which that power was confronted and the diversity of futures that people sought for themselves, an understanding of how and why some of those futures were excluded from the realm of the politically feasible, and an openness to possibilities for the future that can be imagined today.[177]

Among African nations, Algeria has its work cut out for it in terms of finding a common dialogue to fit its diverse peoples and in understanding the "diversity of futures" that its population of *pieds noirs*, Berber, Arab, Jewish, and other groups expected in decolonized Algeria. The weight of the past on the present is vivid in the novels of Assia Djebar. In Djebar's works, the past dominates present time. Though her books are mostly set in modern times, we know very little of the present lives of the characters. Their minds are fixated on memories so that they never seem to be focused on the here and now and are instead constantly looking back. Consequently, her writings characterize the nature of the Algerian nation, where the present has in a way become more unreal than the memories of the past. This is because Algeria has learned to define itself with its memories, and this has kept the country's definition of itself from forming and addressing social and political issues that need immediate attention if Algeria is to attempt to end its political instability.

As Assia Djebar puts it, the fact that the Algerian memory is in pieces makes it "arable" :

> O my other self, my shadow, my one so like me,
> You are gone, you have deserted me, left me arable,
> Your pain, a plowshare, turned me over and seeded
> me with tears. At these last words, rhyming in ancient Arabic,
> a woman suddenly shrieked. She stood up, tall and thin; she
> tore off her scarf with one hand, and with the fingers of her other
> opened to tear slowly at her left cheek.[178]

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[177] Cooper, *History After the Three Worlds*, 108.

[178] Assia Djebar, *So Vast the Prison* (Seven Stories Press: New York, 1995), 24.

The woman in this passage represents the way Algerian women's memories are torn between a yearning for the past they lost to colonization and a violent modernized world of continuing civil warfare. The sound of ancient Arabic seems to make the woman suddenly aware of this split within herself. She mourns for the self that has deserted her. Is this deserted self the irretrievable past symbolized by ancient Arabic? It is the arableness that she feels in herself that makes her tear at her face. As Farida Abu-Haidar says in her article, "Unmasking Women: The Female Persona in Algerian Fiction," Djebar gives voice to contless women who took part in the national struggle and whose poignantly informative oral testaments would have been lost if she had not translated them and included them in her text.

ASSIA DJEBAR'S *FANTASIA: AN ALGERIAN CAVALCADE* AND WOMEN UNITED BY MEMORY

Assia Djebar was born Fatima-Zohra Imalayen in Cherchell, Algeria, in 1936, and was educated in the primary school where her father was a French teacher. A talented student, she was the first Algerian woman to be accepted into the prestigious École Normale Supérieure. Although Djebar did not live in Algeria during the Independence War, she did witness some of its violence since she participated in student demonstrations in France at the outbreak of the Independence War. [179] During this period, as Alec G. Hargreaves informs us in *Voices of the North African Immigrant Community in France: Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction*, "An unknown number of immigrants were killed, in some cases after being brutally interrogated, and scores of bodies were found floating in the Seine. News of these events was largely suppressed by the French media. . . "[180]

Djebar also worked for *El-Moujahid,* an anti-colonial newspaper run by the FLN, and even married a member of the Resistance from whom she later separated. While Djebar's works criticize the French, her works equally criticize the restrictions on women in Muslim society. Because of these radical feminist views,

[179] www.kirjasto.sci.fi/djebar.htm (accessed Feburary 17, 2005.

[180] Jean Déjeux, *Littérature Maghrébine de Langue Française* (Ottowa: Éditions Naaman, 1973), 248.

she adopted her pen name, being afraid that her father would disapprove of her writing.[181] She dared to vocalize the lives and feelings of Algerian women and to make them known to the western world and for this reason,

> Djebar est ressentie par de nobreueses jeunes algérienne
> comme le porte-drapeau de leur émancipation, elle qui
> décrivait dès 1956 la situation et les préoccupations des jeunes
> citadines à demi libérées -- du moins en façade -- d'aujourdhui, *guerre en plus.*' [182]
>
> [Djebar is felt by numerous young Algerian (women)
> as the flag-bearer of their emancipation, she who described
> at the start of 1956 the situation and preoccupations of young,
> partially liberated (female) city-dwellers -- at least on the surface --
> of today, war as well.]

L'Amour, la Fantasia or Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade was written in 1985 and is the thirteenth of her many novels on women, war, and memory. I have chosen to concentrate on this novel, which is perhaps the most perfect example of how the memory of the Independence War has affected the Algerian psyche. It dramatically demonstrates the shards of Algeria's memories and how women like her have struggled with being caught between the pieces of their past. In *Fantasia,* we find an odd mix of multiple times of war: the initial occupation of Algeria in the 1830s, the Independence War, and it should not be forgotten, Djebars' own time in post-independence Algeria where a terrible civil war was also being waged. Although this civil war is never mentioned in the novel, its presence is inevitably conjured since Djebar brings her own time period into the story and since she is writing the novel in 1985, during the conflict.

The multiple layers of time in Assia Djebar's work also attest to the extra strain put on women trying to write about Algerian history. In Djebar's novels, women become a channel through which all of the country's "historylines" are told. In *Litterature Maghrebine de Langue Française* [Magreb Literature of the French Language], Jean Dejeux explains that while Djebar's novels are about women, they are equally about the Arab man and about all of Algeria:

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[181] www.kirjasto.sci.fi/djebar.htm

[182] Charles Bonn, *La Littérature Algérienne de Langue Française et ses Lectures: Imaginaireet Discours d'Idées* (Ottowa: Éditions Naaman, 1974), 134.

> Parce que la mémoire de l'homme colonisé a été entravée par l'étranglement de la colonisation, parce qu'elle est en même temps un ensemble de noeuds et d'élans cette mémoire <<devient un champ profond pour un labourage. [183]
>
> [Because the memory of the colonized man was hindered by the strangling of colonization, because it is at the same time an ensemble of knots and of impulses , this memory "becomes a deep field for tilling."]

Thus, when Assia Djebar takes up the cause of speaking and writing for women, she is additionally assuming the responsibility of giving a voice to the whole of her society. Irreconcilability fuels Assia Djebar's thinking; her intellectual development is a result of the unresolved paradoxes with which she has had to struggle in her life. Djebar begins by recounting going to school for the first time, but soon her story expands to a universal kind of storytelling. Djebar takes on the imposing as well as impossible task of uniting Algerian memory for herself because her education in French daily forces her to live the frustration of writing in the colonizer's language, yet she yearns to reconnect with the oral traditions of Algeria's past and the culture and language that were overrun by the French.

She also writes on behalf of the veiled woman because even though she lives the life of a westernized woman, she is the only kind of "Arab" woman who can do so because the restrictions and lack of education placed on traditional Arab women keep them silent and unable to write down their own history. Finally, Djebar, who lived in France during the Independence War and who most recently has taught in New York, represents the intellectually broken state of the Algerian nation. As a result of the Independence War and because of decades of poverty, many Algerians were forced to "sell out" to French ways in order to survive .

During the early period of colonization, many of the traditional Algerian Qur'anic schools were destroyed and therefore, to get a proper education, Algerian children had to go to French-run schools. The French tried to promote their own schools because they served as useful assimilation devices, so they allowed

[183] Déjeux, 266.

Qur'anic schools only in military territory while Arabic-French primary schools were opened in the towns and among the more resistant tribes. Arabic was taught in the morning and French in the afternoon.[184] The French were using their language as a tool to destroy Algerian resistance. Under the western system, the Qur'anic schools could not prosper and could not offer a "proper" education. Djebar's father, who taught French, and Djebar herself, are the product of this French campaign, even though she confesses that French was a language "that my father had been at pains for me to learn." [185]

Djebar must write in French even though it is the language of the enemy, yet despite her regrets in doing so, she says, "This language was formerly used to entomb my people; when I write it today I feel like the messenger of old, who bore a sealed missive which might sentence him to death or to the dungeon. By laying myself bare in this language I start a fire which may consume me. For attempting an autobiography in the former enemy's language. . . ." [186] Djebar does not finish the thought, but she does not have to explain that writing in French makes her in a way an exile as well as a traitor, reburying her people many times over with her words.

Djebar developed a sense of alienation from her own countrywomen, especially a linguistic one, because she wrote in French and they did not. [187] The more Djebar used French, the more she became a fugitive. Using French even makes her feel detached from her own mother (whose first language was Arabic and who only learned to speak French, but not to write it).[188] In the introduction to *So Vast the Prison*, she writes, "Voiceless, cut off from my mother's words by some trick of memory, I managed to pass through the dark waters of the corridor, miraculously inviolate, not even guessing at the enclosing walls. The shock of the first words blurted out: the truth emerging from a break in my stammering voice. From what nocturnal reef of pleasure did I manage to wrest this truth?"[189] Is it the

[184] Ageron, 42.

