POSTCOLONIAL HAUNTING – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE:

Spectrality and Intertextuality in Twenty-First Century Algerian Francophone Literature



Lillian Fontaine
St Anne's College,
University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Hilary Term 2024

For Reg, who would have been so proud.
Rest in peace.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my husband, Mackenzie, for his unwavering support and encouragement of me always. Thank you for being so willing to move to the other side of the world with me in order to pursue this experience. The highlight of these four years has been, without a doubt, marrying you in a small Covid ceremony with our nearest and dearest. Thank you also for tethering me firmly to other aspects of life beyond academia, for knowing how to make me laugh, and for never failing to rekindle my *joie de vivre* when it feels near extinguished. You continue to enrich my life every day and I couldn't have undertaken this task – let alone seen it through to completion – without you. Your magnanimity will never cease to inspire me.

No less importantly, my heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor, Prof. Jane Hiddleston, whose expert advice and compassionate guidance have been integral to my development not only as a researcher but also as a person. I cannot thank her enough for her thorough and constructive critiques of my work, as well as for her timely feedback on all matters. It has been a joy to work with Jane and I feel very fortunate to count her amongst my academic family.

In addition, this thesis would be far less polished without the seasoned input of my internal examiners, Dr. Simon Kemp, Prof. Ève Morisi, and Prof. Jennifer Yee, whose insightful comments on early draft chapters helped greatly to guide the project in its nascent stages. I am truly grateful for their attentive readings and generous engagement with my work.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Patrick McGuinness and St Anne's College for providing me with the opportunity to gain a range of teaching experience as part of the Graduate Development Scholarship. Patrick has been an invaluable mentor and College Advisor, helping me navigate the often overwhelming world of academia with an infectious sense of humour. I have greatly enjoyed our stimulating and enriching discussions, and I feel very privileged to have been part of such a supportive and inspiring community at St Anne's.

Furthermore, I remain indebted to the Society for the Study of French History for their ECR Support Grant, as well as the Oxford Faculty of Modern Languages, and both St Antony's and St Anne's colleges for their generous travel awards, without which I would not have been able to attend and present at a number of international conferences during my time here.

Finally, a huge thank you to my family and family-in-law for their ongoing love and support over great distance (and for sustaining me with shipments of vegemite and homemade fudge!). In the words of Jules Renard, 'Écrire, c'est une façon de parler sans être interrompu' and perhaps that's why I have enjoyed this process so much![1] I now gladly pass this thesis onto the examiners, as it has haunted me for far too long…

[1] Journal entry from 13 April 1895. Jules Renard, *Journal: 1887-1910* (Paris: Gallimard,1960), Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, ed. Léon Guichard et Gilbert Sigaux, p. 277.

Lillian Fontaine
St Anne's College, Oxford

Postcolonial Haunting – Past, Present, Future:
Spectrality and Intertextuality in Twenty-First Century Algerian Francophone Literature

Doctor of Philosophy in Modern Languages
Trinity Term 2023

Abstract

This thesis investigates the intersection of spectrality and intertextuality in contemporary Algerian francophone literature, examining a corpus of twenty-first century prose fiction written by Algerian authors who were mostly born *after* Independence: Kamel Daoud, Kaouther Adimi, Salim Bachi, and Boualem Sansal. Mobilising Jacques Derrida's theory of *hauntologie*, wherein the figure of the spectre incarnates ambivalence, liminality, and epistemological instability, my focus is two-fold. I am interested, firstly, in how phantomatic imagery is being used as a means of 'exorcising' a deeply traumatic colonial history; but moreover, in how conceiving of literature and storytelling as inherently spectral artforms can present a challenge to certain state narratives and religious dogma that seek to cement a singular, restrictive version of history and identity onto their people. By 'spectral artforms', I am mostly referring to the capacity for narratives to be framed and utilised as constantly resurrected *revenants*: multivalent and non-fixed entities that blur temporal, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Analysing works written since the decade-long civil war of the 1990s, this thesis posits literary haunting as an increasingly *future-focussed* phenomenon, evolving from representing buried trauma, loss, or dispossession under colonial rule to symbolising uncertainty and even warnings about independent futures. Furthermore, it explores what the growing postcolonial trend of 'rewriting' classic works – from the French, Arabic, and English canons – can reveal about Algeria's changing concerns as it moves further and further away from its colonial past. Seeking to 'break free' from what many consider to be an overbearing colonial legacy, contemporary authors are increasingly turning their attention to present, domestic concerns; notably religious extremism, language politics, literary censorship, and government corruption. I contend that this progression from colonial to postcolonial haunting has spurred an interest not only in rewriting the past but also in (re)writing potential futures, as Algeria grapples with its spectres yet to come.

Lillian Fontaine
St Anne's College, Oxford

Postcolonial Haunting – Past, Present, Future:
Spectrality and Intertextuality in Twenty-First Century Algerian Francophone Literature

Doctor of Philosophy in Modern Languages
Trinity Term 2023

Extended Abstract

Since the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993, which proposed an ontological theory of haunting in literature, the idea of ghostly imagery as a reputable field of academic inquiry has seen a marked resurgence. While spectrality tends to focus on ghosts from the past haunting the present, however, this thesis explores what ghosts can tell us about the future. Since Independence in 1962, the majority of Algerian francophone fiction involving depictions of ghosts, possession, or more veiled metaphors of haunting has used such forms of spectrality to represent buried trauma or feelings of dispossession and invisibility that have resulted from atrocities experienced either personally or collectively under French colonial rule. However, in the last twenty years – since the decade-long civil war of the 1990s – this focus has shifted. Algeria's enemies are no longer external and no longer from the past; instead, they have become Islamist violence, political unrest, and domestic terrorism. Building on the work of scholars like Jane Hiddleston, Joseph Ford, Patrick Crowley, and Tristan Leperlier, I explore how Algerian works written since 2000 reflect these changing concerns through a distinct form of literary spectrality, conceived by a generation of writers who, for the most part, never experienced colonisation or the War of Independence directly. My aim is not simply to analyse these shifting phantomatic expressions in literature but to consider how conceiving of writing and storytelling themselves as inherently spectral processes can challenge oppressive state narratives and religious dogma, potentially overcoming cultural stagnancy and paving the way

for more productive and collaborative futures by encouraging a recognition of plurality and rejecting determinism.

I begin by tracing the evolution of theories of spectrality from the end of the twentieth century up to the present day in order to contextualise my work before assessing how spectrality has been mobilised specifically in a postcolonial context. Focussing on Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török's notion of the 'transgenerational phantom', Derrida's 'hauntologie' (an amalgam of *hanter* and *ontologie*), and Avery Gordon's 'Haunted Futurities', I distil an emerging interest in future hauntings. While Abraham and Török concentrate their analysis on the psychological effects of past, familial trauma that continues to haunt unwitting victims in the present, Derrida conceptualises the spectre as a dialectical figure that is inherently paradoxical and unknowable due to its liminal status as neither living nor dead but, rather, the presence of an absence. Like Abraham and Török's theory of haunting, *hauntologie* entails a 'disjonction temporelle' in which the past returns, but it also assumes an implicit future dimension. Derrida emphasises the etymology of 'revenants' as *always* return*ing* entities or concepts in a process of constant regeneration that extends indefinitely to the future but which is never complete. Furthermore, his evocation of Marx recalls to mind the latter's conception of communism as a spectre *yet*-to-materialise; an imminent inevitability rather than a lingering remnant of the past. Taking this further, Gordon figures haunting as a social phenomenon that indicates what is awry in the present, enabling those haunted to rectify their future paths in order to avoid impending tragedy. In this way, ghosts can be helpful companions but also indicate a state of living death to which marginalised members of society are doomed. Using the example of the prisoner, Gordon demonstrates how one's future can itself be a source of haunting in instances where one has no agency over it.

Each of these models of haunting has some resonance with contemporary francophone literature but what becomes clear, through an overview of the work on spectrality in postcolonial writing thus far, is that the overwhelming majority of scholarship has focussed on haunting as a means of coming to terms (or not) with a colonial past. As Kathleen Brogan and Fiona Barclay make clear in their works *Cultural Haunting* (1998) and *Writing Postcolonial France* (2011) respectively, ghostly figures in postcolonial literature tend to embody either the memory of lost loved ones, repressed trauma (inherited or lived), or the experience of being racially and politically othered, and we can see this type of haunting exhibited clearly in the works of Algerian writers from the pre-civil war era, such as Assia Djebar. Such portrayals make sense given the particular history of prolonged silence and censorship surrounding the Algerian War of Liberation (particularly in France). However, this retrospective focus does not always resonate with the current 'generation of postmemory', to borrow Marianne Hirsch's term. Hirsch's designation, deployed in relation to the Holocaust, refers to those who come after a traumatic cultural event and unwittingly inherit the burden of their ancestors' trauma. The authors explored in this thesis could mostly be considered part of this category and, through their works, they seek to break free from an overbearing colonial legacy to which they cannot always relate. As a result, their texts diverge from a preoccupation with colonial loss and mourning, no longer focussing on a haunted past but, increasingly, depicting literary ghosts as symbols of uncertainty and anxiety regarding Algeria's future trajectory.

It is important to note, however, that the views expressed in many of these works are not representative of the broader Algerian population and are indeed often a source of contention and controversy. Several of the authors analysed in this thesis hold a problematic and contested status within their own country for this reason, receiving death threats and facing censorship. Nonetheless, their works reflect a certain awareness of this uncertain status and exhibit a profound curiosity about, as well as a challenge to, the purpose and usage of stories within their

culture and beyond. In this way, they foreground the intractable relationship between literature, politics, history, culture, and identity. As Algeria seeks to reinvent itself as an independent nation, it has turned to a reclamation of its Arabo-Islamic roots, imposing a formal, literary version of Arabic as the national language[2] and Islam as the official religion, which many believe denies the country's rich polyglossic and heterogenic heritage. Drawing on authors like Malika Rahal, James McDougall, Natalya Vince, Raphaëlle Branche, and Muriam Haleh Davis, I examine how these particular notions of national identity have become cemented through the construction of a 'state myth' that relies on a conscious and selective memorialisation of the War of Independence. One way of exploring these concerns around post-independent cultural identity has been to reflect on, reappropriate, and extrapolate the colonial literary legacy – as well as narratives more broadly, whether they take the form of political or cultural myths, national histories, or oral storytelling traditions. Stories themselves, as well as specific canonical figures, works, and characters, are often portrayed as ghostly in recent works, both haunting and inspiring contemporary authors. This has resulted in an interesting phenomenon of not just rewriting the past but also seeking to envision potential futures; 'rewriting' that which has supposedly already been 'written' or predetermined in a religious sense.

This thesis takes us on a voyage through past, present, and future hauntings *by and from* the French, Arabic, English, and 'world' canons in order to examine and account for a growing spectral and intertextual focus in contemporary Algerian francophone writing. Part I opens with an exploration of the ways in which literature itself can be considered an intrinsically haunted space. It then proceeds to examine the spectral interplay between French and Algerian literary patrimonies more specifically through a close analysis of two Algerian novels that represent canonical French literary figures and their works as ghosts: Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-*

[2] With the addition of Tamazigh (Berber) in 2016.

enquête (2013) and Kaouther Adimi's *Nos richesses* (2017). The former is a purported rewriting of Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* from the perspective of the imagined brother of the unnamed 'Arab' who is murdered in Camus's classic, and Adimi's text narrates the journey of Edmond Charlot's real-life bookshop in Algiers in the 1930s – an often-overlooked element of the French literary legacy in Algeria. *Nos richesses* extols the virtues of Charlot's engaged writing and depicts the literary legacy he represents in adulatory terms but also as something from which the younger generation is dissociated. *Contre-enquête* provides an even more ambivalent portrayal of this intertwined heritage. A detailed dissection of the various layers of hypertextuality in the novel, as well as the representation of Camus as both 'auteur-assassin' and a literal phantom, reveals a concern with the ethics and aesthetics of writing, calling into question issues of 'ownership' over a culture's (hi)story. Both texts reflect on the challenge of forging their own, post-independent literary tradition, moving beyond a simple 'anxiety of influence' to reconceptualise intertextuality as a form of literary spectrality that can be both transformative and restrictive. In so doing, they highlight the palimpsestic nature of narrative and the many ways we can 'read' Algeria's history. Each author projects, to varying degrees, a vision of an inclusive Mediterranean literature, mobilising the dialectical nature of the spectre to revolt against the absurdity of binary models that insist on an 'either/or' view of history, identity, and patrimony. The question now remains: what will Algeria's future story look like?

Moving from an engagement with the French to the Arabic canon, Part II examines the ghostly representation of a particular Arabic tradition of (oral) storytelling in Algerian francophone literature, scrutinising two recent novels that draw heavily on *The Thousand and One Nights*: Salim Bachi's *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin* (2010) and Kamel Daoud's *Zabor ou les psaumes* (2017). Each work invokes not only the stories and characters from the *Nights* but also the volume's uniquely dialogic, palimpsestic, and metatextual focus in order to reflect self-consciously on the nature, uses, and art of storytelling itself. I argue that these novels seek to

foreground the spectral indeterminacy and malleability of both narrative and myth by demonstrating how their conciliatory and salvific powers lie in their ability to be constantly resurrected and reincarnated in different forms across time and space. Furthermore, a complex relationship emerges between storytelling and death, which raises some provocative questions about the role of stories in Algerian culture and whether the country's own national narrative will serve to immortalise or limit its future legacy. By treating stories as shape-shifting *revenants* and contemporary writers as modern-day Scheherazades, both works highlight the contrapuntal nature of storytelling, revealing its capacity for redemption and self-determination on the one hand while also exposing its suffocating potential for duplicity on the other. Ultimately, they caution readers against certain types of fossilised narratives that can be used to delude and subjugate – particularly in a political setting – and offer instead a hauntological mode of narrative that is continually reassessed and revised.

Set in a dystopic future Algiers, *Amours et aventures* establishes a connection between storytelling and survival through the former's ability to transcend geographical, linguistic, cultural, and even temporal barriers. In *Zabor*, this is taken further with stories literally delaying death, providing access to both the divine and immortality in a spiritual process that 'possesses' the storyteller and renders them a prophetic medium. Writing and storytelling emerge as ethical imperatives in both works but, in the latter, this extends to an almost sacred duty that provides an alternative means of salvation and transcendence to that offered by institutionalised religion with its single, canonised version of absolute Truth. Just like in Part I, the status of literature in Algeria is called into question, but more specifically, Bachi and Daoud problematise the role of the writer/storyteller in contemporary society, cast alternately as a saviour, scapegoat, and spokesperson.

The final part of the thesis culminates in a sustained future haunting, investigating a work set definitively in the distant future. While Part I analyses literary ghosts from the past, concentrating on their impact on the present and future, and Part II interrogates time-travelling ghosts and (narrative) hauntings that span epochs and eras, Part III examines a 'necropolitical' Islamist-like superstate where time has stopped since the year 2084. Boualem Sansal's *2084: La fin du monde* transposes George Orwell's dystopic classic *1984* to a largely North African and Middle Eastern context, adapting the former's totalitarian political concerns to a theocratic plane. I consider Sansal a post-1990s author since, despite living through colonisation, he only began writing towards the end of the civil war, with his first novel published in 1999. Furthermore, his literary and political concerns align with those of the post-postcolonial generation, focussing on contemporary domestic politics and Islamism rather than mourning losses from the colonial period or glorifying the War of Independence.

As an underpinning framework for my analysis of *2084*, I mobilise Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, wherein political structures exert control over the corporeal agency and mortality of their subjects through the propagation of falsified narratives and constantly changing, unknowable state myths. This engenders a spectral reality and also projects 'death-worlds' in which citizens are reduced to mere objects and instrumental entities. Positing necropolitics as the spectral antithesis of Derrida's *hauntologie*, I dissect the ways in which political fictions and their mechanisms of dissemination are depicted in Sansal's novel as ghostly – invisible yet omnipresent forces channelling untruths, disrupting epistemological stability, and symbolised through hypostasised, absent leaders – as well as how they engender a 'zombified' existence for both leaders and subjects. Through linguistic manipulation, thought policing, and the prohibition of all travel apart from holy pilgrimage, the world order in *2084* is built on physical and mental imprisonment, stripping citizens of the ability for critical or creative thought. It also dispossesses them of any meaningful relationship with the past or

future since, in the superstate depicted, history is erased and archives falsified or destroyed. In their place, the government has cemented apodictic – yet constantly changing – national myths, relying on the perpetual fabrication of histories and concepts to control the population, including the construction of an elusive 'Grand ennemi'. All this projects a spectral simulacrum wherein reality is never wholly knowable, only held up by a tenuous web of carefully constructed fictions used to deceive and subdue the population.

In a world where there can be no freedom of thought, no nuance or ambivalence, and where time and truth are meaningless, spectrality – understood as an ontology of openness to alterity and indeterminacy – acts as an emancipatory tool, necessarily negating binary ways of thinking. Harnessing this hauntological mindset, therefore, can empower one to question dogma and accepted 'truths', denying the imposed singularity and fixity of necropolitical states. In Sansal's novel, this is encouraged through the evocation of a mythical *frontière* and a secret *musée de la nostalgie*, which become powerful symbols for seeking out the limits of knowledge and enabling one to actively construct one's own future. Algerians, it seems, have two options: they can risk becoming static objects mummified and othered in a museum, or, like Sansal's protagonist, they can literally cross the threshold to move forward into a new era of their own making.