[185] Assia Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, trans. Betsy Wing (New York: Seven Stories Press,1999), 4.

[186] Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, introduction.

[187] Clarisse Zimra, "In Her Own Write: The Circular Structures of Linguistic Alienation in Assia Djebar's Early Novels," *Research in African Literatures* vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1980), 208.

[188] Djebar.*So Vast the Prison*, 176.

[189] Djebar,*So Vast the Prison*, 4.

memories to which French is connected that play this trick on her and make her an exile?

In *So Vast the Prison,* which picks up many of the themes in *Fantasia,* she writes, "Fugitive without knowing it, or rather without knowing it yet. At least up to this precise instant in which I am relating these comings and goings of women in flight from the long-ago or recent past. Up to the moment in which I become conscious of my permanent condition as a fugitive -- I would even say: as someone rooted in flight -- just because I am writing and so that I write. I do not record, alas the words from *noubas.* The language is too scholarly for me to write, but I remember them." [190] Using French to honor the memory of her ancestors' words is the only way to justify writing in the language.

The continual struggle to bring together what cannot ever or will not ever fit together defines Djebar's intellectualism and shifting identities. Yet she recognizes that though she hates the irreconcilability, without it, her intellect would not have the richness that allows her to write her novel. It is her French education that gave her access to the French record of the colonization of Algeria which lasted 132 years from 1830 to 1962. On the other hand, Assia's ability to speak Arabic enabled her to obtain oral accounts of the Arabic experiences during the War of Independence from 1954-1962, especially the experiences of individual women. She also uses second-hand oral accounts of Algerian women who had lived through the colonization of the 1830s which were passed down from generation to generation.

Recognizing that the French and Algerian parts of history and her own life cannot be brought together any other way, Djebar elects to flaunt them as a parade of flashing memories. In the Introduction to *Fantasia*, Dorothy Blair calls *Fantasia* "An historical pageant of the vicissitudes of [Djebar's] native country [which] covers the capture of Algiers in 1830 to the War of Independence of 1954-1962: for the chapters devoted to the War of Colonization, Djebar, the historian, draws on the archives, and disinters little-known eye-witness accounts written at the time by artists, obscure officers, publicists (whom we now call war correspondents) and various

[190] Djebar, *So Vast the Prison,* 176.

camp-followers. . . .[for] the War of Independence, [she] relies on the oral testimony of women who took part in the struggle. . . ."[191]

In order to make their story part of her own, the author deliberately blurs all of the memories in her pageant, including her own autobiography, so that it becomes too difficult to distinguish where one memory begins and the next ends. Characters in the story are introduced by "I" and it is not clear exactly who this "I" is. Often, no name is given at all and to add to the confusion, Assia mixes and intermingles the stories in her book. Some chapters discuss her own life, some tell the story of the confrontations with the French during the 1830s, and some tell the stories of other women. To do this, Assia begins many chapters with "I." For example, Chapter 2 begins," I could well have been my brother's confidante when he first took to the hills to join the maquis. . . ."[192]

By blending all of these "I's" together, she connects herself with the identity of the harem and of the Sheharazadic days of oral tradition and storytelling. In the only way she can, she becomes a part of the resistance of Algerian women of the past and she becomes a part of their oral tradition by telling their stories. In *The Interpretation of Dreams -- Freud's Theories Revisited*, Laurence M. Porter says that characters may still be made to represent the self, even if the self is concealed: "So if the dreamer does not appear as a character in a dream, she must be concealed behind a character with whom she has something in common. Even when the self does not recognizably appear, others in the dream may represent the self as well so that the ego appears several times over." [193]

Although she is writing in French, through her dreamlike writing, Djebar is still able to encompass the oral tradition of Algerian women in her western writing. In so doing, she tries to create a dialogue between herself and the oral traditions of her ancestors. Tzvetan Todorov, in *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, states that ". . . .The I and the Thou -- that is, the self and the other --

[191] Dorothy S.Blair, "Introduction to Fantasia" in *Fantasia:An Algerian Cavalcade* (Portsmouth: Heinemann,1985), xii.

[192] Djebar, *Fantasia,* 80.

[193] Laurence M. Porter, *The Interpretation of Dreams -- Freud's Theories Revisited* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 78.

designate the two participants in the act of discourse: the one who speaks and the one addressed." He further notes that his predecessor, Martin Buber, said, "There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word I-Thou. . . ." [194] In other words, a person does not exist in and of himself but because there are others around him. So Djebar exists as a paradox because she cannot reconcile the two others to whom she addresses the book -- Algerian women and the French.

MUSICAL MEMORIES

It is the musical rhythm of parading characters that binds history together for Djebar as she makes all of the characters of the past move along to her *Fantasia,* which is defined as a fanciful musical composition. However, a *Fantasia* is also an Arab ceremony. Djebar's chosen title for the book, *Fantasia*, is derived from the Arabic word *fantaziya*, which "in North Africa [is] a set of virtuoso movements on horseback executed at a gallop, accompanied by loud cries and culminating in rifle shots; the Fantasia [is] associated with ceremonial occasions and military triumphs. . . . But a Fantasia [in Italian] is also a musical composition . . . .usually contrapuntal and in several sections, in which the character of the music suggests an improvisational character or the play of free fancy."[195]

Djebar's book is a play on all these meanings of the word *fantasia* in language, content, and form or structure. First, she uses the contrapuntal form to display her superb mastery of French and to capture the feel of the oral language of the Arabic-Berber women's accounts. Thus, in *Fantasia*, Djebar writes in virtuoso French the information obtained from French sources about the colonization of Algeria. This virtuoso French is full of lyrical rhythm and rich details. In contrast, the oral accounts obtained from the Arabic-Berber women are a rough, simple, even ungrammatical French as she attempts to do literal translations of what the women have said.

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[194]Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 154.

[195] Blair, "Introduction to *Fantasia*," xiv.

Even the organization of her book , especially Part III, is structurally a musical fantasia. The titles have obvious musical implications: "First Movement: The Two Strangers," "Second Movement: The Trance," "Third Movement: The Ballad of Abraham," "Fourth Movement: The Cry in the Dream," "Fifth Movement: The Tunic of Nessus," and "Finale." In these "movements," she has "free play" to explore the past and the present and how they have affected Algerian women.

This is Djebar's way, then, of breaching the distance between herself and the past from which she feels separated and exiled. Through her own *Fantasia,* which manages to be both French and Arab as well as smooth and discordant at the same time, she re-lives the initial history of her ancestors, the efforts of heroes of Algerian history like Abd al-Qadir (Abd al-Qadir, often called the greatest of Algerian heroes, attempted to resist the French, but was defeated by 1847 and found asylum in Morocco), and participates in the liberation resistance. She becomes her characters because "[t]hese repeated fragments of the author's autobiographical recollections, occurring in the two works *Fantasia* and *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde*, make the distinction between author and character practically non-existent" [196]

OF WOMEN AND WEAPONS: FEMALES AS THE WEAKEST LINK

Djebar must assume the role of her characters in order to tell the story of women during the war of liberation because, as explained, the women cannot do so themselves. Because of the length and intensity of the struggle, Algerian men eventually had no choice but to allow women to join the resistance in 1955, an unthinkable step for an Islamic society. Women became part of the mujahadeen, or underground resistance connected to the F.L.N. (National Liberation Front). After the war was over, Algerian men considered their women's' participation in the war a terrible shame and a stain on women's honor as well as their own.

Women were participating in all aspects of the war, bringing food to the rebels, fighting with the maquis in the hills, and transporting weapons across

[196] Laila Ibnlfassi and Nicki Hitchcott, *African Francophone Writing: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford:Berg, 1996), 74.

checkpoints. To keep the French off guard at checkpoints so they would not be suspected, women would switch back and forth between wearing the veil and wearing westernized clothing. Catching them at checkpoints or fighting in the hills, the French realized how women were important to the resistance movement. At the same time, the French understood that persecuting women might help to break Algerian morale. Women prisoners could be used as the "weak" link that would end Algerian resistance, so women became targets for interrogations and torture. After all, it was a French tenet of colonization that every woman who was unveiled added to the breakdown of the Algerian culture and made it easier to impose western rule over the country.[197]

The French, even before the liberation war, had decided that the best way to conquer and dominate the Algerian men was to work on Algerian women under the guise of promoting their equal rights. If the Algerian women could be made more "French" in their mores and behavior, they in turn would change the Algerian societal structure, especially the role of Algerian men. So the French embarked on an ambitious program to do just this. They used three techniques to win women to their side. First, they began an intensive campaign to educate girls in French schools. Second, they waged a war of propaganda against the use of the veil in their attempts to "civilize" the Algerian women. [198] And third, in 1958, while the war was going on, they gave women the power to vote.[199]

For Algerian men, these campaigns and changes were intolerable because every Muslim man considers the ideal woman to be the "Umm" or Mediterranean mamma, and they wanted their sisters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers to conform to this ideal. In the eyes of Muslim men, the woman was the center of the household and the mother of the family. This was the sum total of her role. Islamic women had always been carefully closed away in the harem, kept sheltered in a

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[197] Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press,1965), 43.