Having just celebrated sixty years of independence, and in light of the recent *Hirak*, it seems an appropriate moment to re-evaluate Algeria's relationship not just with France but also with itself. Moving beyond the retrospective and arguably reductive paradigms of mourning and nostalgia, wherein one has a duty to either 'exorcise' or avenge past trauma on behalf of those who came before, this thesis aims to explore how spectrality in francophone Algerian literature can be utilised to counter ossified state narratives and monolithic notions of cultural identity. I argue that the texts examined offer a model of hauntological storytelling that necessarily entails

ongoing, intertextual, and intercultural (re)writing, and which, due to its inherent recognition of multiplicity, ambivalence, and incompletion, can offer more plural and representative notions of what it means to be Algerian in the twenty-first century.

Sensitive Content Warning

Discussion of Islamophobia: many of the works analysed in this thesis not only criticise political versions of Islam but represent anti-religious sentiments more generally and sometimes border on Islamophobia. They also address periods of prolonged conflict involving torture, violence, and terrorism.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: From Mourning and Melancholia to a Haunted Futurity 1

I. The Transgenerational Phantom and Hauntology 3
II. Towards a Future Haunting 9
III. Spectrality in Postcolonial Theory 15
IV. Ghosts in Algerian Literature: The Spectre of Revolution, The Black Decade, and Construction of the State Myth 25
V. Post-1990s Context and Introduction to my Corpus 39

PART I
Ghosts of Literature Past: Rewriting a French-Algerian Literary Heritage 54

I. Textual Haunting and the Death of the Author 56
II. Camus: Complexity and Controversies 62
III. *Meursault, contre-enquête* – Kamel Daoud 68
  i. *Réécrire de droite à gauche*: Textual Echoes and Ghostly Doubling 73
  ii. *Auteur-assassin* and *le fantôme*: Camus as Ghost 92
IV. *Nos richesses* – Kaouther Adimi 107
  i. Generational Haunting: From Literary Havens to Doughnuts 109

PART II
The Thousand and One Ghosts: Appropriating the Arabic Canon in French 126

I. *Alf Layla wa-Layla* and World Literature 128
II. *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le marin* – Salim Bachi 139
  i. From Mythological Temporalities to State Myths 141
  ii. Stories as *Revenants*: Nomadic Narratives and Verbal Voyage 151
  iii. 'Le Dormant' and Apocalypse: Is Storytelling Dying or Death-Defying? 160
III. *Zabor ou les psaumes* – Kamel Daoud 172
  i. Spectrality and the Postsecular: Writer as Ghost, Writer as Prophet 173
  ii. *Hikāya, Boustrophédon*, and Cosmological Animism 185
  iii. Writing Algeria's Future: Author as Spokesperson, Scapegoat, or Saviour? 200

PART III
Speculative Spectres: Necropolitics and Orwellian Dystopia in Algeria 212

I. Necropolitics and Necropower 218
II. *2084: La fin du monde* – Boualem Sansal 224
  i. Ghostly Government 228
  ii. Spectralisation of Time and Space: *'la frontière' et 'l'anti-musée'* 240

CONCLUSION: Phantomatic Futures – Possibility, Plurality, *Partage* 260

BIBLIOGRAPHY 269

Introduction

From Mourning and Melancholia to a Haunted Futurity

L'avenir ne peut être qu'aux fantômes[3]

Since the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993, which proposed an ontological theory of haunting in literature ('hauntologie'), the idea of ghostly imagery as a reputable field of academic inquiry has seen a notable resurgence, and this has been applied in various ways to postcolonial contexts. However, while spectral figures are generally considered to be omens from the past, this thesis is interested in what they can tell us about – or even from – the future. In the Algerian context, following a period of prolonged colonial and civil conflict, literature and politics are undergoing a marked transition as the country experiences a pivotal cultural moment in which it is questioning post-independent government, religious ideals, linguistic politics, and in many ways attempting to re-evaluate and redefine what it means to be Algerian. Several recent works are turning to spectral imagery to express this uncertainty and liminality, putting supposed truths and accepted dogma under the microscope. This introduction traces the evolution of spectral theory from the late twentieth century through to the present day to examine how its many resonances and uses within postcolonial settings are changing. It then turns more specifically to an analysis of contemporary Algeria, exploring the ways in which ghostly figures and depictions of hauntings have been mobilised in francophone Algerian writing since independence, and how this refracts the country's complex and turbulent political context. Discerning a notable shift in the treatment of phantomatic expression over the past two decades, I am interested in why an emerging generation of writers – those mostly born *after*

[3] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), p. 69.

independence – is characterising the narrative act as inherently spectral and exhibiting in particular an increasing preoccupation with both intertextual ghosts and future hauntings.

As we will see, the term 'spectrality' is notoriously difficult to define, meaning different things to different critics. In its most basic sense, however, it simply refers to the study of spectral figures and 'ghostliness'; that is, the analysis of phantomatic imagery and metaphors of haunting primarily in literature but also in sociology and psychoanalytic theory. It often crystallises around how ghostly figures problematise the boundaries between life and death, past and present, the here and not-here. As such, spectrality is commonly mobilised for its intersection with questions of epistemology and ontology. According to Colin Davis, it forms:

> part of an endeavour to keep raising the stakes of literary study, to make it a place where we can interrogate our relation to the dead, examine the elusive identities of the living, and explore the boundaries between the thought and the unthought. The ghost becomes a focus for competing epistemological and ethical positions.[4]

Deriving from the Latin *specere* ('to look'), the term 'spectrality' at once evokes notions of being looked *at* (a spectacle) as well as the *act* of looking, observing and in*spect*ing. Moreover, it is closely related to 'spectrum', 'speculate' and 'spectacular', each of which suggests a certain element of doubt or uncertainty, whether that be falling somewhere on an indefinable range, relating to a possible theory or conjecture, or involving supernatural or unbelievable elements. These varied associations reveal the multifaceted nature of the concept, even if the word 'spectrality' has only recently come into usage.

[4] Colin Davis, 'Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms', *French studies*, 59.3 (2005), 373–379, p.379.

The Transgenerational Phantom and Hauntology

As mentioned above, Derrida is often given credit for the field's emergence as an academic discipline, however it is important to note that he is not solely responsible for the renewed conceptual interest in ghosts and haunting that characterised the last decade of the twentieth century. It is undeniable that *Spectres de Marx*, which I will explore in detail momentarily, contributed to this 'spectral turn',[5] to borrow Roger Luckhurst's term, but it was not the first work to develop a theory of spectral analysis. It is a continuation of (albeit a notable divergence from) a strand of thought that came to the fore in the 1970s. In a collection of essays entitled *L'Écorce et le noyau*, Hungarian-French psychologists Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török developed a theory of the 'transgenerational phantom'[6] – a conception of haunting wherein the inherited trauma of a previous generation affects a descendent without their knowledge of the distant cause(s). The theory emerged from encounters with patients who exhibited traumatised behaviours that could not be traced back to any significant event in their lives. A striking example of this, cited in Colin Davis's *Haunted Subjects*, is a woman who had persistent erotic fantasies involving suffocation and who also refused to eat meat. Unbeknownst to her, her grandfather was a butcher who abused his eldest daughter and eventually hung himself.[7] In such instances, it appears that repressed family secrets have managed to disturb the psyche of those who were neither directly involved in (nor knew anything of) them. This 'nescience'[8] led to the radical claim that an individual could be haunted by *someone else's* past.

[5] Roger Luckhurst, 'The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the "Spectral Turn"', *Textual Practice,* 16 (2002), 527-546.
[6] Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török, *L'Écorce et le noyau,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 978; repr. 1987).
[7] Ibid., p.408-11, cited in Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 78.
[8] Abraham and Török, p. 391.

It is not difficult to see why this form of haunting is often depicted in twentieth-century postcolonial texts to signify inherited colonial trauma and loss, as a result of which the possessed subject becomes the mouthpiece for silenced wounds of their ancestors. Drawing heavily on Freud's influential essay, 'Mourning and Melancholia', which figures mourning as an inevitable response to loss but melancholia as pathological,[9] Abraham and Török explain that haunting persists because it is a form of unfinished grieving in which the ghost does not want to bring the secrets of the past to light. Instead, it seeks to preserve loved ones from being lost in death by burying the dead relative's trauma in what the two psychologists call the 'Crypte', an unconscious barrier within the Ego.[10] The function of the ghost, therefore, is to safeguard this knowledge – to conceal rather than reveal – and this suggests that haunting is symptomatic of repression; that allowing psychological wounds to fester results in individual traumas becoming collective and communal issues that will continue to 'infect' subsequent generations. The transgenerational phantom, then, is inherently deceitful, serving to 'bury' the truth. As Davis notes, it is the problem not the solution and therefore needs to be exorcised from the suffering patient in order to address the trauma directly.

This contrasts starkly with Derrida's conception of ghosts as interstitial entities that seek to expose rather than repress. *Spectres de Marx* draws its inspiration from the opening line of Marx's and Engels's *The Communist Manifesto*: 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism.'[11] The aim of Derrida's work is to undertake a deconstructive critique of Marxist thought, exploring not only the ghosts that haunted Marx but, as the dual genitive

[9] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), in *On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement: Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), pp. 243-58.
[10] Abraham and Török, pp. 254-5.
[11] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), trans. by Samuel Moore [*Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848)], p. 73.

and possessive function of the 'de' in the title indicates, the ghost *of* Marx (and communism) as well – that which he believed was hovering over Europe as an impending reality; that is, a ghost *yet* to manifest. Most notably, Derrida outlines a mode of analysis which he terms 'hauntologie' – an amalgamation of 'hantise/hanter' and 'ontologie'. This semantic conflation posits the spectral as a way of being, bringing to the fore the intangible and shadowy plane of existence we rarely acknowledge; that which is ignored, overlooked, or othered – the absences and alternatives – but also that which is inherently unclear or even unknowable. Unlike Abraham and Török's phantoms, Derrida affirms that ghosts can be honest and serve as guides. He makes constant reference to the ghost of King Hamlet throughout his work, observing that the function of the spectre in Shakespeare's play is to reveal an important truth to the titular character, setting in motion a series of necessary events that enable the eventual restoration of order and peace in the kingdom. In this way, Derrida highlights the phantom's potential for good, explaining that ghosts often possess a privileged insight since they can survey *us* yet we cannot always see *them*. This *'effet de visière'*[12] suggests that whilst our relationship with ghosts is not necessarily reciprocal, we can benefit from their omniscience whilst recognising the limits of our own comprehension.

Crucial to hauntology – and to the understanding of spectrality in this thesis – is the recognition that the figure of the ghost is inherently paradoxical, since it incarnates 'l'opposition entre présence et non-présence, effectivité et non-effectivité, vie et non-vie'.[13] As 'l'apparition de l'inapparent',[14] the spectre will always 'défier la sémantique autant que l'ontologie, la psychanalyse autant que la philosophie',[15] questioning the very foundations of knowledge itself. As Maria Blanco and Esther Peeren affirm in *The Spectralities Reader*,

[12] Derrida, pp. 26, 27
[13] Ibid., p. 34.
[14] Ibid., Ch. 5 title: 'Apparition de l'inapparent: l'« escamotage » phénoménologique', p. 201.
[15] Ibid., p. 26.

'the spectre is seen to signify precisely that which escapes full cognition or comprehension'[16] and as such, it disrupts binary thinking, assuming instead a 'liminal position between visibility and invisibility, life and death, materiality and immateriality'.[17] In typical deconstructive fashion, Derrida affirms that the ghost is '[l]e plus d'un'[18]– at once 'more than one' but also '*no* more than one'. He emphasises this epistemological instability by evoking the concept of 'différ**a**nce',[19] a deliberate misspelling of 'différence' that highlights the two meanings of the verb *différer* in French – 'to differ' and 'to defer'. By asserting that the phantom is a '[p]oint de différ*a*nce sans altérité, point d'altérité dans singularité, pas de singularité sans ici-maintenant',[20] Derrida is equating the figure of the ghost with the deferral of meaning and therefore delayed understanding. Through the act of *différance*, the spectre functions as a 'trace' – the silent signifier implicitly evoked through a chain of linguistic associations. According to Derrida, textual signs necessarily derive their meaning in opposition and therefore leave 'traces' of their binary counterparts, unconsciously evoking that which they are not.[21] Like the *trace*, then, the spectre is the reminder of an absence, defying presumed dichotomies through its simultaneous evocation of opposites. In this way, it is not simply a representation of the supernatural but a way of thinking about knowledge, meaning, and being that Derrida uses in a range of contexts.

The spectre's refusal to conform to diametric certainties applies to the realm of time as well. Derrida asserts that spectres disrupt our understanding of linear temporality and historical

[16] María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p.9.
[17] Ibid., p. 2.
[18] Derrida, p.19 (original emphasis).
[19] Derrida first coins this term in 'Cogito et histoire de la folie', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale,* 4 (1963), pp. 460-494, and subsequently expands on it in 'La Différance', *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 62.3 1968, pp. 73-101.
[20] Derrida, *Spectres*, p. 60.
[21] The concept of 'trace' is most notably discussed in Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

continuity because they entail a 'disjointure temporelle'[22] that implicates the past in the present and vice versa. Like Abraham and Torok's transgenerational phantom, which unwitting brings a trauma from the past into the present, Derrida's ghosts unite past and present but in a more conscious way, rendering time 'out of joint' as Hamlet so famously declares upon seeing the apparition of his late father.[23] Derrida affirms that 'un spectre est toujours un revenant',[24] and the lexical choice here is significant since 'revenant' denotes not only 'ghost' but also 'coming back' in French. Its present participle form also encapsulates the continual nature of this return, highlighting the fact that it is never complete but rather an ongoing and repetitive process, always *between* coming and going ('*entre* ce qui *va* et ce qui *vient*').[25] Moreover, 'revenant' is also a familiar term for a stranger or someone not seen in a long time, thus adding an element of defamiliarisation to the phantom that reflects Freud's notion of *das Unheimliche*.[26] Although not necessarily spectral, Freud's Uncanny is often evoked 'in the highest degree with relation to […] spirits and ghosts'.[27]

For the most part, Derrida focuses on ghosts from the past, however, the '*non-contemporanéité du temps*'[28] which he observes broadens the scope of phantomatic influence, foregrounding the ghost's ability to impact future generations as well. Derrida reminds us that when Marx spoke of 'the spectre of Communism' in 1848, he was referring to a political movement that did not yet exist and was therefore invoking a *future* ghost – an inevitable new world order that he believed was on the cusp of eventuating. Derrida

[22] Derrida, *Spectres*, p.42.
[23] Derrida repeatedly cites this line from Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, v, c.1600.
[24] Derrida, *Spectres*, p.32.
[25] Ibid., p.52 (original emphasis).
[26] A displaced sense of unease that results from the re-awakening of something once familiar but since repressed.
[27] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trad. David McLintock and Hugh Haughton (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 364 [Originally 'Das Unheimliche', *Imago* 5 (1919)].
[28] Derrida, *Spectres*, p.52.

describes this as a 'promesse infinie' akin to an 'espérance messianique'.[29] By highlighting Marx's prescience, he lays the foundations for an analysis of prophetic hauntings – an idea that is only beginning to be explored in spectral theory now. As Elisabeth Roudinesco confirms: *'Spectres de Marx* est une réflexion sur […] l'idée *d'une possible révolution à venir* […], sur ce qu'est le déshonneur d'une époque qui ne parvient pas à *penser son avenir*.'[30] For Derrida, the ghost presents a call to action, transferring responsibility to the haunted subject such that they are actively implicated in the ghostly relationship. Indeed, like many of the texts in this thesis, Derrida encourages us to '*vivre […] avec le fantôme'* rather than avoid or exorcise our ghosts.[31]

By transcending temporal and spatial loci, spectres 'open the possibility of an unconditional encounter with otherness' and this forces us to re-evaluate our own lives.[32] It is for this reason that Derrida instructs his readers to 'penser la possibilité du spectre, le spectre comme possibilité'.[33] Therefore, rather than seeking to understand the 'secret' the phantom represents, as in the psychoanalytical model, Derrida champions an acceptance of what exceeds knowledge. Importantly, however, none of this entails an actual belief in the supernatural, merely a willingness to adopt a mode of analysis and understanding that challenges dialectical norms and binary ways of thinking; that is, a way of being that accepts – indeed embraces – the inherent polyvalence, ambiguity, and flux of existence. Hauntology encompasses a heightened and pervasive awareness of the imbrication of the past and future in the present, and therefore the realisation that nothing is ever truly 'dead' but that concepts,

[29] Ibid., p. 111.
[30] Élisabeth Roudinesco, 'Jacques Derrida: spectres de Marx, spectres de Freud', in *Un jour Derrida,* ed. by Valerio Adami et al (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque publique d'information, 2006), pp.51-60. <http://books.openedition.org/bibpompidou/1376>. My emphasis.
[31] Derrida, *Spectres*, p. 279.
[32] Davis, *Haunted Subjects,* p. 76.
[33] Derrida, *Spectres*, p. 34.

ideas, and stories inevitably return – or, more accurately, are always *in the process* of returning but never complete. As such, they can be continually transformed and reinterpreted; and in this way, spectrality – understood in a hauntological sense – becomes an apt metaphor for the processes of rewriting and retelling. Indeed, this recognition of the necessary evolution and regeneration of concepts is central to the works studied in this thesis, which mobilise spectrality precisely for this purpose.

Towards a Future Haunting

Spectres de Marx sparked the rapid publication of a number of texts exploring varied aspects of ghostly criticism, such as Jean-Michel Rabaté's *The Ghosts of Modernity* (1996), Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* (1997, revised in 2008), Kathleen Brogan's *Cultural Haunting* (1998), Peter Buse and Andrew Scott's *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (1999), and, that same year, Peter Schwenger's *Fantasm and Fiction*. Since then, the field has only grown. More recent publications include Julian Wolfreys's *Victorian Hauntings* (2002), Jeffrey Weinstock's *Spectral America* (2004), Susan Owens's *The Ghost* (2017), Katy Shaw's *Hauntology* (2018), and Seth Pierce's *A Theory of Spectral Rhetoric* (2021), all in addition to meta-spectral theory I have already mentioned, such as *Haunted Subjects* by Colin Davis and *The Spectralities Reader* by Maria Blanco and Esther Peeren. Evidently, this is a rapidly expanding field of critical thought but for obvious reasons, this introduction cannot address it all. I will instead concentrate on the latest direction in which spectral theory is heading in order to analyse its resonances with the contemporary Algerian context.

The vast majority of recent scholarship on haunting continues Derrida's focus on the political, exploring the spectral aspects of our relationship to slavery (as Gordon does), or to the modern age (like Rabaté), or to US politics and the media (like Weinstock).

Nonetheless, one recent strand of spectral theory has emerged that, instead of using ghosts as a lens through which to view society, offers a novel way of conceptualising spectrality itself as a structuring principle in contemporary thought. Rather than an indication of inherited trauma or a deconstructive figure that causes temporal disruption and epistemological instability, *Borderlands e-Journal* conceives of the spectre as a social state and an indication of haunted futures, devoting an entire issue to the subject in 2011.[34] Avery Gordon appears once again on the spectral scene here as the featured essayist. Approaching haunting from a sociological perspective, she claims that it is inextricably linked to responsibility and signals that 'something must be done'.[35] Rather than looking back to past traumas or uncovering a secret, it, like the ghost of King Hamlet constantly evoked by Derrida, constitutes a demand for a better future and therefore entails a normative and ethical dimension. Indeed, Gordon attests that 'futurity is imbricated or interwoven into the very scene of haunting itself',[36] which requires not only the response of the haunted subject but often, too, the active involvement of the wider community such that those not directly affected by the haunting are still implicated in its resolution. For Gordon, 'the ghost is not the invisible or the unknown or the constitutively unknowable, in the Derridean sense';[37] rather, it reveals 'what's there in the blind field'.[38] She explains:

> 'the ghost arises, carrying the signs and portents of a repression in the past or the present that's no longer working. The ghost demands your attention. The present wavers. Something will happen […] something must be done. [It is] the critical analytic moment […] that demand[s] re-narrativization. What's happening? How did it come to pass? What does it mean?'.[39]

[34] Debra Ferreday and Adi Kuntsman (eds.), 'Haunted Futurities', *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces in the Humanities,* 10. 2 (2011) <http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol10no2_2011/ferrkun_intro.pdf. > [accessed 6 December 2020]. The page numbers in this issue are not continuous but restart with each article.
[35] Avery Gordon, 'Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity', in Debra Ferreday and Adi Kuntsman (eds.), 'Haunted Futurities', *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces in the Humanities,* 10. 2 (2011), p. 3.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 2.
[38] Ibid., p.3.
[39] Ibid.

Not unlike Derrida, then, Gordon emphasises the need to treat our metaphorical ghosts with respect rather than force them back into hiding, for whilst we may mourn spectres, they can also inspirit us (literally) to action. Like the Ghost of Christmas-Yet-to-Come in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Gordon's ghosts can be catalysts for improvement, projecting potential futures in order to reveal what awaits should one refuse to alter their ways. For Gordon, the function of spectres is often cautionary, enabling us to avoid unwanted outcomes rather than dooming us to a predetermined path, and this strikes a chord with the way many current Algerian writers are mobilising spectrality. As Debra Ferreday and Adi Kuntsman state in their introduction to the *Borderlands* issue: 'Unlike the ghosts of the dead, the spectre from the future suggests what its very presence is intended to conceal; that there are multiple potential futures, individual as well as collective'.[40] This is a radical new direction in spectral thought, shifting the focus of the discourse to a different temporal plane.

Gordon goes on to address the plight of those who have had their futures stolen through the removal of their ability to choose their own path. This lack of agency, she argues, reduces them to 'the living who haunt as if they were dead'.[41] She focuses her analysis on the figure of the prisoner, but such a state can apply to other conditions such as that of the slave, which Gordon analyses extensively in *Ghostly Matters*.[42] She asserts that these marginalised and excluded figures haunt society because they remind us: 'it could be you.'[43] In this way, they hold up a mirror to our own lives, threatening our assuredness of a secure future for ourselves. We momentarily consider the possibility that we too could be 'fated to a life of abandonment and spectrality'.[44] This frightening possibility is further compounded by the

[40] Ferreday and Kuntsman, 'Introduction', Ibid., p. 7.
[41] Gordon, p. 3.
[42] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[43] Gordon, 'Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity' p. 13.
[44] Ibid., p. 15.

fact that time assumes a whole new meaning when one is imprisoned (metaphorically and literally). The 'social death' imposed on prisoners forces them to 'grasp or forge a relationship to futurity that's very complex, especially for those on death row or for those who will spend their lives in prison'.[45] The ghostly othering experienced by the prisoner diametrically opposes that of trauma victims according to Abraham and Török, who argue that a concealed tragedy in the past is unconsciously 'passed on' to future victims who then become doomed to relive someone else's trauma. Gordon, by contrast, elucidates how a threat to one's *future* can result in a *current* trauma – a ghostly state that relegates one to the periphery of society. Conversely, she suggests that a traumatic future can often be avoided if one is willing to heed the ghost's warning.

In their *Borderlands* issue, then, Ferreday and Kuntsman challenge the assumption that all ghosts are located in the past, proposing instead that 'the future may be both haunted and haunting: whether through the ways in which the past casts a shadow over (im)possible futures; or through horrors that are imagined as inevitable; or through our hopes and dreams for difference, for change.'[46] This type of future projection can be seen clearly in the speculative and dystopic settings of works like Salim Bachi's *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin* and Boualem Sansal's *2084: La fin du monde* analysed in this thesis. Responding to Gordon's article, Amal Kabesh explores the implications of being haunted 'not by the past but rather by our responsibilities to the present and future'.[47] This emphasis on responsibility is crucial because it establishes haunting as a two-way relationship that requires the engagement of the hauntee, supporting Gordon's conception of haunting as a something-to-be-done rather than a something-to-repress. This forward-looking focus also

[45] Ibid.
[46] Debra Ferreday and Adi Kuntsman, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[47] Amal Kabesh, 'A response to Avery Gordon: On Being haunted by the Present', *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces in the Humanities,* 10 (2011), p.1.

resonates with more contemporary depictions of, and reflections on, colonial histories. Whilst it is of course important not to forget or dismiss the influence of the past, francophone texts from the current generation are increasingly turning away from a preoccupation with mourning in order to avoid what they see as a damaging cycle of regression that chains them to an unresolvable past, one which many never experienced in the first place. It may be true that '[t]he mind is a palimpsest, as traces of the past remain',[48] but this does not mean we are beholden to those traces. Both Gordon and Kabesh conclude that society's response to haunting should not be about erasing history's ghosts but determining how to live *with* them – just *without* allowing them to determine the future.

Spectrality is reconceptualised, then, in Gordon's paper and the responses it has provoked, as not simply an indication of past trauma, as Abraham and Török argue, nor a recognition of the limits of human knowledge, as Derrida posits, but rather, a call to action that prompts an awareness or change of behaviour *in the present* with a view to ensuring a better *future.* While this may seem rather optimistic, it is important to note that Gordon does not insist that every form of haunting works in the service of a better future; she simply highlights its *potential* to do so. She recognises that ghosts can be both pathological and therapeutic entities and that haunting is often disabling, as in the case of the prisoner. Nonetheless, she draws our attention to how it can provide us with the chance not only to rectify a past wrong but also attend productively to the present, and therefore ensure we do not end up as society's ghosts ourselves, beholden to a past that is doomed to repeat itself or locked into a futureless existence in which we are stripped of the ability to determine our own path forward. We must note, too, that although such hauntings are focussed on improving or avoiding a certain future fate, the ghosts that prompt this awakening of sorts are still either

[48] Ibid., p. 4.

remnants of the past or shadows in the present, serving to shed light on an unresolved issue 'hidden from view'.[49]

In the following thesis, I go one step further. I explore not simply the *impact* that a haunting from the past or present has on the future, but also the possibility of hauntings *from* and *by* the future itself, more closely aligned with the way Marx was evoking communism as a spectre that would *soon* materialise rather than one that lingers as a mere memory. In some of the novels investigated, we will see that potential futures – or potential *lost* futures – can indeed be the source of a present haunting, and that the appearance of figures from both the past and the future, rather than revealing an inherited trauma, can serve to foreshadow a political, cultural, or social turning point, either inciting action or cementing stagnation. Furthermore, much of this haunting takes a literary turn, as will become clear by the end of this introduction. Not only are classic works and authors – of various literary canons – represented as ghostly figures, often catapulted into future horizons, but the very acts of storytelling and writing are themselves portrayed as inherently haunted means of connecting generations and even (re)constructing collective futures. But this is only a relatively recent phenomenon. In order to understand the significance of the emergent focus on both future and literary hauntings in Algeria, we must first understand how this differs from the ways spectrality has been deployed thus far in postcolonial and francophone literature.

[49] Gordon, 'Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity', p. 3.

Spectrality in Postcolonial Theory

Due to its preoccupation with violent and traumatic pasts, silenced or occluded histories, and political and cultural tensions that still linger in collective memory, postcolonial studies has been a ripe field for exploring notions of spectrality over the past quarter century. Several scholars have taken an interest in ghostly relations in subaltern literature since the 1990s but for the purpose of this study, I will focus – briefly – on the work of three in order to provide a varied overview of the research thus far and distil some salient features of postcolonial haunting that are being transformed in the Algerian context. These critics are: American literary professor Kathleen Brogan, who writes on ghost stories in Native and ethnic American cultures; Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe, whose work analyses the place of spectral elements in sub-Saharan African writing; and Scottish academic Fiona Barclay, who examines haunting in (and by) Maghrebi literature in the twentieth century.

Kathleen Brogan's 1998 *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* contends that ghosts 'are agents of both cultural memory *and* cultural renewal [in an] ongoing process of ethnic redefinition'.[50] In this way, her understanding of ghosts complements the theories of spectrality discussed above. Through an analysis of 'contemporary writers who turn to the supernatural to examine the troubled transmission of immigrant, slave, or native cultures',[51] Brogan explores how the use of narrative ghosts enables minority writers to come to terms with a lost cultural identity and an historical amnesia regarding atrocities of the past. She argues that the experience of mourning is central to this process as it encompasses not only melancholy for the victims of a colonial

[50] Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p.12.
[51] Ibid., p. 4.

or slave period but also nostalgia for a way of life that no longer exists. 'Cultural haunting' refers to a pan-ethnic genre of writing that:

> differ[s] from other twentieth-century ghost stories in exploring the hidden passageways not only of the individual psyche but also of a people's historical consciousness. Through the agency of ghosts, group histories that have in some way been threatened, erased, or fragmented are recuperated and revised.[52]

The phantasmal elements in these narratives therefore enable a repressed or forgotten history to be recovered, forcing a confrontation with the past. In a similar way to Abraham and Török, Brogan explains that a 'denied history reasserts itself, much like the return of the repressed'.[53] She highlights the use of metaphors of consumption to convey ghostly possession, such as vampiric and cannibalistic spirits who feed off the living to such an extent that their victims thin into transparency while they solidify into concrete reality. The pasts they are consuming, however, cannot nourish these parasites for long because they are only half-remembered and fading. Therefore, according to Brogan, ghosts suggest 'a dangerous introjection of the dead, or mourning gone awry' for both parties.[54]

This focus on mourning extends to a 'three-stage model of immigrant generational succession, in which an assimilationist second generation rears children nostalgic for the lost culture of the emigrant grandparents.'[55] Brogan argues that the further removed a generation becomes from their cultural heritage, the more they wish to retrieve it and re-incorporate it into their own lives. Resonating in some ways with the Algerian context, this often entails retelling one's own history in a different language from that of one's parents,

[52] Ibid., pp. 5-6.
[53] Ibid., p. 9.
[54] Ibid., p. 10
[55] Ibid., p. 21

resulting in 'the peculiar position of ethnic writers as both "heirs" and "ethnographers"'.[56] This 'in-between' status involves the dual role of at once uncovering an inherited culture as well as redefining it for a current audience. Resulting in a pastiche of contrasting cultural narratives, this leads to 'an emphasis on multiple viewpoints, the fictionality of any reconstruction of the past, and the creation of alternative histories through the telling of unheard or suppressed stories.'[57] Such an awareness of narrative fragility and malleability will be integral to my own analysis of spectrality in Algerian 'rewritings' and intertextual works more broadly. As Brogan affirms, '[s]torytelling has a vital function in ethnic ghost literature', for 'not only do ghosts appear, but ghost stories are told'.[58] Haunting, then, is not just a phenomenon that happens *to* a minority culture but also one that happens *within* it. It forms an integral part of the oral transmission of culture and history in many of the ethnic groups Brogan discusses. Stories of cultural haunting document a collective interpretation and memorialisation of events that often present an alternative account to that of the dominant narrative, which is inevitably written by those in power. Indeed, Brogan affirms that 'the true purpose of [this form of] commemoration is to make whom and what we mourn our own.'[59] Ghosts, therefore, can offer a form of catharsis that helps reclaim one's heritage and contribute to an ongoing healing process by determining who and what is buried, revealed, haunted, or exorcised.

By way of contrast, Achille Mbembe presents a more philosophical view of ghosts in subaltern literature in his 2003 paper 'Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola'. Rather than agents of cultural renewal, Mbembe depicts literary ghosts as alternately 'the cadaver' and 'the wandering subject' in the two texts he analyses – *The*

[56] Ibid., p. 17.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., p. 18.
[59] Ibid., p. 138.

Palm-Wine Drinkard and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. He expresses a need to depart from traditional Western modes of analysis due to their rigid understanding of the concepts of 'self, truth and time' which are limiting to an African interpretation of spectrality.[60] Mbembe is interested in 'manners of living and risking death that are […] situated beyond the political';[61] the liminal space to which individuals are confined as a result of tragedy and subjugation. He characterises these 'specular experiences' as '*death-worlds*, forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead (ghosts)' – a predicament that will be discussed in detail in Part III.[62] Mbembe pre-empts Gordon's analysis of the social dead here but instead of focussing on the plight of the prisoner, he applies this analogy to the postcolonial subject. He explains that '[i]n the contemporary African context, these extreme forms of human existence are experienced through the corruption of the senses as well as through the horror that accompanies wars and outbreaks of terror'.[63] Spectrality is thus once again linked to violence and trauma, but the novel aspect is the effect it has on one's sensory perception. Mbembe argues that a postcolonial haunting often results in a state of uncertainty between what is real and what is imagined or perceived, which he illustrates through the metaphor of the mirror. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical work in *Le Stade du Miroir*,[64] this ghostly self-recognition is closely connected to the experience of observing oneself from an external position. Mbembe explains that '[t]he correspondences that unite the *I* to the image are projected as ghosts' such that 'the self becomes its own spectator'.[65] This

[60] Achille Mbembe, 'Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola', trans. by R. H. Mitsch, *Research in African Literatures,* 34 (2003), p. 1.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid (original emphasis). Mbembe refers to his own work on 'necropolitics' here, which we will explore in detail in Part III.
[63] Ibid.
[64] 'The mirror stage' refers to self-recognition in infants but Lacan extends it to include a lifelong condition of self-consciousness in his article 'Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je: telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique', *Revue française de psychanalyse* (1949), pp. 449-455.
[65] Mbembe, p. 4 (original emphasis).

entails a process of detachment from oneself that results, paradoxically, in a heightened *sense* of self – something we will see exemplified in several of the novels analysed in this thesis. Perhaps in this manner, ghosts can be said to enable greater self-knowledge, but this is not necessarily a positive experience. Understanding oneself on a deep and honest level involves an uncomfortable scrutiny of one's most buried and shameful secrets – that which Abraham and Török's ghosts seek to repress – and what it can reveal about one's nature is often confronting.