[198] Peter Knauss, "Algeria's 'Agrarian Revolution': Peasant Control or Control of Peasants," *African Studies Review* 20, no. 3, 65-78.

[199] Alf Andrew Heggoy, "Cultural Disrespect: Europeans and Algerian Views on Women in Colonial and Independent Algeria," *Muslim World* 62, no. 4 (October),228-235.

restrictive world. But for the first time during their fight against the French, women were subjected to serious physical as well as psychological danger, and men were mostly powerless to do anything about it. Indeed, Algerian men had reluctantly exposed their women to much danger, and the French quickly learned how to use their culturally ingrained dogma of protecting their women against Algerian men. Putting women in harm's way exposed Algerian men to their greatest social fear, but at the same time, the French obsession with unveiling the harem women caused the Algerian men to resist colonization even more ferociously. [200]

In one account, Bachir Hadj Ali explains how a man was made to confess because of fear for his wife whom he was tricked into thinking was being held and tortured by his French torturers:

> Est-elle ici? Pourquoi? . . . le Rouquin menace : <<Parle ou je torture ta femme.>> Du fond d'un couloir obscur, Safia me dit d'une voix blessé : << Parle, ils m'ont brulé corps.>>[201]
>
> [Is she here? Why?. . . The "Red-hair" (referring to one of the torturers) threatens : "Speak or I torture your wife." At the end of an obscure hallway, Safia tells me in an injured voice, "Speak, they've burned me."]

Later, he found out she was not even there but that a voice that sounded like his wife's had been used to persuade him to give up information.

Fanon's chapter on mental disorders resulting from the war in *The Wretched of the Earth* even features a case called "The Impotence in an Algerian following the Rape of his Wife." Fanon describes the story of a young man, B__ , who leaves his wife after hearing about her rape by French soldiers and tries to carry on an affair with another woman. This affair is not successful because, " . . . before every sexual attempt, he thought of his wife." The young man says later, "I came to realize that they'd raped her because they were looking for me. In fact, it was to punish her for keeping silent that she'd been violated. She could have very well told them at least the name of one of the chaps in the movement, and from that they could have searched out the whole network, destroyed it, and maybe even arrested me."

[200] Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 46-47.
[201] Bachir Hadj Ali, *L'Arbitraire* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1966), 55.

Because of this realization, B__ takes his wife back. [202] This story demonstrates how women often showed themselves to be even stronger than the menfolk. Whether or not the men wanted to admit it, it was the men who folded, as in B__'s story, while women accepted their situation with stoicism.

Because Algerian women were tortured by the French, whenever they entered European surroundings, they were very fearful and uncomfortable. As Frantz Fanon explains, "The Algerian woman, the young Algerian woman -- except for a very few students (who, besides, never have the same ease as their European counterparts) -- must overcome a multiplicity of inner resistances, of subjectively organized fears, of emotions."[203] Therefore, Assia must treat the act of liberating women by vocalizing their past traumas gently because she is bringing them into the space of the colonizer --that is, re-exposing them to their French tormenters, so to speak -- by writing about their pain in a book, in French, available to French readers.

Djebar's difficulty in writing about Algerian women is the same one faced by Urvashi Butalia in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India.* As will be recalled from the Introduction, Urvashi Butalia , who writes about the torture, murder, and rape of Indian women during Partition, worries about forcing open the silence surrounding their ordeal. She is especially aware of this since many of these Indian women are Muslim and are particularly sensitive to having their stories laid before the public. Like Butalia, Djebar is also working with Muslim women and must face the same dilemma of breaking the silence that surrounds their experiences without being too intrusive. In telling their stories, Djebar knows that she risks exposing Algerian women to a second violation and her book is organized and written with this in mind.

Traditional Islamic Algerian women do not willingly expose any part of themselves to the world, especially not in a book written in the colonizers' language as Djebar's is. They are too used to "veiling" their emotions. To add to this

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[202] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 254-258

[203] Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 52.

problem, both French and Algerians have been reluctant to address this issue of torture.

The French government, as reluctant to speak about the subject of torture as Algerians themselves, has been quite unwilling to address this issue. The only French government-ordered report on torture, *The Wilhelm Report*, tended to understate the severity and used euphemisms to blunt the ugliness which was allowed. For example, when Djamila Boupacha was tortured, she was also raped with a bottle. Simone de Beauvoir, in *Torture -- The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War*, said that euphemisms such as "des exces ou des abus" [excesses or abuse] made both the torturers and the readers participants in a system designed to camouflage the horrors of torture.[204]

Even among themselves, Algerian women carefully used euphemistic terms to talk about their torture, especially rape, because in Islamic society, women are not to discuss their sexuality or sexual relations and rape is clearly the worst scenario imaginable . Assia's passages on the Independence War illustrates the use of indirect terms: "To say the private, the Arabic word 'damage,' or at the most, 'hurt'; "Sister, did you ever suffer 'damage'?" [205]

The organization of Djebar's book is another method of protecting the women or of keeping them veiled. The ambiguous "I" connects but also protects. This kind of ambiguous reference to a person without pronouncing a name is comfortable because in traditional Algerian society, relationships between men and women are never to be referred to by name. Men and women keep a certain emotional distance from each other. This emotional aloofness between the sexes is also supported by the different physical spaces each sex occupies: public for men and domestic for women. [206]

However, by Assia's parents' generation, the relationship between men and women was beginning to change. Right after the War of Independence, still using the leverage women had gained from their essential roles in the fighting, women

[204] Rita Maran, 52.
[205] Djebar, *Fantasia*, 202.
[206] Entelis, 56.

were allowed to assert themselves as they had never done before. Assia explains how it was such a "daring innovation" for her mother, when she learned French, to do away with the "usual euphemisms and verbal circumlocutions."[207] Yet, to protect the sensitivity of the traditional women she is writing about, Djebar cleverly uses the Algerian tradition of non-naming to disassociate women from the graphicness of their experiences. She does not try to hide the realities of torture and suffering, but she finds different ways to expose them. She also uses other kinds of euphemisms: for example, in the chapter titled "Voice," she tells the story of a woman who relates her story in a detached way. The woman says, "My little girl and my sister (it was before she died) started to follow me." This understatement of death is thrown in as if an afterthought. The woman continues her story saying, ". . . they questioned me with electricity until. . . until I thought I'd die!" Djebar leaves out any details of the torture . All that we know is that electricity was used which still clearly conveys the violence.

The way Djebar treats women's issues again shows why some Algerians have allowed their memories to remain fragmented. The fragmentation of time makes the reality of Algerian colonization and War of Independence "escapable." Djebar erases any trace of normal linear time (the sense of time stereotypically associated with occidental or western society) in her novel and instead rearranges time to give it a non-linear flow. For example, Chapter 1 begins in modern times and suddenly, in the second chapter, the reader is transported back almost a decade earlier to 1830 and the beginning of French colonization. Djebar's non-linear way of organizing the chapter alleviates some of the heaviness of the history she is speaking about. The chapters switch back and forth between the early period of French colonization and modern times so one is eventually able to escape from the 1840s and is not "trapped in the past" to be constantly forced to deal with the ancient sufferings of Algerian conquest.

So when Algerians allow their memories to remain broken, they seem less painful to confront. (Of course, this means that Algerians are encouraged to keep their

[207] Djebar, *Fantasia* , 37.

memories in pieces and we will discuss how this is problematic in the next section) One of the most graphic chapters of *Fantasia* is entitled "Women, Children, Oxen Dying in Caves," which describes an incident in 1845 when French troops killed and asphyxiated the whole tribe of Ouled Riah. This infamous incident, as described by Assia, occurred in the Dahra mountains during the first decade of Algerian conquest. At this point, the French had decided on a new policy of total and complete destruction of any resistance through *rassias* [raids], which were conducted by people like Pélissier, soon to become the future governor-general of Algéria. One passage describes, "In the light of dawn, an unsteady figure -- man or woman -- emerges. It totters forward, pauses after a few steps, then collapses to die in the sun." Other writers such as historians Ruedy and Clancy-Smith describe this infamous incident. [208]

Even while exposing the audience to this painful description, Djebar builds in several layers of escape to ease the pain of expressing pain itself. Again it can be remarked that she makes the dying person anonymous -- without a name or even a gender -- the person is an "it." As Todorov notes in *The Fantastic*, this technique of using the anonymous pronoun "it" serves two functions. First, it has the effect of pointing out the "collective unconscious;" in other words, these are the suppressed feelings of all the Algerian women who suffered or empathized with the pain of those who were actually tortured or murdered. The collective "it" also compiles the sufferings of all of the women in her story, joining their tellings together to create one louder voice whereas each individual woman's voice might be too soft or timid to be heard on its own.