The spectre prompts this self-examination by forcing the subject to face themself as 'other'. The projected image or reflection highlights a divorce between sensory and perceptible awareness since one can only *see* and not *touch* the image in the mirror. The self is there, visible, yet intangible and elusive, producing a literal out-of-body experience that Mbembe calls the 'spectralization of reality'.[66] This disembodiment is characteristic of the postcolonial subject, who is often left feeling alien to his or her own self and country, dispossessed of the cultural practices, languages and values that are so intrinsic to one's sense of identity. Just like the 'fictive double' in the mirror,[67] the aftermath of colonial violence presents a distorted reflection of a former time since it often leaves a nation virtually unrecognisable yet somehow still familiar. Without explicitly referencing Freud, Mbembe draws on the psychologist's notion of the Uncanny to conclude that 'dissemblance and duplicity [are] an integral part of […] the confrontation between self and self' in a postcolonial context.[68] This idea is taken further by Algerian author Samir Toumi in his 2016 novel *L'Effacement*. Although not one of the texts explored in this thesis, the novel depicts an interesting ghosting of the self through the protagonist who, upon turning forty-

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p. 5.
[68] Ibid.

four, is suddenly unable to view his own reflection and later discovers that this malady only befalls the sons of those who fought in the Algerian War.[69]

This 'mirror effect' is two-fold, Mbembe argues. It not only entails the recognition of self as 'othered' (or absent, in the case of Toumi's novel), but it also extends to an identification with the dead. This is where Mbembe's notion of ghost as cadavre arises. The philosopher describes how in Tutuola's works, the spirits are depicted as frightening figures, wearing grotesque masks and performing cruel and humiliating acts upon their victims, often in what appears to be a (p)re-enactment of their murder. During these terrifying ceremonies, the frontiers between perception and reality are once again blurred as the living subject witnesses his or her own burial. Indeed, Mbembe asserts that 'in the realm of ghostly violence, life and murder are one and the same thing'.[70] Death remains omnipresent in postcolonial memory to such an extent that 'the living person must carry the remains of the dead even when he is by no means the party responsible for the living's demise'.[71] Those who are still living therefore unwittingly assume responsibility for the death of those passed, even '*taking the place of* ' the cadavers themselves.[72] This condition resonates profoundly – at least initially – with the protagonist of Kamel Daoud's *Meursault contre-enquête,* analysed in Part I of this thesis. The 'relationship of embrace between the dead and the living'[73] embroils both parties in a vicious hostage situation wherein 'the object (the corpse) and its reflection (the living subject) are henceforth superimposed'.[74] Such a doubling occurs when one has 'been taken by someone else, whose history, despite himself, he must endorse'[75] – a clear description of the colonised subject. Those who have survived or *live*

[69] Samir Toumi, *L'Effacement* (Algiers: Éditions Barzakh, 2016).
[70] Mbembe, p. 11.
[71] Ibid., p. 21.
[72] Ibid., p. 20 (original emphasis).
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

after an experience of colonial violence serve as screens onto which the dead and their memory are forever projected. Here, instead of the postcolonial subject becoming effaced to the point of a ghost, '[t]he dead person is objectified through the surface of a living being, in a form that is both spectral and palpable'.[76] This reverse objectification reminds us how past violence and trauma can continue to 'live on' in the memories of those in both the present and future, and how it can even make the recipients of this haunting into ghosts themselves, consumed and overshadowed by a suffocating history with which they may or may not identify. Echoing Derrida's temporal disjuncture, Mbembe affirms that in the peripheral, spectral realm, '[l]ife unfolds in the manner of a spectacle *where past and future are reversed* [my emphasis]. Everything takes place in an *indefinite present* [original emphasis]. Before and after are abolished, memory is destabilized, and multiplication reigns'.[77]

This focus on the paramount state of confusion that haunting produces strikes a chord with Derrida's conception of ghosts as representations of the incomprehensible. It also foregrounds a different understanding of chronology. Unlike in Western cultures, where time is generally considered to be linear, many African and Islamic cultures conceive of it as cyclical.[78] Mbembe explains how spectrality reinforces this conception of time as constant repetition, entailing a perpetual reliving of the experiences of the past:

> In the ghostly realm, there is neither reversibility nor irreversibility of time. There is only *unfolding* and folding over anew of experience. […] Consequently, everything functions according to the principle of incompletion. As a result, there is no necessary continuity between the present, the past and the future.[79]

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., p. 6.
[78] Samantha Robinson, 'Cyclical History: The Political Basis of Islam as a Centripetal and Centrifugal Force', *Macalester Islam Journal,* 2, pp. 17-27; Gerhard Böwering, 'he Concept of Time in Islam', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 141 (1997), pp.55-66.
[79] Mbembe, p. 22.

In this manner, far from working towards a better future like Gordon proposes, postcolonial ghosts serve instead to distort realities, blur temporal boundaries, and engender a perpetual state of doubt and uncertainty that imprisons their subjects in a Sisyphean cycle of meaningless repetition.

In addition to the 'cadavre', the ghost is also a nomad, according to Mbembe; a lost soul condemned to wander aimlessly for eternity (an idea we will see echoed – and then subverted – in Salim Bachi's *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin*). This scenario encapsulates the predicament of the postcolonial subject, often no longer sure where they belong and thus feeling an overwhelming sense of displacement and dislocation within their own country. Contending that one 'penetrate[s] into the world of ghosts by means of tragedy',[80] Mbembe, like Brogan, explains that the loss of culture, agency, and most importantly, loved ones leaves the subject purposeless and unsure of how to move forward. Unlike Edouard Glissant's notion of 'errance enracinée',[81] however, the wandering ghost is not 'rooted' in any sense but rather 'constantly exiting out of [them]self […] in an agonizing, centripetal movement that is all the more terrifying as the possibility of returning to the center is never assured'.[82] Again, spectrality hinges on the idea that identity, time, and meaning are constantly in flux, but this time it seems to impede as much as enhance a greater understanding of self.

Finally, in a similar manner to both Mbembe and Brogan, Fiona Barclay interrogates the unresolved mourning of a colonial past in North Africa and how this pervades French historical consciousness in her 2011 monograph, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature, and the Maghreb*. A point of difference with this work is that it concentrates on

[80] Ibid., p. 8.
[81] Glissant, 'Une errance enracinée', *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), pp. 49-54 (introduced in a previous chapter, 'L'errance, l'exil', pp. 23-34).
[82] Mbembe, p. 19.

metropolitan France's memory of empire rather than the memory of those who were colonised *by* France, thus providing an illuminating counterpoint to the works of both Brogan and Mbembe. The literary ghosts analysed, however, serve similar functions to those explored above. Through close textual analysis of a range of novels by francophone authors (who mostly live and write in France but have North African roots), Barclay foregrounds the ways in which the French colonial legacy continues to haunt France's own literature, society, politics, and culture, inevitably affecting the nation's relationship with its former colonies. She explores the variegated ways in which literary ghosts are deployed in Franco-Maghrebi texts in order to ascertain whether 'the memory of colonial atrocities condemn[s] the former colonizer and colonized to perpetual identification with the sterile categories of perpetrator and victim'.[83] Barclay seeks to look beyond this reductive dichotomy by examining less straightforward connections to French Algeria, such as those experienced by the *harkis* (native Algerians who fought for the French army in the Algerian War and therefore have a complex relationship with the *colons*), and the *pieds-noirs* population of French-heritage settlers who made Algeria their home. These multilayered aspects are often ignored or overlooked, which, according to Barclay, results in a dual ghosting effect much like Mbembe's notion of a fractured reflection except in this instance, the ex-coloniser and ex-colonised form two halves of the split self.

Seemingly unable to acknowledge the contradiction between its republican ideals and sustained colonial conduct, France has adopted a policy of denial and silence surrounding French Algeria that culminated in a refusal to even acknowledge the War of Independence

[83] Fiona Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature, and the Maghreb* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), p. xv. Barclay utilises two predominant theories of memory here: Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019). See also his *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), which explores multiple, conflicting perspectives of historicization.

as a war until 1999 – before this, it was simply referred to as 'les évènements d'Algérie'. This unwillingness to own any responsibility for 'the Algerian events' was virtually enshrined in French legislature by the post-war amnesty agreements, which imposed censorship around military methods used during the period of colonial rule. If this colonial aphasia were not enough, the French government proposed a law in 2005 (later amended) that instructed secondary school teachers to emphasise the 'positive' role of the French presence in its overseas territories, particularly North Africa.[84] Such historical revisionism is the subject of Benjamin Stora's *La Gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (1992), which likens French colonial memory (or, more accurately, its suppression, negation, and rewriting) to a gangrenous malady that slowly dismembers French society.[85]

Barclay argues that France's reluctance to confront its colonial past locks both the metropole and its former colonies into a spectral relationship wherein the presence of one signals the absence of the other, and vice versa. Not only are ex-colonised subjects reduced to 'living ghosts' in a way that echoes both Mbembe and Gordon's models, but they also 'haunt back' by posing (albeit unintentionally) a challenge to French national identity and an 'unwelcome reminder of the Republic's contradictions, lies, and betrayals'.[86] The ghosts in the texts Barclay analyses are mostly indicators of cultural invisibility or remnants of 'unresolved mourning' that cannot be laid to rest 'for the sake of justice'.[87] Though they mirror Gordon's

[84] French Government, Law 158: Article 4, passed on 23 Februrary 2005, which demanded that '[l]es programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord', cited from *Légifrance*: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=912B6DCAFB091874B155B7FFC8064D4B.tplgfr29s_1?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006238938&cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&categorieLien=id&dateTexte=20060215> [accessed 20 January 2020].
[85] It is worth noting, however, that this is beginning to change with events like President Macron's 2021 apology to the *harkis* who were brutally massacred after fighting for France during the Algerian War, and the commissioning of the 'Stora report' in July 2020 to look into 'les questions mémorielles portant sur la colonisation et la guerre d'Algérie'. The results were published in Benjamin Stora's *France-Algérie: les passions douleureuses* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2021).
[86] Barclay, p. xxii
[87] Ibid., p. xxxiii

social dead in this way, these ghosts provide no helpful opportunity to remedy an ill hitherto unnoticed, nor do they ensure a more productive future. Rather, like the transgenerational phantom, they serve as lingering, disabling effects of past tragedy. It is clear that this is a common thread across postcolonial works in a range of contexts – the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb – with ghosts often representing trauma resurfacing from the colonial past. But how does this apply to the Algerian context specifically? While Barclay explores the work of some French-Algerian writers like Sebbar, Bouraoui, and Cixous, the focus remains on metropolitan France and how its colonial exploits continue to affect the country's collective psyche. By contrast, this thesis explores the work of post-independent, Arab Algerians (who choose to write in French) in an attempt to move beyond a colonial haunting to an analysis of how the current generation of non-metropolitan writers are using spectrality to reflect and refract changing concerns about the future of their country.

Ghosts in Algerian Literature: The Spectre of Revolution, The Black Decade, and Construction of the State Myth

We have seen how haunting is often used in postcolonial literature to symbolise and work through issues of loss and repression, which in turn breeds mourning, melancholy, and nostalgia. Turning specifically to francophone Algeria, it is clear that these tropes have persisted in the works of other twentieth-century writers, such as Assia Djebar, but have since undergone a notable transition.[88] Though not discussed in detail in Barclay's study, Djebar is a major figure in North African francophone writing and deploys spectrality in her works as a means of memorialising and coming to terms (or not) with the past. What is interesting about her writing is that one can discern a progression throughout her oeuvre regarding the use of spectrality, which in many ways inaugurates a new focus in Algerian

[88] 'Assia Djebar' is actually a pseudonym; the author was born Fatima-Zohra Imalayan.

literature away from the colonial past and towards contemporary post-independent politics. A brief analysis of her work, therefore, will be helpful to establish this shift before examining the more recent political and historical context of the last thirty years in Algeria.

La Femme sans sépulture (which Djebar began writing in 1982, two decades before its ultimate publication) narrativises the life of Zoulikha Oudai, real-life *mujahida*[89] who played an instrumental role in the anti-colonial resistance during the Algerian War. Hailing from Djebar's own hometown of Césarée (now Cherchell), the freedom fighter was eventually captured and tortured by the French but her body never found. In the novel, Djebar pieces together the Zoulikha's life through the perspectives of multiple women who gather to remember her years later, including the *mujahida*'s daughters and Djebar herself. Zoulikha's ghost speaks directly to the reader in four separate monologues and is also incarnated by her eldest daughter, Hania, in a manner not unlike that of the transgenerational phantom. By being 'physically re-membered by the next generation',[90] as Anne Donadey puts it, Zoulikha's ghost exposes the horrific and lasting effects not only of this part of Algerian history but also of the attempt to suppress it. The silence surrounding Zoulikha's fate, coupled with the absence of a gravesite, inhibits Hania's ability to mourn her mother and as a result, she becomes physically possessed by a process of grieving that will forever be incomplete. Like the works investigated in Brogan's, Mbembe's, and Barclay's studies, then, *La femme sans sépulture* uses spectres and haunting to express loss and mourning from a colonial past. In Djebar's later works, however, this begins to change.

Le Blanc de l'Algérie (1995) and *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003), for example, both present the 'process of mourning as always, inevitably incomplete. Algeria […] is not

[89] 'Freedom-fighter' in Arabic.
[90] Anne Donadey, 'Introjection and Incorporation in Assia Djebar's *La Femme sans sépulture'*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, 438. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 82.

merely a victim of loss but *constituted* by loss, peopled by spectres'.[91] The former addresses the 'chers disparus' who died in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s.[92] Three of the author's close friends were murdered by Islamist extremist groups during this period – dramatist Abdelkader Alloula, psychiatrist Mahfoud Boucebci, and sociologist M'Hamed Boukhobza – and through imagined conversations and ghostly visitations, Djebar's narrator manages to keep their memory alive. Although haunting here is yet again a symptom of mourning (indeed 'le blanc' is the colour associated with mourning in Islam), it is also presented as curative; a means of reanimating the dead in order to sustain a connection with them. Indeed, Djebar *wills* her friends to haunt her: 'Je ne demande rien: seulement qu'ils nous hantent encore, qu'ils nous habitent.'[93] Nonetheless, she grapples with the inadequacies of language in expressing her grief, and turns to fellow franco-Algerian writers both for inspiration and to mourn their deaths, evoking authors such as Albert Camus, Jean Amrouche, Jean Sénac, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Mouloud Feraoun, and Tahar Djaout (who was also assassinated in the civil war). This 'textual polyphony'[94] triggers a reflection on the intersection between the literary and historical as well as the personal and the political – a trend that has since exploded in francophone literature. At the end of the novel, the ghost of Emir Abdelkader, Algerian resistance leader who unified the Amazigh[95] tribes against the French in the 1830s, resurfaces to revolt against the violence of the present day. In this way, Djebar weaves together the trauma of colonisation with that of the civil war, evoking both historical and literary ghosts to unite the two periods. While the focus remains on mourning

[91] Hiddleston, p. 158.
[92] Djebar, *Le Blanc de l'Algérie: récit* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), p. 15.
[93] Djebar, *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, p. 60.
[94] Alexandra Gueydan-Turek, 'Reinventing Algeria Through a Transnational Literary Community: Assia Djebar's *Le Blanc De L'Algérie*', *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 31, pp.85-102. (p.100).
[95] This is the preferred name (plural 'Imazighen') of the autochthonous inhabitants of North Africa, often referred to as Berbers and who have traditionally inhabited the Kabylia mountain region in Algeria. In the Amazigh language, called Tamizight, 'Imazighen' means 'free people'. For a thorough dissection of the construction of 'Berber' identity, see Yassin Temlali, *La Genèse de la Kabylie: Aux origines de l'affirmation berbère en Algérie (1830-1962)* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2015).

and melancholia, with ghosts still issuing from the past, we can observe an emerging interest in the effects of post-independent trauma – and also literary spectres – as ghostly figures move from incarnating war heroes and victims to well-known literary personalities. And this trend becomes even more pronounced in the next generation of Algerian francophone writers.

To understand why these developments are occurring, we need an awareness of the recent political and social history of Algeria. In 1962, after a brutal eight-year war, one hundred and thirty-two years of French colonisation finally came to an end, but this did not mean that the following sixty years would be harmonious. As previously mentioned, Algeria suffered a decade-long civil war from roughly 1991-2002, known as *la décennie noire*, which resulted in up to 200,000 deaths.[96] In the aftermath of the October youth riots of 1988, a new constitution was adopted that sanctioned a multiparty system in 1989.[97] The FIS (*Front islamique du salut*) started gaining popularity and seemed poised to win the upcoming federal election in 1991 after securing the majority in the first round the previous year. However, the party in power at the time, the FLN (*Front de libération nationale*), which had also been the primary agent of independence during the War of Liberation, cancelled the second round of voting and banned the FIS from running for government.[98] It then forced the resignation of its own president, Chadli Benjadid, who was prepared to compromise with the FIS, and enacted a military coup. In retaliation, supporters of the FIS formed various guerrilla groups, most notably the GIA (*Groupe islamique armée*) and the

[96] Exact figures are uncertain but is most likely to be between 100,000 and 200,000 according to Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University press, 2008), p. xiv.
[97] The reasons for the riots are contested although it seems likely that they were protesting high unemployment and inflation, despite government officials denying any political motive. Malika Rahal, '1988-1992: Multipartism, Islamism and the Decent into Civil War' in Patrick Crowley, *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988-2015* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 84-85.
[98] These would have been the country's first free elections since the FLN was then the sole legal party since Independence (and still governs today).

MIA (*Mouvement islamique armée),* and waged war on the government. The next decade was characterised by extreme religious violence and political terrorism, as well as literary censorship and the assassination and imprisonment of writers, artists, and intellectuals who spoke out about either government corruption or Islamist violence. Since then, the Algerian government, known as *le pouvoir*, has attempted to re-establish a sanctified narrative of anticolonial rebellion and national unity in which the War of Independence dominates social and cultural discourse at the expense of any recognition of domestic conflict – not just the Black Decade but also internecine division during the war and early independent turmoil such as the political coup of June 1965, in which president Ahmed Ben Bella was deposed by his own party.

As historian Raphaëlle Branche asserts, the memory of the war remains 'a primordial social and political resource' in Algeria,[99] with *le pouvoir* seeking to control the narrative of independence through a symbolic reservoir that aims 'to fix forever a national identity linked to the struggle for liberation'.[100] In the aftermath of the war, the FLN's flag became synonymous with the Democratic Republic of Algeria, and the battle song of the revolution, *Kassaman* ('We Pledge'), became – and remains – the national anthem, explicitly praising the FLN and declaring a 'reckoning' with France. Furthermore, this legacy of anticolonial revolt is literally inscribed into the Constitution of 1963, with Article 5 (revised in November 2008) specifying that '[t]he national symbol and national anthem are conquests of the Revolution of November 1st, 1954. They are immutable'.[101] National holidays commemorating independence and the anniversary of the revolution (July 5 and November

[99] Raphaëlle Branche, 'The martyr's torch: memory and power in Algeria', *Journal of North African Studies*, 16.3, 431-443 (p. 431), DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2010.550138.
[100] Ibid., p. 436.
[101] Algerian Constitution of 10 September, 1963, available at <http://www.marxists.org/history/algeria/1963/09/constitution.htm> (cited in Branche, 'The martyr's torch', p. 441).

1 respectively) were established, and streets, airports and major buildings were named after wartime heroes. As one critic asserts, 'le temps [est] arrêté' in Algeria since 1962 (a notion that author Boualem Sansal plays on quite literally in his novel examined in Part III).[102] Such a 'Freezing of Historical Time',[103] however, presumes that the experience of independence was homogenous, but as Malika Rahal explains in her recent monograph by foregrounding the diverse and often conflicting experiences of different groups, this was not the case.[104]

Nonetheless, everything from postage stamps to the commissioning of grand monuments and statues (such as the ninety-two-metre-high Martyrs' Memorial in Algiers, across from both the National Museum of the Mujahideen and the Central Museum of the Army) served to render the memory of the war omnipresent.[105] Even today, the president must swear by both the Qu'ran and the 'blood of martyrs' upon assuming office. Indeed, the status of martyr or war veteran became a highly sought after badge of honour that afforded numerous economic and social privileges. In 1962, the state established the Ministry of Martyrs, which was responsible for validating and issuing literal *mujahidin* cards for qualifying citizens.

There is an odd tension, however, between this omnipresent and overbearing history on the one hand, and what Rahal calls the 'absence d'histoire' on the other, referring to both the

[102] Malika Rahal, 'Le temps arrêté: Un pays sans histoire. Algérie, 2011-2013', *Écrire l'histoire*, 12 (2013), 27-36, p. 118.
[103] This is how Muriam Haleh Davis and Thomas Serres describe the state of affairs in Algeria in their article 'Political Contestation in Algeria: Between Postcolonial Legacies and the Arab Spring', *Middle East Critique*, 22.2 (2013), 99-112 (p. 101).
[104] Malika Rahal, *Algérie 1962: Une histoire populaire* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2022). Rahal focuses in particular on the return of the 300,000 displaced Algerians who had fled to Tunisia and Morocco, the liberation of concentration camps and prisons, the search and grief for lost loved ones, and the various forms of celebration that overtook the nation.
[105] For more on memorialisation of the war through monuments, see Emmanuel Alcaraz, 'Les monuments aux martyrs de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne: monumentalité, enjeux de mémoire et commémorations', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 237, 125–146, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25733325> [accessed 14 December 2023]. This type of state iconography is also discussed at length in James McDougall, 'The Fetishism of Identity: Empire, Nation and the Politics of Subjectivity in Algeria' in John Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani (eds), *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 49-71.

inaccessibility of national archives and the government's refusal to allow universities to undertake any studies into the country's post-independent history.[106] This is because, according to the state, the *mujahidin* are the country's most reliable source of memory[107] and therefore the National Organisation of Mujahidin is the sole institution in charge of archival documents (and the dissemination of this information). This led to a period of 'writing and rewriting history',[108] which has continued in various forms ever since, and this notion of absent archives and historical revisionism underpins several of the works in this thesis as contemporary authors seek to extricate themselves from the current rehashing of the past and look towards the future. As Algerian historian Mohamed Harbi affirms, who was himself a member of the FLN during the war,[109] '[l]'Histoire est instrumentalisée pour traiter des problèmes actuels' and this has directly resulted in 'cette sorte d'enfermement dans lequel vit l'Algérie'.[110] Now, whilst the FLN was – and is – a primary agent of the state, I am wary of treating 'the Algerian state' as a single actor when it is really, as James McDougall reminds us, 'a coherent facade for bundles of institutions, processes and actors, with their often conflicting interests'.[111] Therefore, for clarity, when I refer to the (notoriously nebulous) *pouvoir*, I am mostly invoking the single party system of government,

[106] Rahal, 'Le temps arrêté', pp. 29, 35. For more detail, see also her article 'Fused Together and Torn Apart: Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria', *History and Memory*, 24.1 (2012), 118-151.
[107] Indeed, president Chadli Bendjedid affirmed this in an address in May 1984, cited in Branche, 'The martyr's torch', p. 433.
[108] Gilles Manceron and Hassan Remaoun make a convincing case for this in their comparative approach to the memorialisation of the Algerian War in both France and Algeria, *D'une rive à l'autre: la guerre d'Algérie de la mémoire à l'histoire* (Paris: Syros, 1993).
[109] Harbi became advisor to the first President of the Republic, Ahmed Ben Bella, but his Marxist leanings made him unpopular as he began to oppose the increasingly authoritarian approach of the new government. In 1965, when Houari Boumédiènne seized office, he was imprisoned without trial and eventually placed under house arrest in 1971 but managed to escape to Tunisia in 1973 and then move to Paris, where he became a Political Science professor.
[110] Mohamed Harbi, '« L'Histoire est instrumentalisée »' en Algérie, *Jeune Afrique*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/140818/politique/mohammed-harbi-l-histoire-est-instrumentalis-e-en-alg-rie/> [accessed 17 December 2023]. For a more exhaustive study of the independence mouvement and foundational myths of Algeria, see Harbi, *Le FLN, mirage et réalité, des origines à la prise du pouvoir (1945–1962)* (Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1980) and *La guerre d'Algérie: 1954-2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris: R. Laffont, 2004), cowritten with Benjamin Stora.
[111] James McDougall, 'Culture as War by Other Means: Community, Conflict and Cultural Revolution, 1967-81' in Rabah Aissaoui and Claire Eldridge (eds), *Algeria Revisited: History, Culture and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2017), pp. 235-252 (p. 236).

along with the agencies and policies under its direct control, while recognising that not all of these institutions are necessarily unanimous and of course consist of various factions, but that they still represent, at least nominally, the regime in power, and serve to perpetuate an Algerian version of what Hélé Béji calls '*nationalitarisme*'.[112]

It is clear that the historical foundations of the Algerian state have been built entirely on a glorified narrative of anticolonial heroism, through the conscious (and inescapable) mythologisation of the revolution. However, the *cultural* foundations of national identity were also reaffirmed by the government in the wake of independence. As McDougall explains, the 1970s (a time of relative growth and prosperity in Algeria) saw the advancement of

> a very specific vision of the Algerian past, one which informed a particular project for Algeria's present and future, in which socialist progress was informed and legitimized by the state's appropriation of strategic resources in the cultural field: the definition and promotion of Islam and of Muslim values; the […] memorialization of the national past; and the codification and teaching of the national language.[113]

The notion of an 'authentic' Algerian culture thus became rooted in a Muslim and Arabophone identity, as well as one of simultaneous colonial victimhood and heroism. The 1963 constitution stipulated that Islam was the state religion and Arabic the sole national and official language.[114] As Mohamed Benrabah explains, 'Algeria's leadership imposed monolingualism in literary Arabic at the expense of the country's pluralism and the real

[112] Hélé Béji uses this term in the context of postcolonial Tunisia to describe the co-opting of a budding national consciousness by authoritarian regimes. Béji, *Le Désenchantement national* (Paris: Maspéro, 1982).
[113] James McDougall, 'Culture as War', p. 240.
[114] Article 5, cited in Mohammed Benrabah, *The Language Planning Situation in Algeria* in Richard Baldauf and Robert Kaplan (eds), *Language Policy and Planning in Africa,* Vol. II (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007), pp. 25-148 (pp. 64-65).

mother tongues, dialectical Berber and Berber'.[115] This posed numerous problems for a society that, willingly or not, had operated for well over a century in a system where French was the language of instruction, government and power. Compounding this is the fact that there is a large disparity between the dialectal Arabic spoken daily by most Algerians (*darja*) and the classical or Modern Standard variety imposed (*fushā*), which is a formal, written language, mostly reserved for Qu'ranic ceremonies. According to Farida Abu-Haidar, classical Arabic is rarely spoken in the Arab world, and most Algerians are unable to understand it.[116] Today, due to Amazigh revivalist movements, Algeria now has two national languages: Modern Standard (classical) Arabic and Tamazight ('Berber'), added in 2016. Despite having the third-largest French-speaking population of any country in the world, Algeria is not part of the official *Francophonie*.[117]

Rather than cement a harmonious national unity, this monolithic vision of 'Algerianness' dictated by the state (what McDougall terms 'fictions of unanimity') served instead 'to turn culture into a war zone, fought over in terms of mutual exclusion, [as opposed to] a site for the *entre-soi*, the nation as an everyday living-together, of all Algerians.'[118] There is a certain irony, too, in linking Algerian identity so exclusively to Islam and the Arabic language, since, as Murium Haleh Davis and Thomas Serres point out, this merely perpetuates colonial power mechanics that rely on 'essentializ[ing] the characteristics of a people, group, or ethnicity'.[119]

---

[115] Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013), p.54.
[116] Farida Abu-Haidar, 'Arabisation in Algeria', *International Journal of Francophone Studies,* 3 (2000), 151–63 (p. 152).
[117] With almost fifteen million French speakers, Algeria is third only to France and the Democratic Republic of Congo, according to the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie*, 'Qui parle français dans le monde?', 2022 <https://observatoire.francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-le-monde/> [accessed 2 February 2023]
[118] James McDougall, 'Culture as War', p. 248.
[119] Davis & Serres, 'Political Contestation in Algeria', p.110.

Nonetheless, this reassertion of Algerian identity along linguistic and religious lines forms one of the key stages in the memorialisation of the Algerian Independence. While critics generally divide the commemoration of the Algerian War (in both Algeria and France) into four main phases: amnesia, challenges to this amnesia, return of the repressed, and obsession; historian Natalya Vince proposes a less psychoanalytic categorisation, focusing instead on how this memory has been consciously repackaged for new contexts rather than treating it as a spontaneously recurring entity. Her amended classification thus revolves around the motivations for this repurposing: firstly, a preoccupation with post-war practicalities (1962 – mid-1970s); then identity politics (mid-1970s – early1990s); followed by a transnational memory turn, which focused on reparation and law-making (1990s); and, finally, using the anticolonial past as 'political code and strategic weapon' (mid-2000s onwards).[120] This revision of the more conventional analytical framework used to study post-independent Algeria is an attempt on Vince's part to avoid what Frederick Cooper calls 'leapfrogging legacies', wherein the past and present are compared with little regard for the changing influences of the intervening period.[121] Instead, Vince calls our attention to the ways in which the memory of the war has been 'activated' to reflect distinct contextual changes and advance specific political, economic, or social agendas over time.[122]

In the lead up to the civil war, the need for a strong national narrative only intensified. Amidst rising unemployment, a sharp economic downturn, and a housing crisis in the 1980s, it became harder to 'sell' the story of a felicitous independence that had, or would, resolve all of the country's problems. This led to new strategies of memory manipulation, shifting the focus from the commemoration of heroes to that of victims, and using the language of

[120] Natalya Vince, *The Algerian War, The Algerian Revolution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 166.
[121] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 19-20.
[122] Natalya Vince, *The Algerian War*, p. 190.

trauma and guilt to demand reparations.[123] In 1989, following the riots of the previous year, a new constitution was ratified, which further emphasised the state's duty to respect the symbols of the revolution and the dignity of the *mujahidin*, as well as 'to promote the writing of history and its teaching to the younger generations'.[124] As Rahal explains, it is very difficult to oppose a regime that has made itself so synonymous with the ideals of the Revolution because one would not simply be opposing the party in power but also (seen to be) rejecting the national values they represent, the core tenets of what it supposedly means to be Algerian.[125] Indeed, these cultural constructs of homogeneity became all the more important after the *décennie noire*, since the conflict effectively delegitimised radical Islam as a potential solution to society's struggles (as many had hoped) and this enabled the regime to '[f]erociously re-establish[…] its position and the status quo ante'.[126] This can be seen quite clearly in the constant appeal to war-time triumph throughout the official celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of Independence, just ten years on from *la décennie noire*. In particular, the use of the FLN's slogan '*ma zaal waqfin*' ('still standing') refers unmistakably to 'the inaugural historical moment' of 1954 – the time from which the FLN is 'still' standing – and is used, according to Davis, to affirm a continuity in the Algerian story.[127]

For generations born *after* colonialism, however, this inherited tale of past glory and a purportedly harmonious independence does not resonate. In addition to the *décennie noire*,

[123] Ibid., p. 178.
[124] Algerian Constitution of 1989, Article 59. These two aspects were already included in a previous amendment to the constitution in 1976 but in two separate articles (Articles 84 and 85). Branche, 'The martyr's torch', p. 434.
[125] Malika Rahal, 'Impossible Opposition: The Magic of the One-Party Regime', Jadaliyaa, 4 November 2013, < https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29730/Impossible-Opposition-The-Magic-of-the-One-Party-Regime> [accessed 9 November 2023]. This piece is part of an electronic roundtable organised for the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian Independence, moderated by Muriam Haleh Davis.
[126] James McDougall, 'The Fragile and Resilient Country, 1992-2012', in *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 290-336 (p. 335).
[127] Davis and Serres, 'Political Contestation in Algeria', p. 104.

there has been much dissatisfaction with post-independent government, especially with president Abdelaziz Bouteflika who rose to power towards the end of the 1990s and quickly became a figure of corruption and autocracy. The recent *Hirak*[128] protests of 2019-2021 were largely a response to Bouteflika's announcement of his intention to run for a fifth term, despite almost two decades in power. During the *Hirak*, the memory and symbols of the Revolution were yet again mobilised but this time reappropriated by the people rather than manipulated by the government, with protestors carrying posters of well-known heroes who died in the war as examples of 'true *mujahidin*' in contrast to the 'false *mujahidin*' in power.[129] The language of the war was weaponised too, with constant singing of the national anthem and the use of revolutionary slogans, chants, and banners to highlight what Henry Rousso famously described (in the context of the Vichy collaboration) as 'ce passé qui ne passe pas'.[130] In this way, according to Giulia Fabbiano, the *Hirak* both managed to disrupt the longstanding 'récit surplombant où Histoire, Temps et Mémoire convergent' *and* re-establish a 'rapprochement entre 1962 et 2019', thereby renewing 'un dialogue […] avec le(s) passé(s), le(s) présent(s) et le(s) futur(s)'[131] – something all of the texts studied in this thesis explicitly seek to do.

The Black Decade and its aftermath have reinvigorated debate around cultural identity, as the question of the 'real' Algeria remains fraught. A prevailing desire to re-evaluate the dominant cultural model is reflected strongly in literary and artistic output since the turn of the century, and one way this has been achieved is through sustained engagement with other literary traditions, canons, and intercultural narratives. This transnational focus, discussed

[128] 'Movement' in Arabic. The *Hirak* consisted of peaceful demonstrations on Fridays (the Islamic holy day) mostly outside mosques.
[129] Natalya Vince, *The Algerian War*', p. 186.
[130] Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), cited in Fabbiano ; and also Rousso and Eric Conan, *Vichy : un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).
[131] Giulia Fabbiano, 'Le temps long du hirak: le passé et ses présences', *L'Année du Maghreb*, 21 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.5334>, paragraphs 4, 9, 4 respectively [accessed 21 January 2024].

in more detail in Part II, is an attempt to draw attention back to the longstanding history of plurality, polyglossia, and *métissage* in the Maghreb in order to open up the nationalistic narrative in Algeria and break free from narrow definitions of cultural singularity. It is especially important not to extrapolate the divide between French and Arabic literature[132] to a dichotomous view of Algerian culture, which is all too often reduced to cultural and religious polarities along these linguistic lines. Scholars like Joseph Ford, along with Natalya Vince and Walid Benkhaled, highlight the limitations of the overly simplified binary through which the Algerian 'identity crisis' is often analysed; that is: in terms of a struggle between Muslim conservatives (seen to be either in league with, or downtrodden by, an autocratic government) and secular, francophone progressives.[133] Ford, in particular, cautions against the 'clash of civilisations' mentality to which these views can give rise, and this will be discussed more later on.[134] As we will see, the Algerian reality is much more complex than these reductive and misleading oppositions allow. This is one reason that spectrality, with its fundamental questioning of binaries and epistemological certainties, as well as its fluid approach to the past, memory, and potential futures, is a particularly apt model for (re)interrogating seemingly fixed cultural dogma and narratives that rely on singular political, linguistic, and religious 'truths'. Harnessed as an ontological lens, it can also help us reassess the accuracy and usefulness of arbitrary categories like post-/colonial, French-/Algerian, hero/victim and perhaps construct new, less rigid ones that encompass a more representative range of identifies and experiences.