Second, it projects Djebar's own "individual unconscious" into her work. She has suffered in her own way from her "split identity" as both a French-educated westernized woman and her Arabic-Berber origins and in *Fantasia*, she struggles to reconcile both. It must be kept in mind that Djebar, as an Algerian in France, is still approaching the memory of Algerian women as an outsider and a westerner. The

[208] Ageron, 21.

use of "it" also protects her because she becomes anonymous as well, no longer a French outsider.

THE ATTITUDE OF ISLAMIC AND FRENCH MEN TOWARDS ALGERIAN WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

The description of physical pain is one thing Djebar must protect women against, but the stereotypes and fantasies that surround the Algerian woman are another reason why Algerian women are so reluctant to be under the public gaze. Freeing women from their idealized images is another way in which Djebar struggles to protect the honor and private space of women in her book. She works to counter the language previously used to describe the colonization of Algeria, which is full of masculine-feminine gender symbolism. For example, "Not only were French men sexualized and Algerian women eroticized, but also the land, labor, and the 'exotic' were seen in male or female terms." [209]

These symbolic labels were necessary to make a distinction between the French ("us") and the Algerians ("them," mainly the Islamic population). Algerian men were perceived or deliberately portrayed as lazy, passive, and unintelligent. Asks Fanon, "How many times -- in Paris, in Aix, in Algiers, or in Basse-Terre -- have we not heard men from the colonized countries violently protesting against the pretended laziness of the black man, of the Algerian, and of the Vietnamese.?"[210] As for the veiled woman, she was painted as an unsolvable mystery, fascinatingly sensual and sexual. In fact, the French often sent home postcards of veiled women scantily clad or nude, even though this was not truly the way veiled women "dressed." The fantasy of the veil was a classic motif of European's orientalist image of the Muslim woman. Fanon says,

> ...the rape of the Algerian woman in the dream of a European is always preceded by a rending of the veil. We here witness a double deflowering. Likewise, the woman's conduct is never one of consent or acceptance, but of abject humility. [211]

[209] Simposn Fletcher,194.
[210] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 294.
[211] Fanon,*Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 45.

The West's obsession with the veil effaced the true identity of Algerian women. The use of the veil has a deep complexity barely understood by Westerners. "Ironically, while the veil plays an inordinate role in representation of women in North Africa and the Middle East, it is seldom studied in terms of the reality that lies behind it. Women's strategic uses of the veil and what goes on under the veil remain a mystery." [212] The strategic use of the veil was especially important for Algerian women, who switched between keeping it on and taking it off in order to smuggle guns and weapons through French military checkpoints. The complexity of the veil is part of the silent history of Algerian women that has been ignored by Western historians.

Ironically, during World War II, when the French needed to conscript soldiers, they turned to their French African colonies because the men were "noted warriors." The imagination of the French were especially fired by one particular tribe of women -- the Ouiled Nail -- whose women were allowed to acquire a dowry before marriage by trading their sexual favors. This was not the practice of the Islamic women, but the French tended to blur this distinction back home and to think that all Algerian women were sexually immoral. Even the Algerian landscape was viewed as female, and France was the virile partner who inseminated her and made her fertile. This female was not yet a mother and needed the protection of the French to guide her to maturity.

Still, the French were not the main guilty party in idealizing the image of the Algerian women. Algerian men caused much greater damage. After independence was gained in 1962, the many factions that made up Algerian society had no common ideological commitment to hold them together and to help them rebuild their society. So yet again, women served as the emblems of Algerian society. For Algerian men, falling back on convention and tradition restored some sense of organization and continuity in their disrupted lives and lost status. Enforcing the role

[212] Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 14.

of Islamic women gained exaggerated importance because it was seen by men as an important part of the small stability on which they could depend.

Women have always been considered the keepers of society. Guarding women had always been a way of protecting the integrity of society. Early on in the development of human society, ". . . people developed myths that depicted women as the source of evil and of sexual temptation who were hence dangerous and should be controlled. . . . This close guarding and control of women has been especially strong in Mediterranean and Near Eastern societies." [213]

It was an obvious choice, then, for Algerian men to use women to "save" their badly shaken culture. Algerian women with birkas became the living image of the pre-colonial days. Traditionally-clad women represented mother-figures and hence women's conduct and dress took on grave significance. [214]

To make matters worse, in the post-war economy, there was not enough employment for men. But women, with the freedoms they had gained during the war, were now working in jobs alongside men. Job competition with women was all the more intolerable, giving men another reason to reimpose traditional restriction on women.[215]

THE PARADOXICAL ROLE OF THE VEILED HAREM WOMAN AND THE FRENCH EDUCATED AND WESTERNIZED WOMAN

According to Peter R. Knauss in "Algerian Women Since Independence," more than 10,000 women fought in the Algerian War of Independence against France, and for this role, they expected their social status to improve after the country gained its independence. This means that Assia was reaching adulthood (18 years of age) at a time when modern Algerian nationalism was on the rise and while Algerians were trying to revive the Algerian culture and form of government.

Men and women had to unite for the cause of ending French rule during the

[213] Nikki R.Keddie, "The Past and Present of Women in the Muslim World." *Journal of World History* Vol. I , No. I, p.77,1990, University of Hawai'i Press.

[214] Assia Djebar, "A Noted Algerian Writer Presents Her Views of Muslim Women Today." *Courier*, Paris, UNESCO, 1975, 25.

[215] Entelis, 61.

war, but during the period that followed, Algerian Islamic women's and men's goals became increasingly opposed. The feminists and the rationalist Muslim men -- liberals who believed the Qur'an did not prohibit women from participating in government and having an education and career -- pushed for assimilation with Western ideas. Non-feminists and fundamentalist Muslim men pushed for a return to traditional women's roles of wives and mothers.

And in the case of the Algerian society, family structure was extremely rigid, especially with its well-defined sex roles, so even if the women had participated in the war, they could not be given freedom nor equality with the men. Once the war was over, men quickly tried to gloss over the uncomfortable fact that women had participated in it. "In a society where space -- real and imaginary -- was divided along gender lines, women were, for the first time, called on by the male leadership to participate actively and in an armed struggle. However, after the war was won, women were sent back to the private space of home." [216] Men may have wanted women to go back to their traditional roles, but it was too late for a total reversal. Before the war, most women had been illiterate, but now many became fluent in French and were empowered by the new roles they had taken on during the Independence War.

> Entering the war against the colonizer was an opportunity to even the score, regardless of whether it was perceived in this clear a fashion. It was also a chance to take charge of one's life, and finally break in deeds and not in words the structural and discursive silence imposed upon them for more than a century. The '*Ulama*, colonial administrators and writers, F.L.N. leaders and intellectuals, including Fanon, all held conceptions of women that were at odds with women's lived and felt reality. [217]

But it was still men who controlled politics and who decided women's fate. After the war, of course, the men rejected emancipation for women and continued to view the rights women were pushing for with mistrust and fear. They claimed that the ideas coming from the women's movement were simply spurred by western propaganda which was designed to destroy the integrity of traditional Muslim culture.

The FLN represented the rationalist or secularist Muslim point of view and

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[216] Donadey, 1.

[217] Lazreg, 137.

had control of the government after 1962, when Algeria had become an independent nation. It was then that the feminist movement was on the rise up to the early 1980s. So Assia experienced a period when

> The modern Muslim family reflect[ed] a gradual but unmistakable change in the traditional status of Muslim women. . . . The mother, still veiled, belong[ed] to a generation whose lives until recently were secluded and limited to housework and motherhood. Life for her teen-age daughter mean[t] freedom to choose her job, husband and life-style. . . . Between them, the grandmother, whose age now allow[ed] her to discard the veil.

However, to appease the fundamentalists in order to maintain power, the FLN began to counter this feminist movement by passing bills like the Family Code of 1984, which stated that women were too irrational and immature to be the decision-makers of the family.

Thus, rebuilding Algeria after independence was anything but simple. The division between secularist or rationalist Muslims and fundamentalist Muslims, especially affected women. The secularists passed the February 1989 Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, giving women equality with men, but the fundamentalists support the Family Code, which stressed the laws of the Qur'an over these documents.

Caught in this bind, the feminists wanted the right to divorce and the right to work or determine their own social and political fate. They denounced the Family Code as a denial of justice and said it contradicts the promises made to them after the war that they would participate in the development of their nation. Women were also allowed by law to unveil, but fundamentalists killed any unveiled women they were able to as examples to other women who considered doing so. Ironically, as the nation threatened to unravel from civil war, young Algerian women once again took up the veil of their own accord in order to restore their cultural dignity by representing a purified, authentic version of Islamic ethical and daily practices. [218]

Even after independence, Algerian women feared being used as the West's means to control their culture. Women had been tortured by the French in order to

[218] Entelis, 204.

intimidate Algerians into giving up their fight for independence. However, the Algerian women who took up the veil saw westernization as a continuing offensive on their society. Such women by no means felt the West was doing them a favor. Instead, "These Islamists see western practices and views regarding women as part of a western cultural offensive, which accompanies political and economic offensives. For many believers, western gender practices are seen more as aggression than as liberation. . . . " [219] Growing fundamentalism strengthened the Family Code, and women slowly lost any grounds gained right after independence. As fundamentalism expanded, the Islamist press continually denounced the Western model of womanhood. This is the situation into which Assia Djebar entered as a young feminist and writer.

Despite the strength of feminists writers like Djebar, Algerian women have failed to obtain emancipation. Instead, compared to the rights of women in Morocco and Tunisia, also former French colonies, Algerian women lag far behind. Assia Djebar, having intellectually matured in this milieu, has found herself the center point of this conflict -- at one and the same time, she is a westernized-emancipated-feminist-French educated woman and an Algerian-Islamic woman, sometimes veiled, sometimes unveiled, a "victim" of irreconcilable shifting identities which she tries to "straighten out" by using her writings such as *Fantasia* as a personal quest to discover a stable identity. Still, it appears that she will never find unity within these paradoxes and while she may appear "unhappy" or "frustrated," in the next chapter we will see how authors like Djebar use their internal multiplicity as a tool and perhaps have even become too accustomed to wielding their fractured identities like a weapon.

So the Algerian women are besieged on all sides. They are as much confined by the European colonizers' exotic images of them, as by the traditional view of women as housekeeper and mother held by their own brothers, fathers, and husbands. *Fantasia* is a double criticism of how both French and Islamic Algerian men sought to use the veiled Algerian women as a means to win their battles. On

[219] Keddie,78.

one side were the French, determined to restructure Algerian society by giving women a prominent political and social role and remove the veil . In contrast, the Muslim Algerians say the Qur'an is unequivocal regarding the status of women:

> Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a status above women. Allah is mighty and wise (2:228). Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further actions against them. Allah is high, supreme (4:34).[220]

FANTASIA AND THE VIOLENCE OF ALGERIAN MEN TOWARDS WOMEN

In another chapter of the novel, a woman spurns an Algerian man and using the *fantaziya*, a ritual of shooting guns in the air and shouting exclamations while on horseback, he tramples her to death beneath his horse's hooves as he cries out his victory over her. If he can't have her, no other man will. So *Fantasia* explores this theme of the Algerian women's plight.

Djebar attempts to turn the Europeans' dreamlike orientalist image of the veiled Algerian woman, (the harem woman) against the colonizers themselves, and at the same time, she also struggles against the wish of her own society, the wish of the men to once again veil their women and lock them away in the harem. For example, the Algerians adopted a voting system which counts votes by household. Often, because men are the only literate household members, they will vote for all the illiterate women of the house. Opponents such as the feminists and democrats called this, " 'a virtual stealing of voices,' especially women's voices because they constitute the bulk of the illiterate population."[221]

To allow these illiterate women to speak, Djebar adapts oral tradition to make a written account of women's sufferings, accounts which might otherwise be lost. As she explains in an article on women in modern society, "The world of women,

[220] Entelis,197.

[221] Entelis, 203.

overshadowed both socially and politically, was affected indirectly by all that went on -- although, alas, no written testimony of this has survived." [222] Assia further writes, "The girls who were my friends and accomplices during my village holidays wrote in the same futile, cryptic language because they were confined, because they were prisoners; they mark their marasmus with their own identity in an attempt to rise above their pathetic plight." [223] Djebar's "pathetic plight" is that she is never truly free to express herself through either her own language or the colonizers' and she must fight her own society's oppression as hard as she fights that of the colonizers'.

The Algerian woman faces an impossibility, for she cannot find liberation and expression of herself through either her own culture or the colonizers'. Perhaps the only way that such a liberation (at least a psychological one since a physical one is virtually impossible) may be possible is through a dream, through a "fantasy." At one point, Assia, in her frustration, decided to stop writing all together. As Clarisse Zimra also states, ". . she [Assia] told me that she had come to her decision to give up writing because she could not reach her female compatriots. . . . her foremost ambition had been to give Algerian women the voice that society denied them."[224]

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[222] Djebar, *Courier*, 25.

[223] Djebar, *Fantasia*, 45.

[224] Clarisse Zimra, "In Her Own Words: The Circular Structures ofLinguistic Alienation in Assia Djebar's Early Novels" *Research in African Literatures* vol. II, no. 1, Spring 1980,206.

CHAPTER 5.
LOSING ONESELF TO POSTCOLONIALTHEORY: SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF USING LITERATURE TO FIGHT THE PAST

Novels like Assia Djebar's *Fantasia* provide dramatic examples of the turmoil left by colonization. Djebar's *Fantasia* is proof that the psychological "mess" of colonization often outweighs the physical. But picking through the debris of history, calling up old memories, and fighting with the very French words she writes, to quote Djebar, may " start a fire which may consume me." Writers like Djebar and Sebbar walk a fine line in order to reconquer history and give a voice back to their people. Sometimes, as Djebar fears, they can become too consumed by the "fire of their memories."

Assia Djebar's works have become part of a large postcolonial backlash against Algeria's former colonizers through literature. But her attacks have come at a cost, for dredging up memories has proven treacherous, often causing damage when proposing to help. Thus, writers such as Urvashi Butalia, in writing about the partition of India, have been cautious when choosing to force open the silences that surround uncomfortable decolonization memories.

THE RUSH TOWARDS THE POSTCOLONIAL

Like other formerly colonized peoples, Algerian writers have embraced postcolonial theory as an intellectual means of fighting the legacy of their French conquerers, and the appeal of this theory is obvious. Postcolonialism, currently the most popular literary weapon to combat the past dominance of Europeans, is a way for Algerians to take possession of a past in which they were seen as primitive and uncivilized. Post-colonialism has provided Algerians with an answer to countering the stereotypes placed on them by France's orientalism. In a sense, it is

also the closest thing to reentering and rewriting history because through literature, Algerians can restructure the past and take back their culture and language from the French. Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction,* classifies post-colonial theory as an adaptation of post-modernism which applies 'high' theory to contemporary global society and particularly "peripheral cultures" which have been subjected to rapid modernity. Eagleton also says that the women in these peripheral cultures have been forced "to assume many of its most wretched burdens, resulting in a peculiarly fruitful alliance between feminism and post-colonialism." [225] Since Algerian women have been exposed to such violent modernization and have been burdened by the changes in their culture, it is no wonder they are one of the major producers of post-colonial writing.

Wielded by women, postcolonial writing has attempted to create a new memory of the past in which the Algerians are not the orientalized, subjugated primitives, but instead, the rebels who have overcome their French domination . For example, it is clear in *Fantasia* that Djebar controls the memories of 1830 and of the Independence War through the dream of her writing. She chooses when to begin and end the dream of the past that she has created, especially when it becomes too nightmarish. Even in the most explicitly violent passages on the Independence War, she can edit the terrors of history.

We also saw that the postcolonial war to reconquer the past from the French has fallen to women in particular since women, who have not had a chance to speak, have the greatest need to tell their "true story" but are veiled in silence by the West as well as their own male-dominated culture. The desire to break out of their silence has given them added incentive to find a new way to express the hurts of the past, and they have turned to postcolonial language as their solution. For Algerian women, postcolonial language provides a space where they can at last speak about their neglected history.

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[225] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Indroduction* (Indiana:University of Indiana Press,1998), 205.

THE DOUBLE VEIL OF HISTORICAL SILENCE

The Assia Djebar chapter suggested that Algerian women are fighting the orientalized vision of the veiled and sensuous female that the West has placed on them, but Algerian women are veiled by a second silence imposed on them by the men and the societal rules of their own culture. Of course, Algerian women are not supposed to write at all since Muslim women are not suffered to be vocal in any way. Algerian women have been invisible to both French and Algerian men : "Algerian women, kept in their homes, were, for the most part, invisible to the French soldiers, and because of the veil, they were also rendered invisible to most Algerian men. Their enforced silence cries for a spokesperson: 'Qui le dira, qui l'écrira? . . . que se disent les femmes de la ville?' [Who will say it, who will write it?. . . what do the women of the town say to themselves?]" [226] This enforced silence on both fronts causes the wounds of their memory to fester.