[132] See pp. 46-47 for a more in-depth discussion of the Algerian linguistic landscape.
[133] Benkhaled, Walid, and Natalya Vince, 'Performing Algerianness: The National and Transnational Construction of Algeria's "Culture Wars"', in Patrick Crowley (ed.), Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism: 1988-2015 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017); Joseph Ford, *Writing the Black Decade: Conflict and Criticism in Francophone Algerian Literature* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021).
[134] Ford is referring to Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', Foreign Affairs 72.3 (1993), 22–49.

As Derrida characterises it, spectrality is about making the absent present, as well as retaining an awareness of the influence of both and past and future on the present – but, importantly, realising that these can be continually reshaped. As Daniel Hartley and Beatrice Ivey affirm, '[t]he Algerian present is […] inspired by a critical nostalgia that mobilizes the "past-futurity" of lost utopian projects whilst seeking a mode of rupture that would finally break with the institutional repetitions that perpetuate its present impasse'.[135] Whilst this absence-presence topos has traditionally centred on the memory of lost loved ones from the past who return to haunt or be mourned, the focus is shifting to current generations who are now, ironically, the ones who are marginalised and overlooked, since they are largely absent from their own national story while the martyrs of the past overwhelm national discourse. Those born after colonisation and the War of Liberation have no personal memory or experience of this struggle, yet it has become the sole marker of Algerian history and identity. A glorified myth of unified national revolt and heroism has been consciously manufactured and perpetuated in order to legitimise the state's power and overlook the more recent domestic conflict and ongoing political and social struggles. Current writers are pushing back not only against this fixed history and its use as propaganda, but also against the imposition of a single language and religion, instead redefining – or at least questioning – what it means to be Algerian in the twenty-first century.

Post-1990s Context and Introduction to My Corpus

It is now clear that as a result of all the post-independent uncertainty explored above and especially in the wake of the civil war, literary spectrality is being used less to represent loss and mourning from the past and increasingly to symbolise anxiety or concern about

[135] Daniel Hartley and Beatrice Ivey, 'Rupture, Repression, Repetition: The Algerian War of Independence in the Present', International Journal of Francophone Studies 21. 3-4 (2018), 185–207 (pp. 193-194).

Algeria's future. Whilst we can observe the beginnings of this shift in Djebar's later works, the author still belongs firmly to the previous generation of writers who grew up under a colonial regime, with most of her work written in the 1950s and 60s and then, after a gap, continuing in the mid-1980s. Much has been observed about the ethics of mourning and memorialisation, expressed through haunting, in the works of this older generation of Algerian writers (such as those investigated in Barclay's study) but relatively little has been written with regard to the haunting portrayed by the 'new wave' of Algerian authors. By this, I mean the *post*-postcolonial generation who only began writing in the aftermath of the *décennie noire*, emerging as literary figures since the turn of the century.[136] Such authors include Samir Toumi, Alice Zeniter, Kaouther Adimi, Samir Kacimi, Mustapha Benfodil, Salim Bachi, Samira Negrouche, Adlène Meddi, El-Mahdi Acherchour, Kamel Daoud, Hajar Bali, Saad Khiari, and Boualem Sansal. All of these writers (bar Sansal) were born *after* independence and could therefore be considered the generation of 'postmemory'; a designation Marianne Hirsch uses in relation to the Holocaust to describe 'the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before'.[137] For these authors, writing in French is not a relic of a colonial education system, like it was for the previous generation, but rather a conscious, political choice that has spurred much controversy given the post-independence policy of Arabisation.

These changing concerns following the civil war are the culmination, according to Jane Hiddleston, of a transitionary period that began in the 1980s. In *Writing After Postcolonialism*, Hiddleston contends that Algerian and North African writing has entered a new phase since the initial period of independence. This 'literature in transition' is

[136] They are sometimes referred to as 'la génération '88' because they were just becoming adults during the youth riots that precipitated the Black Decade.
[137] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 5.

characterised by a persistent spirit of questioning as writers turn to a re-evaluation and re-memorialisation of the past, often reflecting on the potential and limitations of literature as a vehicle for political reform. In Hiddleston's own words:

> Having lost the more explicitly revolutionary rhetoric of writers of the independence movement, those [since the 1980s] appear to be rather more variable and uncertain in their conception of the role of their art, and despite remaining committed to both aesthetic and political contestation, they have produced a series of self-conscious works in which literature itself is figured as a character held up for scrutiny.[138]

As we will see, literature indeed appears as a character in the works examined in this thesis, with each text positing different functions of the writer, whether it be to critically re-examine the complexities of a shared literary heritage and rehabilitate controversial authors, as in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête*; to faithfully resurrect the dead and un-bury forgotten legacies, like Kaouther Adimi suggests; to create a dialogue with other cultures and literary traditions, issuing a national 'wake-up call', as Salim Bachi contends; to act as a prophetic saviour and voice for the country's future, like in Daoud's *Zabor*; or to enact political dissidence and bring awareness to issues of conformity, censorship, authoritarianism, and religious oppression, as Boualem Sansal does.

While Hiddleston addresses a range of texts mostly by North African authors from the last generation (such as Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Yasmina Khadra, Malika Mokeddem, Abdelkébir Khatibi, Tahar Djaout, and Leila Sebbar), I am interested in more recent Algerian works, those written since 2000 by authors who were not raised under a colonial regime. The spirit of questioning and curiosity that Hiddleston identifies (and which scholars like Laurent Demanze suggest is indicative of an increasing 'littérature

[138] Jane Hiddleston, *Writing After Postcolonialism: Francophone North African Literature in Transition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 10.

d'enquête')[139] persists more than ever in this next generation of writers, and often shows up as spectral imagery. Like Crowley, who traces a constellation of Algerian novels written since the 1990s that revolve around the image of the star (that which has come to symbolise the nation and its revolutionary history since Kateb Yacine's 1956 novel *Nedjma*),[140] I analyse a similar aesthetic trend in contemporary Algerian writing but one regarding spectral rather than celestial imagery. Crowley examines how the anticolonial resonances of the star are mobilised in recent works not simply for a decolonial purpose but to highlight the 'failures' of the postcolonial state. By resisting or appropriating this imagery, they call into question how the *pouvoir* 'continues to draw upon that same symbolic reservoir to reassert its political legitimacy'.[141] Similarly, I contend that spectrality is being used not only to undermine or question the authenticity of the state's fossilised narratives but also to express a profound sentiment of uncertainty and anxiety towards the future, one that has gripped the country in the wake of the Black Decade and only intensified since. However, rather than staking 'an independent claim to the past and its archives of the revolution',[142] these works often turn away from the past altogether to offer their own version of contemporary – and future – Algeria.

This recent preoccupation with ghostliness takes many forms, often manifesting in complex and confusing ways. In some texts, it appears as ghostly characters (often writers and literary figures) while other works depict hauntings from both the past and future. More than this explicit phantomatic imagery, however, ghostliness itself is being used as a metaphor for

[139] Laurent Demanze, 'Fictions d'enquête et enquêtes dans la fiction', *COnTEXTES* 22 (2019), abstract. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/contextes.6893 [accessed 18 January 2024]
[140] The star is also a symbol of Islam, featured extensively in the Qu'ran and on the flags of many Muslim countries. 'Nedjma' means 'star' in Arabic. Patrick Crowley, 'Temporalities. Algerian Revolutions: Whose Star? Then/Now?', *Interventions*, 24.7 (2002), 1106-1126, DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2022.2054008.
[141] Ibid., p. 1107.
[142] Ibid, p. 1124.

unknowability and incompletion, drawing attention to alternative futures and absent presents. As an aesthetic framework, spectrality resonates strongly with the Algerian context in many ways, not only representing the liminality of the current period but also reflecting an overbearing past legacy and the more recent memory of civil violence, both of which cast an omnipresent shadow over the present. In the same way that postcolonialism is understood to be both a historical, temporal marker and also an epistemological critique, spectrality operates at once as a designation of ghostly imagery, characters, and metaphors in the texts as well as a critical and ontological lens by which ideology, stable meaning, and temporal fixity are questioned. This hauntological conception of spectrality – that which acknowledges indeterminacy and the infinite potential for ideas to be resurrected and reformed due to their unfixed and ever-recurring nature – serves to encourage scepticism of ossified narratives and political and religious dogma. In particular, it is used in the works investigated here to query the boundaries between past, present, and future in the construction of the Algerian 'story', and moreover to challenge restrictive ways of thinking. As Colin Davis asserts: 'For Derrida, the ghost's secret is not a puzzle to be solved; it is the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future'.[143]

For the purpose of this study, I am focussing on spectrality as a hauntological narrative process, bringing it into dialogue with intertextuality to posit a new framework for how contemporary Algerian francophone authors are reconfiguring postcolonial futures. These writers' highly self-conscious reflection on their own art and its role in affirming or contesting cultural identity involves a particular emphasis on rewriting and retelling, as authors resurrect in ghostly form stories and literary figures from different cultures, canons,

[143] Davis, 'Hauntology', pp. 378-9.

languages, and eras to demonstrate the importance of narratives that evolve over time rather than remain stagnant or controlled by a single entity. We have seen earlier in this introduction how spectrality is notoriously difficult to define and can take many forms. Indeed, the point of spectrality, in Derrida's view, is precisely to bring to light ambiguities, uncertainties, paradoxes, deferred meaning, and reflect on, or bring about, that which is not (yet) manifest. I intend to examine not only ghostly imagery and depictions of hauntings in Algerian francophone literature since the *décennie noire*, but also and especially the way these spectral motifs operate on a hauntological level to encourage cultural and political regeneration, distilling both an intertextual and future focus.

While works like Ford's *Writing The Black Decade* remind us that literature, although often lauded for its emancipatory dimension, can equally entrench and perpetuate conflict and reductive binaries in the wake of political upheaval and periods of violence, I expound the ways that contemporary authors of French expression in Algeria are using spectrality in their writing to carefully *eschew* binaries and definitive, dogmatic narratives, highlighting instead the precise impossibility – and indeed undesirability – of absolute 'Truth'. Of course, this is not to say that their work cannot be polarising or that it always achieves its goal – in fact, we will see that many of the texts examined in this thesis are steeped in (and sometimes court) controversy – but rather, that there is a growing awareness and a self-conscious attempt to mobilise literature as a site for challenging sanctified narratives and cultural homogeneity. As Crowley affirms in his recent study of Algerian cultural production:

> If the War of Independence and the foundation of the state in 1962 remains the currency of political discourse and the symbolic reservoir of both state and people, then for writers and filmmakers to explore the limits of change requires them to draw

> upon this currency, to put it to work in ways that differ from a state narrative that has sought to monopolize and control it.[144]

Reformulation of historical and political discourse on Algeria, including its representation in literature, has therefore been a key focus for contemporary writers. As the country struggles to (re)forge its post-independent identity amidst significant internal division, its French-language literature has indeed 'sought to understand, and not simply represent, the complex interweaving of past and present in its many forms'.[145] However, I contend that this temporal enmeshment extends to the future as well, as the country grapples increasingly with its spectres yet to come.

This has led to an engagement with post-independent language politics, religion, cultural plurality, literary censorship, and government narratives. In particular, a significant discourse has emerged around Islamism, with many works harshly criticising Islamic doctrine, especially its incorporation into politics. It is important to note, however, that these views are not representative of the broader Algerian population and have indeed received much backlash, particularly in light of recent debates around *islamogauchisme*.[146] Some of the authors analysed in this thesis hold a problematic and contested status within their own country for this reason, receiving death threats and having their work censored whilst simultaneously (often in France and the West) being lauded as literary heroes and revolutionaries of sorts for challenging dogma and promoting individual liberty. Although

[144] Patrick Crowley, 'Algerian Cultural Production Sixty Years After Independence, *French Studies,* 76. 4 (2022), pp. 627-44 (p. 630).
[145] Ibid., p. 634.
[146] A pejorative designation popularised by the former French Minister of Higher Education, Frédérique Vidal, on February 2021 to describe academics who work in postcolonial fields. By giving voice to Muslim or Arab works and histories, these scholars are deemed, in Vidal's view, to be promoting Islam (and by erroneous extension, Islamism). For more information, see the following recent special issues: "Islamogauchisme'? Moral Panic, Culture Wars and the Threat to Academic Freedom', *French cultural Studies,* 34.3, (August 2023), guest edited by Simon Davies; and 'Islamophobia in France', *Modern & Contemporary France,* 31.2 (May 2023), guest edited by Nadia Kiwan and Jim Wolfreys.

much of these writers' critiques centre on the dangers of *politicised* versions of Islam (and extremist ideology more generally), they do at times conflate oppression and terrorism with religion itself. In particular, Kamel Daoud and Boualem Sansal have been accused of exhibiting Islamophobic ideas in their journalism and/or interviews, which this thesis most certainly does not condone or seek to legitimise in any form.

While the intersection between literature and politics has always been contentious in Algeria, with literary works subject to severe state scrutiny and censorship, the *décennie noire* exacerbated this tension greatly and reignited debates about the role and purpose of public writing. Until 1989, with the official end of the single-party system, there were no private publishing houses in the country; all works were produced and disseminated by the Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion (SNED), which was established by the government in 1966 (and became the Enterprise National du Livre Algérien, or ENAL, in 1983).[147] If authors wished to be published by the SNED/ENAL, their work could not express criticism of the regime and, moreover, was expected to praise the war of Independence.[148] Due to these restrictions, most authors – especially those whose novels were in any way dissenting – chose to publish overseas (in France for francophone works and in the Middle East for works in Arabic). Even after the emergence of private publishing houses in the 1990s, there were significant issues that continued to limit the autonomy of literary production in Algeria, such as lack of funding, poor distribution networks, and strained relations between publishers and booksellers (and of course, the outbreak of the civil war drastically hampered any possibility for expansion of the domestic publishing infrastructure). As Karima Bentoumi explains, very few bookshops exist outside the capital and most of the population

[147] Karima Bentoumi, 'Rethinking the Algerian Publishing "Boom": Perspectives of Authors, Booksellers, and Publishers on Transnational Networks and Local Infrastructure', *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 14 (2020), 354 –372 (p. 356); Corbin Treacy, 'L'Effet Barzakh', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 20.1 (2016), 76-83 (p. 77).
[148] Bentoumi, p. 356.

has to wait until the annual bookfair to purchase books, which remain expensive commodities for the average citizen.[149] However, this has begun to change in the last two decades, following a significant increase in state revenue towards the end of the 1990s (due to a rise in oil and gas profits). This enabled new investment in the cultural sector and led to the establishment of a number of independent publishing houses since 2000, chief among them Barzakh,[150] Casbah, Chihab, EL-Hibr, and APIC. While this is generally considered to be indicative of a literary flourishing in Algeria, Bentoumi cautions us not to overstate this 'boom' for risk of minimising the ongoing challenges facing the Algerian publishing industry, which still relies on international alliances to survive.[151]

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's conception of 'le champ litteraire',[152] Tristan Leperlier contends that the Algerian literary field is characterised by two main features: it is multilingual (essentially bilingual) and transnational.[153] Despite Algeria's polyglossic context, its dependence on international markets has resulted in two distinct literary spheres, with the vast majority of authors publishing in *either* French *or* Modern Standard Arabic (with Rachid Boudjedra a notable exception, writing in both). Within this 'clivage linguistique', there is, as Leperlier puts it, 'un hyper-centre' of writers who publish with large Parisian *maisons d'éditions*, alongside a peripheral group of authors publishing domestically in dialectal Algerian Arabic (darja) and a range of Tamazigh languages (mainly Kabyle, Chaouia, Chenoua, and Mozabite).[154] This bipolarisation of the literary field, along

[149] Ibid., pp. 365, 259.
[150] In a spectral coincidence, 'Barzakh' denotes the limbo between life and death in Arabic, and is therefore indicative of the liminal, transitionary stage of Algeria's literary 'rebirth'.
[151] Bentoumi, 'Rethinking the Algerian Publishing "Boom"'. Kaoutar Harchi holds a similar view on the Parisian publishing hegemony, discussed more in Part I. See Harchi, *Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne* (Paris: Pauvert, 2016).
[152] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le champ littéraire', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales,* 89 (1991), 3-46.
[153] Tristan Leperlier*, Algérie, les écrivains dans la décennie noire* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), pp. 18-20.
[154] For more on the novel in Tamazight, see Mohand Akli Salhi and Nabila Sadi, 'Le Roman maghrébin en Berbère', in *The Contemporary 'Roman maghrébin': Aesthetics, Politics, Production 2000–2015*, ed. by Patrick Crowley and Megan MacDonald, special issue of *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 20.1 (2016), pp…

with its internationalisation, became further cemented in the 1990s due to the mass exodus of authors fleeing the rampant *intellocide*.[155] It is estimated that at the peak of the *décennie noire,* a third of all Algerian writers were exiled in France.[156] Nonetheless, Leperlier emphasises that '[c]ette internationalisation ne signifie pas un éloignement des préoccupations nationales. Au contraire, les écrivains publiant en France sont particulièrement engagés : du fait de leur rôle d'ambassadeur de l'image de l'Algérie à l'étranger'.[157] The period of civil war brought about a 'repoliticisation' of literature, with a significant overlap emerging between journalism and literary writing, as both fields vied for a monopoly over the domain of the 'public intellectual' and cultural spokesperson. Growing international interest in the Algerian situation led to a form of testimonial writing known as 'littérature d'urgence', which privileged personal accounts of the conflict.[158] Unsurprisingly, such writing was particularly well-received in France, where anti-Islamic narratives, as well as those criticising post-independent Algeria, fit well with increasingly nationalistic political discourse.