Algerian men have made it doubly hard to break the silence surrounding the memories of the past not only because they are troubled by women's participation in the war but also because they are themselves extremely reluctant to talk about their war experiences and their role in the resistance movement. Men are reluctant to speak of what they did and saw during the war. But they most of all fear discussions of being tortured by the French, which could bring about a loss of "machismo," not something a Muslim male can endure as master of his family and household. If men were humiliated by the torture of their women, their own torture is a more unspeakable subject. What this means is that Algerian women have been left to do all the talking even though this goes completely against convention and even though they find it so hard to speak. So they have been left in the ironic position of trying to tell their own historylines as well as that of Algerian men's since the men will not do so for themselves. Women must be responsible for keeping the memories of Algerian men from being buried, as well.

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[226] Anne Donadey, *Recasting Postcolonialism: Women Writing Between Worlds* (Heinemann: New Hampshire, 2001), 48.

Women have had no choice since the men are too uncomfortable to speak for themselves about what they suffered at the hands of the French. Or it may be that these sons, brothers, and husbands are simply deceased and cannot speak. So it is women who have had to take charge of the unspeakable history of Algeria, especially when they write about the Algerian Independence War. Assia Djebar asks in *Algerian White*, yet another of her novels, which, unlike *Fantasia*, does mention the current violence in the country:

> Yes, who will speak out once more at the end of these years '93 and '94, already too heavily burdened with corpses, who will echo Camus: "If I had the power to give voice to our solitude and anguish, would it be in that voice that I would speak to you now?" But this "you" to whom it might be possible to speak, who can it now be? Myself, if I were to say "you," I would be speaking only to the dead, to my friends, my brothers of the pen. [227]

We know from our examination of the Independence War thus far that the men will not speak. Women thus face a heavy burden in their postcolonial writing because of this double veil that covers their memories. They have been twice exiled from history, once by the stereotyped western image of the harem and the veil and the second time by Algerian men who are just as anxious to keep history silent. For this reason, women must continue to reshape their past, reclaiming it from Westerners who have primitivized it and also reclaiming it from their own society which has prevented them from their proper place in history.

Assia Djebar invented a euphemistic language to speak for women, but the sensitivity of Algerian men makes such subtle language all the more necessary . Because talking about the past is just as uncomfortable for Algerian men, women must do so carefully and even delicately. The title of Marnia Lazreg's book, *The Eloquence of Silence*, suggests women have tried to devise an eloquent way to express their silenced memories by manipulating language. Has Djebar invented a language exclusively for women through her writing? As Djebar puts it, women speak an underground language. "I could say: 'stories translated from . . ,' but from which language? From the Arabic? From colloquial Arabic or from feminine Arabic;

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[227] Assia Djebar, *Algerian White: A Narrative* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1995), 114.

one might just as well call it underground Arabic." [228] If some Algerian women have invented a Feminine Arabic that is unmistakably their own (the language of the harem/ of women today still guarded by men in enclosed compounds who are never allowed to venture outside?), an Arabic only whispered between veiled women when the men are not around, then Djebar has translated French into her own form of "Feminine French" and she uses it as a code-language to reach out to other women and to help free them from their hushed speech. This underground language lets women fully express their emotions without having to blatantly describe historical events which might require too much of an unveiling (since Algerian women have already been exposed to too much unveiling). Djebar's feminized French is a language that is as quiet as Muslim women speaking in private but nevertheless has the effect of being loud. With Djebar's private language, women speak in protection but can still be heard by all.

The need to carry out the tasks of reclaiming and mourning at the same time explains why modern Algerian literature is a mixture of poetic lamentation (that evokes Arabic funeral wailing) and French postmodern writing. This curious mixture of French with Arabic tones produces an often indecipherable language. It is purposely disjointed and ambiguous, only allowing for loose coherence. In Leila Sebbar's *Silence on the Shores* , for example, a scene of mourning women is barely sketched out,

> Respect for the dead forbids one from asking about family
> ties to any of the mysterious women who have appeared from
> nowhere, just at the right moment, and who know the right
> gestures, voice, songs to accompany those who have left this world
> and whom love would tearfully abandon to solitude were they not
> present.The sisters fear neither cold nor death, they touch
> lifeless bodies as if they were still alive, bodies cradled
> by the murmur of verses sung in God's language.
> The women, despite what people, say, obey the sisters
> carrying out the rite they respect; they are the only ones
> to do it perfectly . . . . People say that the youngest of the sisters
> -- the women seem to sense which one she is without the proof
> of identity papers -- is the one who composes funeral verses,
> elegies as beautiful as wedding songs. . . . [229]

[228] Djebar, *Women in Their Apartments* , trans. Marjolijn de Jager (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia:1992), overture.

[229] Leila Sebbar, *Silence on the Shores* (University of Nebraska Press:Lincoln, 2000), 13.

At face value, the description of women mourning over a dead child is simple enough. Sebbar's subtlety might be taken as general respect and sensitivity for the dead. The author, being a voice for the dead, is acting as the sisters in the passage do: as an anonymous mourner through her writing. However, in terms of postcolonialism, the subtleness of this scene is much more deeply complex, going quite beyond the description of a dead child's funeral.

When it is put in the larger frame of historical context, the passage evokes multiple levels of historical feminine anguish. The dead child could be taken as a criticism of men who never returned to Algeria after leaving for France and their failure to take care of their wives and children. It first reinforces the theme of *Silence on the Shores*, the sadness of a decaying post-decolonization society of the 1960s in which women were left alone as men went overseas to find jobs in France and more often than not, never returned to their women, children, and homeland. Women ended up waiting in vain on the promise that one day their men would return from France with enough money for their families to lead a better life. Many men had to or chose to stay in France, abandoning their families. The sadness of being abandoned by Algerian men who could no longer endure the poverty of their country is in turn a commentary on the destruction colonization brought to Algerian society and family life. This one scene of mourning, then, leads to a multiple criticism of the past even though the criticism is done very lightly.

The dead child also evokes the legacy of French colonization. Colonization's exploitation of the land and the violence it brought ruined Algeria's society and economy, turning Algeria into a non-functioning "dead land." Sebbar's dead child is symbolic of the death and decay colonization brought to Algeria and its society. Without question, it is an accusation against the French. Yet the wailing writers like Sebbar put into their writing is too loud to be directed solely at the French. Sebbar's passage is also aimed at accusing Algerian men of abandoning their country and leaving women to wallow in a land of loss and death.

Sebbar's passage is an excellent demonstration of why subtlety is so

important to Algerian women writers. Women's subtle language takes on a different face here, for we see it not just as a means to protect themselves, but also a way of bringing complaint against men's part in their wretched condition. Women in Algerian society must carefully lay out their complaints since by no means is it a woman's place to make accusations or speak out. But the style they have developed in their postcolonial writing allows them to link their anguishes into one, hiding one within the other.

Djebar is able to link multiple images of mourning in dramatic fashion. In *Algerian White,* she pulls off a simultaneous criticism of French violence as well as the violence that continued in her own society after the French left.

> Then Ben Bella's fall from power in 1965. The military arrives.... Anna hears that some people close to her have been arrested . . . the dirty deed has lingered, lying in wait, the place still hot! Yesterday's cries will start up again, or rather no, they continue. " If I hear just once that a girl , a woman has thus been handed over to 'them' if . . . I shall kill myself, ah yes, in this city I shall throw myself, I shall drown myself in the Mediterranean! . . ." [230]

In one stroke, she links the Algerian War of Independence to the current period of Algerian violence. Still, her criticism is ever so subtle, only indirectly alluding to the continuation of violence in Algeria.

This couched language aids Djebar in criticizing both the French and Algerian men at the same time. This language (is this a language only understood by other women to keep their exchanges secret?) is reminiscent of the quiet conversations of women gathering around the watering hole. Still, the importance of using an underground language is clearest when it comes to the abuse many Algerian women faced at the hands of French soldiers since it was often sexual abuse. This above all was the crime from which Muslim men were supposed to protect women. Perhaps there is no worse stigma for a Muslim woman than this, but there is no getting around the fact that sexual assault in French interrogation rooms was an all too common occurrence during the Algerian Independence War.