Even if many of the *écrivains éxilés* have returned to Algeria since the end of the civil war, the Algerian publishing sphere remains highly dependent on French and overseas networks. Furthermore, the linguistic hierarchy between French and Arabic literature has only solidified, with works written in French – even if published domestically – generally

[155] For a more specific analysis of this, see Leperlier, 'The Algerian Literary Field in the "Black Decade": A Reinforced Polarization', in Richard Jacquemond and Felix Lang (eds), *Culture and Crisis in the Arab World: Production and Practice in Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 129-144.
[156] Myriam Hachimi Alaoui, *Les Chemins de l'exil : les Algériens exilés en France et au Canada depuis les années 90* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); Leperlier, *Algérie*, p. 163.
[157] Leperlier, *Algérie*, p. 163.
[158] For a detailed analysis of *littérature d'urgence*, see Corbin Treacy, 'Writing in the Aftermath of Two Wars: Algerian Modernism and the Génération '88', Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988-2015 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 123-.139; Joseph Ford, 'Rethinking Urgence: Algerian Francophone Literature after the 'Décennie Noire', *Francosphères*, 5.1 (2016), 39-57.

attaining more commercial success than their Arabophone counterparts.[159] Publishing in France allows relative autonomy and freedom of expression, as well as wider reach and access to an array of international press and an established network of revered literary prizes. This is one reason the production of francophone works continues to be favoured in Algeria, despite an increasingly Arabophone readership. It also goes some way to explaining the, at times confusing, duality of intended recipients. Since literary production is inevitably dictated by its social and economic context, Algerian francophone writers must increasingly tailoring their works to the demands and tastes of a French market. Whilst this can be liberating for some, it is also problematic because it means that even in fictional, non-testimonial literature, 'Algerian authors are still being called upon to appeal – first and foremost – to non-Algerian audiences', [160] expected to act as spokespeople for their country and its history. The writers examined in the following chapters contend with this perceived responsibility in various ways, self-consciously problematising or seeking to eschew it by engaging with a range of other cultural narratives and literary traditions on the one hand, or using mythological and speculative settings on the other, but inevitably fulfilling this *horizon d'attente* to some extent.

As we will see, Algerian francophone fiction appears to be forging a new genre of sorts: part speculative, part supernatural, often intertextual, and almost always political, these works are consciously rewriting the way postcolonial texts engage with (or 'write back to', to borrow Bill Ashcroft et al's term)[161] the French canon – but not only the French canon. This thesis examines the interrelation between spectrality and intertextuality in Algerian

[159] See Leperlier, 'Un champ littéraire transnational? Le cas des écrivains algériens', *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 224 (2018), special issue: 'Espaces intellectuels transnationaux', ed. by Gisèle Sapiro, Tristan Leperlier, and Amine Brahimi, 12-35.
[160] Bentoumi, 'Rethinking the Algerian Publishing "Boom"', p. 369.
[161] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, 2nd edn. (London; New York: Routledge, 1989, repr. 2002).

francophone literature from the last twenty years, analysing in particular the future dimension of this literary haunting. As I have stated, my focus is on the *spectral* – as a way of thinking and being – rather than on *ghosts* necessarily (although ghostly figures and imagery are inevitably part of how this is represented). Building on Derrida's *hauntologie*, my analysis adopts a broader conception of spectrality that revolves around blurring the boundaries between life and death; stories and histories; past, present, and future; and geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders. This in turn conjures ideas about the limits of knowledge, and contests the presumed fixity of the past, interrogating a country's relationship to both its past and its future. It also provokes reflection on the resurrection and reincarnation of history and memory, encouraging reformulation rather than blind rehashing or complete dismissal of tradition. A normative interest emerges throughout the thesis, which considers how conceiving of literature and storytelling as inherently spectral artforms can present a challenge to fossilised state narratives and religious dogma that seek to impose a singular, restrictive version of history and identity onto a population.

In Part I, I examine the spectral interplay between French and Algerian literary patrimonies, exploring two recent 'rewritings' of sorts – one an explicit response to Albert Camus's canonical *L'Étranger* and the other a reimagining of the life of his editor, Edmond Charlot. Both novels feature real-life French literary figures and their works as ghostly presences haunting contemporary writers in both daunting and inspiring ways. The expected 'anxiety of influence', however, is ultimately subverted as the texts reconceptualise intertextuality as a transformative means of connecting generations from the past to the future in an ongoing process of cultural renewal. Nonetheless, a latent tension emerges between the ethics and aesthetics of writing; the previous generation's preoccupation with colonial crimes such as torture, violence, and murder is transposed in large part to a focus on literary crimes, which, in both a colonial and postcolonial context, continue to affect the way history

is remembered and either celebrated or commemorated, silenced or rewritten. By adopting a hauntological mode of representation that is open to ambivalence and defies the very notion of a definitive right and wrong, the two works analysed in Part I – Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2014) and Kaouther Adimi's *Nos richesses* (2018) – prompt, to varying degrees, a re-evaluation of literary legacies as discrete cultural productions and call into question 'ownership' of one's story, as it becomes unclear who is haunting whom in the end. Moreover, the fact that the ghostly figures evoked (notably Camus) occupy a particularly liminal and ambiguous position in the francophone world further suggests the need to consider more nuanced interpretations of, and responses to, the role of literature in producing (or reducing) state histories, powerfully challenging how we (re)read classic works.

In Part II, alongside specific works and writers appearing as phantom figures, the process of storytelling itself is consciously portrayed as intrinsically hauntological, with writers cast as prophetic mediums possessed by the urgent need to recount their own story as well as that of their communities. Furthermore, instead of a haunting from the *French* canon this time, it is the longstanding tradition of oral narrative associated with classic *Arabic* tales and legends that acts as a ghostly influence. My analysis centres on two recent novels that invoke not only the tales and characters from the *Thousand and One Nights* but also the collection's characteristically dialogic, palimpsestic, and intercultural focus to foreground the spectral indeterminacy and malleability of stories and myths. In so doing, they demonstrate how the conciliatory and salvific powers of narrative lie in their ability to be constantly resurrected and reincarnated in different forms across time and space. Salim Bachi's *Amours et aventures* (2010) reappropriates the tale of Sindbad the Sailor in a modern setting, while Kamel Daoud's *Zabor ou les psaumes* (2017) follows the famous frame story of the *Nights*, depicting a protagonist who can delay death through his writing.

By treating stories as 'revenants' and contemporary writers as modern Scheherazades, both works, I argue, highlight the contrapuntal nature of storytelling, revealing its capacity for redemption and self-determination on the one hand but also exposing its suffocating potential for duplicity on the other, ultimately cautioning readers against certain types of narratives that can be used to delude and subjugate. In *Zabor*, storytelling is even presented as a type of sacred duty, providing access to the divine and serving as an alternative to institutionalised religion. This raises some provocative questions about the role of the writer in Algeria – figured alternately as a spokesperson, prophet-saviour, and scapegoat – and whether the county's national story will serve to immortalise or limit its future legacy.

Finally, Part III expounds the dangers of political and religious narratives in theocratic states that rely on 'necropower' – a spectral form of control over the mortality and bodily autonomy of their subjects that blurs the lines between life and death. Necropolitics is revealed here to be the opposite of hauntology – the other end of the spectral spectrum which, rather than seeking to *question* supposed truths, manipulates uncertainties and absences to *cement* absolutist narratives and enforce conformity and submission. Used in this nefarious way, spectrality becomes a weapon, trapping one in a death-like existence rather than serving as a liberating force. Like the authors examined in the previous chapters, Sansal emphasises the duality of storytelling, warning us that its 'power' is not always salutary. We will see how adopting a *hauntological* outlook instead – one that encourages the interrogation and reformulation of the narratives we are told – can enable one to overcome the stagnancy of a necropolitical world. In this way, spectrality becomes (quite fittingly) both the problem and its own solution.

Through an interrogation of Boualem Sansal's *2084: La fin du monde* (2015), this section of the thesis culminates in the analysis of a sustained future haunting wherein Sansal

transposes George Orwell's dystopian classic to a late twenty-first century Eurafrican setting.[162] The novel depicts an oppressive, post-truth world governed by an absent yet omnipresent state leader and prophet. This Big Brother-like figurehead represents a totalitarian regime that Sansal equates, somewhat problematically, with (extreme) Islamic ideology, basing his imagined future state on an exaggerated projection of violent, Islamist rule. Through the manipulation of language, falsification of archives, and the abolition of history, the fictional superstate of Abistan maintains power through the careful construction of a spectral web of deceit, which projects a simulacrum onto its subjects, suspending them in what Mbembe would call a 'death-world'.[163] Indeed, drawing on Mbembe's theory of necropolitics,[164] I expiscate the mutual 'zombification' this engenders for both leaders and citizens, foregrounding the importance and dangers of historical and political myths used to propagate a certain national image.

The thematic evolution of this thesis, then, is both cultural (tracing developments from the French, Arabic, and English canons) and temporal, turning from the past to the present and then future. Although each haunting depicted is future-*focussed*, the spectres evoked are initially literary figures from the past; then time-travelling entities and storytellers suspended in an infinite present; and finally, religio-political fictions used to maintain power in a definitively future setting. Each work examined is a 'rewriting' of sorts but focuses on different elements of spectral intertextuality: explicit evocations of canonical texts and authors (namely *L'Etranger,* Camus and Charlot); appropriations of entire literary heritages and narrative traditions (the *Nights*); and extrapolations of cultural and religious myths and government rhetoric (through extended references to *1984*). Moving beyond the

[162] It may even be set in the twenty-second century; all we know is that 2084 is the foundational date of the new world order depicted.
[163] Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public culture,* 15 (2003), pp.11-40.
[164] As discussed most notably in *Politiques de l'inimitié* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), and 'Necropolitics', *Public culture* 15 (2003), pp.11-40.

retrospective and arguably reductive paradigms of mourning and nostalgia, wherein one has a duty to either 'exorcise' or avenge past trauma on behalf of those who came before, this thesis seeks to reframe both colonial memory and state narratives as non-fixed and non-sanctified sources of historical interpretation and cultural renewal. Recognising the spectral multivalence of these (his)stories means that rather than presenting a burdensome limitation for the current generation, they can allow for an acceptance of the imbrication of the past in the present *whilst also* paving the way for a productive reflection on the future. Above all, this thesis aims to envisage new and emerging models of Algerian cultural identity in the post-independent era through a literary exploration of the progression from Ghosts of Colonies Past, through Ghosts of the Postcolonial Present, to the Ghosts of Algeria-Yet-To-Come.

PART I

Ghosts of Literature Past: Rewriting a French-Algerian Literary Heritage

Texts are neither dead nor alive. [Like ghosts,] they hover at the very limits between living and dying. The text thus partakes in its own haunting, it is traced by its own phantoms, and it is this condition which reading must confront.[165]

As we have seen in the Introduction, there is a growing strand of francophone Algerian literature that is undergoing a significant evolution in terms of how spectrality is being used, not only to 'exorcise' a colonial past but also to address potential post-/de-colonial futures. I will now explore the literary and intertextual focus of this haunting in more detail. This part of the thesis will address how the aforementioned evolution pertains to the ways in which both French and Algerian literary heritages are viewed and evoked in contemporary works. I will examine two novels written in French by Algerian authors in the past decade, each of which deals with a significant aspect of Franco-Algerian literary history. They are: *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2014) by Kamel Daoud and *Nos richesses* (2017) by Kaouther Adimi. The first novel is a rewriting, of sorts, of Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* from the perspective of the brother of the unnamed 'Arab' who is murdered in Camus's classic, while Adimi's text narrates the journey of Edmond Charlot's real-life bookshop in Algiers in the 1930s – an often-overlooked element of the French literary legacy in Algeria. Each work employs ghostly figures and sustained metaphors of textual haunting to raise questions about the current literary landscape in Algeria and its future trajectory as it moves further away from its colonial past.

In the following sections, I will assess the extent to which spectrality in the aforementioned

[165] Julian Wolfreys, 'Preface: On Textual Haunting', *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. xii.

works is indicative of the liminal space to which many francophone writers of the current generation feel confined, navigating between cultures, languages, and literary traditions. What is particularly interesting about these texts is that the ghostly figures they contain do not always embody the subaltern experience directly, as has almost exclusively been the case in the past, such as in Djebar's later works and other Algerian texts discussed in the Introduction. Instead, it is the *colonial* literary legacy that is represented as a ghostly presence, and the postcolonial subject as haunt*ed* by it. Rarely in the preceding generation's work is the French literary sphere depicted as a source of haunting, yet this is the case in both of the works explored here. This not only subverts the colonised/coloniser dynamic, in that it is now colonial culture that lingers as a spectral presence, but it also transposes it from an individual to a cultural and collective haunting. Moreover, the emphasis on past trauma that has been observed in previous postcolonial works exhibiting spectrality gives way to a focus on future anxieties as a new generation of writers contends with the challenge of forging its own literature. In order to embody the current Algerian experience, contemporary works must be free from both the oppressive ties of a colonial heritage that these authors did not directly experience as well as from the preoccupation with mourning and melancholy that defined the writing of their predecessors.

In the last decade and a half, there has been a proliferation of Algerian works engaging explicitly with the French canon, as well as works that reflect on a mixed Franco-Arabic literary heritage. Building on the intense literary reflexivity developed in *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1995), for example, Assia Djebar's final work, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007), adopts a sustained and explicit interaction with a plethora of French and Arabic sources that contributed to her formation as a writer and person, charting her growth though literature. Similarly, in 2009, Algerian author Maïssa Bey published her own account of her personal development through writing (*L'Une et l'autre*), reflecting on formative reading

experiences and exploring her relationship with the French language.[166] Although not spectral, these works are reflective of a growing interest in meta-literature and Algeria's complex literary patrimony. Whilst works evoking the Arabic literary tradition have always been popular in Algeria, those engaging with the French tradition are also gaining traction, as well as inviting controversy. In particular, reworkings of Albert Camus's texts have become something of a phenomenon, as well as novels that incorporate the famous author as a character.[167] In more recent works, this intertextuality assumes an explicitly spectral dimension, but before investigating this, it would be helpful to first clarify what it means for literature can be considered a haunted space. I have already explained how hauntology can serve as an apt model for interrogating and reappropriating stories and dogma, but given that many of the ghosts in the novels examined are representations of literature itself, it is worth exploring how spectrality has been applied specifically to this realm rather than the more overtly political context in which Derrida evokes it.

Textual Haunting and the Death of the Author

While literary works can of course *depict* haunted scenarios through ghostly characters, imagery, and plot, in what sense is it justified to conceive of the *text itself* as a haunted medium? As Davis affirms, literary hauntology draws on the foundational polysemy of Derrida's conception of spectrality to recognise that ghosts are not just 'one theme amongst

[166] Maïssa Bey, *L'Une et l'autre* (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 2009).
[167] There have also been many non-fiction works produced in the last 25 years that focus on Camus's relationship with Algeria, such as Abdelkader Djemaï, *Camus à Oran* (Paris: Michalons éditions, 1995); Maïssa Bey, *L'ombre d'un homme qui marche au soleil: Réflexions sur Albert Camus* (Montpellier: Chèvre-feuille étoilée, 2006); Elizabeth Hawes, *Camus, A Romance* (New York: Grove Press, 2009); Ève Morisi, *Camus Et L'éthique* (Paris: Rencontres, Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2014); Philippe Vanney, *L'Algérie de Camus* (Paris: Revue Des Lettres Modernes, 2014); Alice Kaplan, *Looking for the Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Robert Zaretsky, *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); and Meaghan Emery, *The Algerian War Retold: Of Camus's Revolt and Postwar Reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

others' but rather 'the ungrounded grounding of representation and a key to all forms of storytelling'.[168] I have chosen to analyse literature and intertextuality through this spectral lens rather than mobilise the more well-known concept of 'writing back' – popularised by Bill Ashcroft et al in their seminal volume *The Empire Writes Back*[169] – because the texts I am investigating are not simply direct responses to canonical works or authors but, on a deeper level, constitute demonstrations of, and commentaries on, the ways in which literature continually inflects new literatures – a process that, as we will see, is inherently spectral. Of course, the works in this section are still 'writing back' to the French colonial canon in many ways, but I am interested in the notion of spectral intertextuality specifically because it elicits a particular reflection on the multiple narrative levels inherent in any (his)story and also demonstrates how classic works from the French literary patrimony, their authors, and the tradition of writing they represent continue to haunt the ways Algerian authors write and think today.