As historians have remarked, often Algerian women participating in the resistance movement would disappear for days and weeks, arrested by French

[230] Djebar, *Algerian White*,167.

soldiers. When and if they returned home, fathers and husbands remained totally silent, pretending nothing had ever happened. This taboo subject more than ever requires turning past memories into digestible pieces. Fragmentation makes these memories manageable, only introducing small parts of history at a time. In a chapter titled "*The Dead Speak*," for example, Assia Djebar makes use of this technique. She physically detaches a tiny fragment of the past from the rest of her text and she even turns the topic of violation into a question, ". . . -- violation, who is going to violate them, the mountains, or some commando of the night, a musket shot at them . . . ." [231] Even structuring this description of resistance women in the mountains as a question seems to diffuse the danger and fear of their situation.

USING POSTMODERN THEORY TO DO VIOLENCE TO LANGUAGE

Postcolonial theory has unquestioningly become the Algerian writer's calling card. Upon initial consideration, the Algerian enthusiasm for postmodernistic writing is somewhat puzzling. After all, by taking up a French model of writing, it would appear that the Algerians are simply surrendering to the superiority of the French once again and that the Algerian use of theory is just another Western corruption of their culture. Why, in addition to the fact that Algerians already write in French, must they also write *like* the French? The answer is that we must not pass off postcolonial Algerian as mere mimicry but as a means of fighting the French from the inside. The fragmented sentences used by Algerian writers make sense if they are seen as a direct attack on the French language. The Algerians' obsession with hybrid language shows that they have turned language into a form of rebellion and retribution.

One of the major tools of colonization was a French education in which Algerians were forced to learn French and leave behind their own language to have any hope of advancement. French words surrounded Algerians and dominated their everyday lives, so to live and be successful, Algerians were obligated to deny their own language. In postcolonial Algerian writing, Algerian writers turn the tables by using the French language against itself. While Algerian writers are still French

[231] Djebar, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* , 75.

educated and must still write in French, they can exact some revenge on their conquerers' language with their fragmented words by proving that they can use theory as well as and even better than any French writer.

Showing that Algerian writers are capable of using theory is imperative because as Homi K.Bhabha explains, "There is a damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged. It is said that the place of the academic critic is inevitably within the Eurocentric archives of an imperialist or neo-colonial West." [232] The Algerian writer, by mastering the French love of semiotics and postmodernism, takes possession of French theory, turning it from something European into something uniquely Algerian. By cutting up and reordering the French language as writers like Leila Sebbar and Assia Djebar do, the French language is recodified, its meaning is altered, and it essentially ceases to be French. "...Djebar does violence to her French intertext: she overrides/ overwrites its authority with the oral historical tradition of her family." [233] By attacking her own French, Djebar, who is French-educated and cannot herself speak Arabic, still overcomes the dominance of the Western language. The oral tradition is allowed to invade her French so the supposedly more primitive oral history subjugates and makes use of the master language to express itself.

More than this, Algerian writers put the French language to work for them, making it do their emotional work. Algerians writers who use French cannot wail in their own language, so they have turned French into poetic wailing. They triumph over their French education by turning French into an ululation:

> An Algeria of blood, of streams of blood, of bodies decapitated and mutilated, of stupefied, staring childlike eyes. . . . In the middle of this gallery of death I am seized by the desire to put down my pen or brush and go off to them, to join them; to bathe my face in their blood (that of the victims of assassination) [234]

Algerians in this way have attempted to steal French words and mold them to fit their need to express the sadness and loss of colonization and war. The result is

[232] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London, 1994), 17.
[233] Donadey, 50.
[234] Djebar, *Algerian White*, 137.

that the French language is subjected to the same domination that Arabs and Berbers suffered and the Algerian writer has now become the master.

The Algerian counter-assault on the French language is clearly demonstrated in Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Love in Two Languages.* What *Love in Two Languages* achieves is not language hybridity in which French and Arabic are melded. Instead, it is more of an aggressive takeover of French. Switching between languages "does not consist in either a reterritorializing return to Arabic or an Arabicization of French, but instead allows language to *see double*, making it a 'loucher' in the active sense of that French word, which means 'to peer, to eye.' He subjects the French language to a system that enables it to translate the untranslatable, to express the inexpressible, until it becomes a language which "*makes you afraid*".[235] Fear is the point because French is made to speak about horrible and inexpressible things in Algeria's past. French, the so-called delicate and refined language, is made to talk about baseness and death and is subjected to the violence the Algerians experienced.

GETTING LOST IN POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

As has been seen, postcolonial theory appears to have great flexibility in what it allows Algerians to do with their memories. It also offers Algerians a chance to finally win dominance over the French in some fashion. Nevertheless, the use of postcolonial theory comes at great cost. The final half of this discussion will deal with the dangers of using postcolonialism to retake the past. The formerly colonized's use of such a large amount of theory raises two issues:

1. Whether postcolonialism can provide too much flexibility and whether such looseness is actually more of a source of weakness rather than a source of strength in confronting domination by the west.

2. Whether using theory to delve into the past can become too addictive. until one is irretrievably lost in and obsessed with the past and unable to "move on."

[235] Bensmaïa, 107.

What have Algerian women writers lost by moving the battlefield to the plane of postcolonial writing and memory? The answer seems to be quite a lot for whatever they have gained. What should always be remembered is that when Algerian writers like Sebbar and Djebar attempt to "take back the past" for women and create a space for them in history, this is still nothing but a phantom history in a metaphysical space. "Postmodernism at its best champions the phenomenology of lived experiences and verities against the authority of top-down identity regimes and their deceitful historiographies. These realities must imagine their own discursive homes, homes that are not as yet real in history." [236] In other words, even if postcolonialism is used to fight for women, it does not necessarily represent any tenable social gains for women, just psychological ones, which, unless they eventually result in real action, will remain hollow .

Obviously, no matter how well these authors achieve a retaking of the past in their writing, it is still nothing more than a psychological triumph that does not reflect the Algerian woman's actual social position. The place where Algerian women are liberated and literate still does not exist. Sebbar and Djebar are so adamant about giving Algerian women a voice in the first place because they are among the few educated enough to write such novels. And they are able to write only because they are Algerians living in France and not Algeria itself. Many natives do not count Djebar and Sebbar as true Algerians. Sebbar is "[o]ften denounced by Maghrebian intellectuals who consider her work suspect, given that she does not speak Arabic and is not herself an immigrant. . ." [237] So Sebbar is not even included among her own fellow Algerian immigrants. Ironically, even though they are denounced by natives of their country, these Algerians who speak no Arabic and only French are the only ones who can bring the Algerian woman's story to international attention.

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[236] Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks eds., *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, (Duke University Press: Durham, 2000), 61.

[237] Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices--Race, Gender,Self-Porfraiture* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1989), 178.

Looking at their backgrounds, we understand more than ever that Sebbar and Djebar have no choice but to use postcolonial theory to write. It is the only way for them to connect to a past that is not quite theirs and to write in French that is not really French. In the end, when these writers try to repossess the past with postcolonialism, they are repossessing it for themselves specifically as well as for all Algerian women. "Sebbar writes in fiction in order to build herself a past and a future." [238] Only in the postcolonial space of their books are women writers like Sebbar able to feel authentically Algerian with an Algerian past (she is not since she was born and raised in France) and only by reinventing French in her own style is she not really writing in French.

But with each creation and connection postcolonialism allows for, there comes risk because theory has the potential to be so destructive. As we have seen, to assert oneself using postcolonial theory, one has to further obscure oneself and one's memories. It is rather too easy, then, to carry the hybridization and the fragmentation of identity too far, falling into the modern theoretical trap of nihilism. Writers can easily become mired in theoretical issues. For example, Lionnet criticizes Djebar, remarking that her only tools are the same representation system that paralyzes her by negating her. [239]

In other words, postcolonialism can either be a weapon or a form of addiction or both. One must conclude that while it has its uses, postcolonial studies has also become the alcohol of many third world writers -- something they use to deaden the pain of the past rather than reconstruct it. Postcolonial writers have chosen hybridity as their identity and rather than it tearing them apart, they have turned it into the theme that sews their history together. Algerians, because they cannot overcome their hybridity, have surrendered to it. "What counts now . . . ," citing Edward Said, "is that everyone be able to tell his or her story in pieces, as it is [because] . . . fragmentation, "does not necessarily create a postmodern dispersion or explosion of the subject." [240]

[238] Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*,179.

[239] Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations : Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 171.

[240] Lionnet. *Postcolonial Representations*, 79.

It is true that telling the story of the past, "broken as it is," makes a dramatic demonstration of the damage colonization has wrought upon Algerian history. However, it is a serious concern that the imprecise, disjointedness of hybridity can become just another excuse for a people who already feel culturally broken to put off defining who they are. Algerian women have accepted that hybridity is part of their identity, but they need to explore the nature of hybridity further instead of depending on it. As we have seen, clinging to identity can be used as a crutch, so hybridity has the same potential. Being caught in the hybrid position keeps women misunderstood; being misunderstood in turn keeps women in the subaltern position. And the term "hybrid" is in any case too general since, "As a descriptive catchall term, *hybridity* per se fails to discriminate between diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political co-optation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence." [241]

Algerian women writers have latched on to grief as a quick path to rebuilding their identity, so rather than attempting to get over their time of mourning, they have extended it indefinitely and exaggerated it. The consequence is that making grief the focal point of their new culture just leads them to reprimitivize themselves and their past. Creating unity through mourning ends up making the sadness of the past seem insurmountable. Terry Eagleton also warns against making colonizers like the French, whose goal was to reduce the 'other' to the 'same,' into "the root of all political evil." [242] This is a true enough point lest the former enemy grow so big in the people's memory that the French become "a legend in the Algerian mind." And anyway, Eagleton rightly adds that "in deconstructing any too rigid opposition between colonizing self and colonized other, ends up stressing their mutual implication and so risks blunting the political cutting edge of an anti-colonialist critique." [243]

In other words, there is the possibility that Algerian women are doing just the opposite of what they hope to achieve by creating a memory of the past in which

[241] Afzal-Khan and Seshadri-Crooks, 137.
[242] Eagleton, 205.
[243] Eagleton, 206.

Algerians imagine themselves to be even more dominated and primitivized by Europeans than they actually were. This is the question postcolonial writing leaves us with : Have Algerian women writers rescued their past by using postcolonial theory or have they ended up redominated by it, making the memory of pain and the memory of the enemy seem even more terrible than it was? Perhaps they have done some of both. Whatever the case, Algerians show great persistence and tenaciousness in trying to work through their memories despite the difficulties and this refusal to quit should serve them well if and when they do find a final resolution to the way the Independence War might be remembered.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON MEMORY

Shattered, battered memories resulting from the Independence War lend to Algerian history a sense of heaviness. This is not because Algerian history is any longer or more eventful than another country's history: rather, it is the excess of jumbled historylines told by may different groups and literary writers that has created a seeming complexity incapable of closure and resolution to the pain of violence that fills both the past and the present. Algeria overflows with memory shards stemming from the Independence War, which fractured the country's history by over-emphasizing the diversity of the people and the multiplicity of historylines claiming to be the one legitimate history of the entire country. This has resulted in an emotional and political paralysis for the country.

The disappointments and disagreements over postcolonial Algeria mean that it is easier to talk about what Algeria did not become. It did not become what Arabs, women, Berbers, the *pieds noirs* , or the government wanted or expected. While it is easy to say what Algeria did not become, it is much harder to say what Modern Algeria is since the people themselves cannot decide.

What is clear is that as Algeria's diverse racial and cultural groups demand to be heard, Algeria's FLN-imposed "Arabness" has proven very much "arable." The purpose of this thesis was to highlight the reasons and consequences of having so many fractured and competing "historylines" rather than a single unified history of a

country. These warring "historylines" are tied to the Independence War (also known as the "War Without a Name"), a conflict of terrible proportions which led to an even bloodier civil war. Perhaps these terrible events make the country's history one too painful to remember, thus inducing a kind of amnesia, the very existence of which is doubtful, but if existent, of unknown duration and lesser still, of unknown ability to heal.

Algeria's multinarratives make for a schizophrenic society capable of violence toward its own. The many "historylines" make it difficult for anyone to know which Algeria is the real one, if there is one, or which Algeria will emerge as the dominant one. In the meantime, no nation has arisen that all Algerians can call home. In *The Forbidden Woman,* Melika Mokkedem asks:

> And anyway, Algeria or France, what does it matter, either? Archaic Algeria, with its stale lie of modernity; hypocritical Algeria, who no longer fools anyone, who would like to build for itself sham virtue by having a hypothetical 'foreign hand' shoulder all of its blunders, all olf its errors; absurd Algeria, its self-mutilation and its schizophrenia; Algeria commits suicide each day, no matter what.[244]

Mokeddem's passage brings up another main obstacle for Algerians trying to reconcile with their already complex historylines: It does not matter whether one speaks of France or Algeria as all violent memories have compounded, becoming one and the same, doubling the negative effect on Algerian history. Because of the intermingling of memories of French colonization with memories of the War of Independence with memories of the post-war violence, the populace has not worked through and resolved what it is to be the nation of Algeria.

So while remembrances of the Independence War bring up Algerian's anger against the French, this is only half of the resentment Algerians feel towards their history. Instead, each time Algerians explore memories of their history of colonization, their criticisms of the French inevitably turn into criticisms of themselves since after the war ended, French violence translated itself directly into Algerian violence. The savageness of Algerian guerilla violence waged between the

[244] Mokkedem, 66.

government and dissident Islamic factions has in most cases surpassed French violence, a fact that is hard for the country to accept.

So as expressed by Mokeddem, it does not matter whom the Algerians criticize because the wrongs of the French bleed directly into the wrongs that Algerians have inflicted upon themselves in the wake of decolonization. As Abderrahmande Mossaqui writes in his essay "La Concorde Civile en Algerie: Entre Mémoire et Histoire" or "The Civil Concord in Algeria" Between Memory and History," in Algerian politics,

> La violence actuelle est tantôt considerée comme la réactualisation d'evenements violents passés (guerre de liberation notamment,) tantôt raportée, au contraire, à une amnesia des désastres de violence passés. [245]
>
> [The current violence is sometimes considered as a reenactment of violent events of the past (most notably the war of liberation) sometimes reported, on the contrary, as an amnesia of violent disaster of the past.]

No wonder, then, that the Algerian past seems so profound and insurmountable because through the Independence War, Algerians must recall a double disappointment with their past. To use a final quote from Djebar's *Women of Algiers in their Appartment*, "We jumped on the bandwagon for freedom first, we had nothing but war afterwards." [246] Algeria's continuing wars, both its civil war and its war of conflicting memories, inspire the question: "Are some sites of memory simply too contentious and too divisive to be enshrined . . .? " [247] Perhaps for now, the answer is yes. The memory of the Algerian War is still too fresh to be buried and memorialized. However, until then, Algerians will just have to continue to brave their memories.

The journey through memory is an uneasy and violent one as we have seen. It requires a strength and energy that Derrida was not ready to exert:

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[245] Mossaqui, 11.
[246] Djebar, *Women of Algiers in Their Appartment*, 49.
[247] Deriderian, 1.

> Derrida's long reticence to confess his nostalgeria cannot be attributed to his natural reserve or *pudeur* alone, or even to the politics of colonial and postcolonial identity, but primarily to his excruciating search for the proper modes of anamnesis most suitable to render his unique experience: 'I dream of being able one day, he confessed on France Culture in 1987, "of narrating this legacy, this past experience, this story, but to give of it one among so many other possible accounts. But, in order to achieve this, I would have to embark on an adventure, which so far, I have not been able to manage.[248]

Like Derrida, perhaps some Algerians won't ever be able to confront the silence and amnesia left in the wake of the Algerian Independence War. Yet all the energy Algerians have spent thinking and writing about the Independence War shows that many Algerians do hope to embark on the "adventure of their memories" as Derrida puts it and to eventually find a conclusion to their journey. These Algerians continue to write about, commemorate, and research the war, trying to find the proper way to remember, that is, the proper mode of anamnesis to convey their experience.

Despite the dangers of delving into memory, as the last chapter pointed out, since there is the risk of deepening the pain with and obsession of these memories, there are clear benefits of doing so. The realm of historical memory studies is a fast growing field because "memory is replacing old favorites -- nature, culture, language -- as the word most commonly paired with history." [249] But whereas mixing the words *memory* and *history* might have been frowned on in the past, this field offers a real chance for the formerly colonized to take back their history.

As we have seen in this thesis, Algerians are leading the way in using the memory-history link as a kind of counterhistory which

> . . . . challenges the false generalizations in exclusionary History. The implication is that the emergence of memory as a category of academic discourse is a healthy result of decolonization. In such constructions, memory's notorious vagaries become its strengths . . . History is modernism, the state, science, imperialism, androcentrism, a tool of oppression; memory is postmodernism, the 'symbolically excluded,' the 'body,' 'a healing device and a tool for redemption.' " [250]

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[248] Abdel-Jaouad, 3.

[249] Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* No. 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Rememberig (Winter, 2000),127-150, 128.

[250] Lee Klein, 137.

For their part, Algerians are not just trying to counter colonial history. As we have seen in Chapter Three on the FLN, there are many sources contributing to a distorted and exclusionary form of Algerian history and Algerians are not always sure which version of history they need to counter. But Algerians do seem to be using their history-memory writings as a tool of healing and redemption, so perhaps through their writings on memory, they will eventually work through each of the distortions in their history by countering them one by one.

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