Julian Wolfreys reminds us, in the above epigraph, that stories and texts are neither living nor dead. Yet in them, we have access to the voice(s) of the author(s) and characters, as well as the traces of past readers, critics, and interpretations such as those learned at school and university, or readily portrayed in the media. Furthermore, the act of reading necessarily engages us in a process of interpretation that cannot help but be informed by our own contexts and personal experiences. In *The Ghosts of Modernity*, Jean-Michel Rabaté cites this palimpsestic nature of literature as the reason why all (modernist) texts are 'systematically "haunted" by voices from the past'.[170] He affirms that the entire process of writing necessarily 'deploys itself as an automatic apparatus linked with death or the

[168] Ibid., p. 378.
[169] Bill Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back.*
[170] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. xvi.

crossing of the boundaries separating life from death, in a plurality whose excess counterbalances the suggested sterility of a purely technical reproduction'.[171] He is referring here to the rich polysemic possibilities literature affords, since the meaning of a text is not stagnant or limited to 'purely technical reproduction' but can instead evolve over time and assume new meanings depending on its readership. This strikes a chord with Derrida's conception of the inherent multivalence of language and ideas when viewed through a hauntological lens. Rabaté highlights the potential for each (re)reading of a text to add a new layer of understanding or provide an alternative perspective – something both Daoud and Adimi do emphatically: *Contre-enquête* by 'rewriting' Camus's *L'Étranger* from a new angle and *Nos richesses* by providing an imagined point of view to Edmond Charlot's history.

As a corollary, Wolfreys notes that we constantly reanimate works of literature, speaking of them as possessing the power of agency *in the present*. He notes that we often refer to a text as "'saying something'" and its author as "'making a statement on"' a particular issue – 'as though the text were merely a conduit, a spirit medium if you like, by which the author communicates'.[172] Furthermore, he asserts that as critics and readers, we 'make believe that the writer continues to speak to us' in what he terms an 'uncanny revivification'.[173] I find this a useful analogy insofar as it describes our tendency to think and speak of works from the past as ongoing, ever-recurring subjects in the present, but I would contend that it is actually the work itself rather than the author that 'continues to speak to us'. Many works of literature possess enduring relevance that transcends their contexts of production; the words themselves can assume new meanings other than those originally intended. As

[171] Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.
[172] Wolfreys, 'On Textual Haunting', p. xii.
[173] Ibid., p. xiii.

Roland Barthes insists in his short yet seminal essay 'La mort de l'auteur', '[d]onner un Auteur à un texte, c'est imposer à ce texte un cran d'arrêt, […] c'est fermer l'écriture'.[174] Barthes's concern with overly relying on the author for our understanding of a text is that it tempts us to assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it based on our knowledge of the author, which can be limiting. He affirms instead that 'tout texte est écrit éternellement *ici* et *maintenant*'.[175] Indeed, characters and events in a work of literature – fictional or not – are forever suspended in a continual existence in the present and future, brought back to life with each reading. Like ghosts, they hover in a *potential* state, not belonging to any single, distinct time period but ready to be re-evoked in each future reader's context. This cycle of reincarnation resonates with Derrida's evocation of the *re-venant*, a (literary) figure doomed to return from the dead with each conjuring. As readers, we are the conjurors of a text, summoning it to reinvent itself each time we read or perform it, and this often entails an appropriation (often unconsciously) of the meaning intended by the author.

Michel Foucault further develops this spectral dimension of literature in his essay 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', [176] asserting that there is an inexorable relationship between writing and death whereby heroes die yet their stories are immortalised through literature, allowing them to live on in a certain sense.[177] The author, however, must be sacrificed to anonymity in order to secure the work's longevity: '[l]'œuvre […] a reçu maintenant le droit de tuer, d'être meurtrière de son auteur'. [178] Foucault conceives of the writer as a 'figure qui […] est

[174] Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur', *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris : Seuil, 1984), pp. 61-67 (p.65). The essay was originally published in English in the avant-garde American journal *Aspen: The Magazine in a Box* 5-6, New York (1967) <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/index.html> [accessed 9 February 2020]
[175] Ibid., p. 64 (original emphasis).
[176] Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' (1969), repr. in *Dits et écrits* I, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Eswald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 789-821.The text was originally presented as part of a debate at the Collège de France in Paris on 22 February 1969 to the Société Française de philosophie. The transcript of the conference was published in *Bulletin de la Société Française de philosophie*, 63.3, 1969, pp. 73-104.
[177] Ibid., p. 793.
[178] Ibid., p. 793.

extérieure et antérieure [du texte], en apparence du moins'.[179] The author, therefore, is an absent subject whose name becomes no more than a rhetorical device ('la fonction-auteur') enabling readers and critics to animate a work. In this way, it is not only the works themselves that contribute to a haunting, but also the writer who becomes a ghostly figure since they are present only as a 'function' of the text rather than as a living being, simultaneously present and absent.

Furthermore, literature can also be considered ghostly through its ability to produce an encounter with alterity. The act of reading requires one to recognise – and in many instances, legitimise or assume the perspective of – something different from oneself, and this is necessarily spectral. As Wolfreys affirms, 'what reading does in effect is to bear witness to the existence of something other'[180] and this is especially true of fiction, which demands a certain suspension of disbelief as part of 'the phantasmatic dimension of fabulation'.[181] This is not simply because characters and events hover between the real and the fictional, but rather, as Derrida crucially distinguishes in his essay 'Marx, c'est quelqu'un', because they oscillate more precisely 'between that which is *neither* real *nor* fictional'.[182] It is this blurring of reality and verisimilitude, coupled with the recognition of narrative meaning as dynamic rather than fixed, that causes Wolfreys to declare that 'the idea of text is radically unstable'.[183] This is something that both Daoud's and Adimi's novels bring to the fore, creating fictional presences from real-life figures and at times intentionally conflating characters and historical personalities. It seems wholly justifiable, therefore, to treat

[179] Ibid., p. 792.
[180] Wolfreys, 'On Textual Haunting', p. xiii.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Derrida, 'Marx, c'est quelqu'un', *Marx en jeu* (Paris: Descartes, 1997), p.24 (my emphasis), cited in Wolfreys, 'On Textual Haunting', p. xiii.
[183] Wolfreys, Ibid., p.xiii.

literature as a medium that is haunted *in and of itself*, in addition to being a vehicle for spectrality to emerge through the characters, metaphors, and stories it portrays.

This spectral dimension of textuality can help to illuminate latent challenges facing Algerian francophone writers today, many of whom feel that the omnipresent French canon still looms over them and that they are doomed to be forever writing in its shadow. This phenomenon is elaborated in Harold Bloom's book *The Anxiety of Influence*. Bloom's theory is based on the idea that writers and critics inevitably 'misread' classic works by bringing their own interpretations – and often excessive veneration – to the texts, thereby heightening the already daunting nature of writing in the wake of perceived greatness.[184] Although he is writing about post-Enlightenment and Western literary traditions, his theory can aptly be applied to a postcolonial context, where explicit revisionism or intentional rewriting is often the goal and where there can be no straight-forward assumption of a single or unified literary heritage.

It goes without saying that writing in response to canonical works can engender 'immense anxieties of indebtedness' towards the authors whose works are being adapted.[185] In this respect, 'poetic influence' could perhaps be explained in terms of an inferiority complex or imposter syndrome. In fact, Bloom describes it as 'a disease of self-consciousness' resulting from the constant comparison of one's own works to the precursor's[186] – a process that is inevitably retrospective. However, for many postcolonial writers, there is a clear future focus to this anxiety as well, since authors are often struggling to disassociate from a colonial literary legacy that is politically and affectively charged yet globally revered. The

[184] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, repr. 1997), p. xxiii (original emphasis).
[185] Ibid., p. 5.
[186] Ibid., p. 29.

aim is to be recognised for their own unique contribution but without neglecting or denying their complicated and intertwined cultural heritage. For current Algerian authors – especially those who write in French – this anxiety of influence is not limited to the effect of past works on the present but rather centres on how they can forge their own literary tradition, distinct from the previous generation's preoccupation with mourning and colonial trauma yet without being overly influenced by, and constantly compared to, the French canon.

By asserting that works of literature and their authors can be 'uncannily resurrected'[187] by subsequent generations, Bloom too assigns a spectral quality to textual form, emphasising that 'strong poets keep returning from the dead, and only through the quasi-willing mediumship of other strong poets'.[188] This begs the question: do postcolonial authors increasingly serve the role of intermediary between a French literary education of the past and the mixed response to Arabisation and literary censorship today? As mentioned previously, Camus and his work have become particular focal points for exploring these questions, and indeed the author features in both novels addressed below. Before addressing these works, however, it is worth briefly exploring this mounting preoccupation with Camus in order to better understand why he – and the French literary heritage more broadly – is being represented as ghostly.

Camus: Complexity and Controversies

As a *pied-noir*,[189] Camus has always had a complicated relationship with Algeria, torn between loyalty to his homeland and to the country that welcomed him amongst its

[187] Ibid., p. xxiii.
[188] Ibid., pp. 140-141.
[189] 'Black foot'; the term used to denote a French citizen who was born or grew up in Algeria when it was part of France; or, the descendent of French (or European) settlers in Algeria.

intellectual elite – France. As such, he has caused considerable debate in the francophone world, at once revered for his literary prowess and philosophical insight but also heavily criticised for his refusal to support Algerian Independence. As Valérie Orlando attests, 'Camus's conflicted place, buried in the psyche of the Algerian nation, has haunted Algerian authors and intellectuals of French expression for decades since independence'.[190] Although Camus was an exponent of Arab rights throughout the 1930s (evident, for example, in his journalistic work *Misère de la Kabylie*), he could not imagine Algeria divorced from France and was therefore in favour of a state solution to the colonial conflict. In 'Appel pour une trève civile en Algérie', he calls for a harmonious (and somewhat idealistic) coexistence between Arab, Amazigh, and French Algerian populations, appealing to a sentiment of Mediterranean fraternity and solidarity, as well as to a shared anxiety regarding Algeria's uncertain economic future.[191]

This desire for reconciliation between France and Algeria was deemed naïve by critics such as Albert Memmi who described Camus as a 'colonisateur de bonne volonté', painting the author as a well-meaning but disengaged colonist.[192] However, it is important to understand that Camus's call for a truce stemmed in large part from his commitment to pacificism – his ardent belief that 'aucune cause ne justifie la mort de l'innocent'[193] rather than a desire to propagate colonial politics. He was therefore opposed to the terrorist tactics used by both the FLN in Algeria and the French army.[194] Understandably, however, this stance was unpopular with both the FLN and the French *ultras*. Many *écrivains engagés* at the time

[190] Valérie Orlando, 'Conversations with Camus as Foil, Foe and Fantasy in Contemporary Writing by Algerian Authors of French Expression', *Journal of North African Studies,* 20 (2015), pp. 865-883 <10.1080/13629387.2015.1069741>
[191] Camus, 'Appel pour une trève civile en Algérie' [conference in Algiers, 22 January 1956], *Actuelles, III: Chroniques algériennes* 1939-1958 in *Œuvres Complètes IV,* ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).
[192] Albert Memmi, 'Camus ou le colonisateur de bonne volonté', *La Nef* 12 (1957), pp. 95-6.
[193] Camus, 'Appel pour une trève', p. 174.
[194] See for example Maciej Kałuża,'Rethinking Camus's Truce Appeals: Neither Colonizer nor Colonized in Relation to Memmi's Colonial Dichotomy', *Interventions* 21. 2 (2019), 219-34 (p. 229).

considered Camus a hypocrite for exposing the miserable conditions of Algeria under colonisation in his journalism yet refusing to support the country's liberation from France. Notably, the author did not sign the 'Manifeste des 121' – an open letter published in 1960, which demanded that the French government recognise the Algerian War as a legitimate quest for independence.[195]

Moreover, it is not only Camus's politics but also his fiction that has been criticised for contributing to an implicit colonial agenda, and this is what many recent Algerian works have sought to redress. Edward Saïd notes that 'on perçoit la dynamique qui rend inévitable l'amoindrissement de la présence arabe chez Camus',[196] while Conor Cruise O'Brien goes so far as to accuse Camus of creating an 'artistic final solution'[197] against the indigenous Algerian populations. A striking example of this is *L'Étranger*, in which the murdered Arab character is reduced to a mere ethnicity, deprived of a name and thus an identity. This work has been heavily debated, with many scholars criticising it for its marginalisation of subaltern figures yet others rather generously suggesting that the depiction of the murder of an unnamed Arab by a French settler is an allegory for France's treatment of Algeria. David Carroll, for example, proposes that the

> narrative (il)logic and legal absurdity [portrayed in *L'Étranger*] disguise (which is also a way of revealing) a historical-political insight of a very different nature and one that concerns not just the hypocrisy of modern society in general but more specifically the crimes and injustices of French colonial Algeria.[198]

[195] 'Le Manifeste des 121: Déclaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie', *Vérité-Liberté,* 6 September 1960.
[196] Edward Said, 'Albert Camus, ou l'inconscient colonial', *Le Monde diplomatique,* November 2000, pp. 8-9 <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2000/11/SAID/2555> [accessed 9 January 2020]
[197] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* (New York: Viking Publishing, 1970), p. 56.
[198] David Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 10.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that contemporary Algerian writers have returned to Camus despite this apparent ambivalence towards local Algerian culture, or perhaps it is precisely because of a fascination with his liminal position between France and Algeria.

Just within this last decade or so, there has been an explosion of Algerian works that display a profound interest in Camus. In 2011, Hamid Grine released *Camus dans le narguilé*, in which the protagonist – a French teacher – discovers he has been adopted and that his real father is, in fact, Camus. The following year, Alek Baylee Toumi produced a play entitled *Albert Camus: Entre la mère and l'injustice,* which retells Camus's short story *l'Hôte* from an Algerian perspective. Then, in 2013, Salah Guemriche published a 'dialogue implicite' between Camus and the son of the unnamed Arab murdered in *L'Étranger*, titled *Aujourd'hui, Meursault est mort*, and later that same year, Salim Bachi published *Le dernier été d'un jeune homme*, which provides an imagined account of Camus's trip to Brazil in 1949. This brings us to the first focal work of Part I, outlined above: Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête* (published in 2013 in Algeria and 2014 in France). Taking this intertextuality one step further, Saad Khiari's 2017 novel *Le soleil n'est pas obligé* (an intertextual reference to Ahmadou Kourouma's 1968 and 2000 novels *Les soleils des indépendances* and *Allah n'est pas obligé* respectively) interacts not only with *L'Étranger* but also with *Meursault, contre-enquête*. It is written from the perspective of Marie Cardona (Meursault's fiancée in *L'Étranger*) who, now living in a retirement home in the south of France, travels back to Algeria to meet Daoud after reading his novel about her late partner.[199] It appears that journalist Olivier Mony was right when he proclaimed: 'De quelque côté que se tournent aujourd'hui nos regards, tout clame avec une absolue

[199] There are also many other works ghat feature Camus in a lesser way, such as Adimi's *Nos richesses*.

certitude la même bonne nouvelle: Camus est vivant.'[200] Of all these works that reference Camus, I have chosen to focus on *Meursault, contre-enquête* for two main reasons. Firstly, it has caused considerable tension between Algerian and French critics, which reveals ongoing concerns regarding the ways each country has memorialised its colonial past; and secondly, it distinguishes itself from other postcolonial 'rewritings' because of the novel and complex ways in which it incorporates Camus's text, style, and philosophy into its own, not only representing the author as a ghost but more importantly demonstrating that literature itself works in a spectral way.

There appears to be a large degree of uncertainty amongst critics and the public as to what exactly the relationship *is* between *Contre-enquête* and *L'Étranger*. The former has been widely hailed as a 'rewriting' but also as a 'palimpsest',[201] a 'miroitement',[202] 'parodique',[203] and an 'appropriation'.[204] This perplexity crystallises in the apparent blurring of characters in the novel, which Alice Kaplan describes as 'la confusion vertigineuse entre narrateur et auteur, entre Meursault et Camus'.[205] Similarly, a review from *Salon littéraire* remarks that Daoud 'ne cesse de s'en prendre à un *« tu »* dont on ne sait trop s'il désigne Meursault, Camus ou le lecteur, ou les trois à la fois'.[206] What all this indicates is a profound confusion operating at once at the level of the author, the narrator,

---

[200] Olivier Mony, 'Albert Camus: un anniversaire polémique', *Le Figaro*, 7 November 2013 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2013/11/07/03004-20131107ARTFIG00334-albert-camus-naissait-il-y-a-un-siecle.php> [accessed 9 January, 2020]
[201] Danielle Pister, 'Meursault, contre-enquête: les miroitement d'un texte', *Études littéraires africaines* 39 (2015), p. 170.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Lobna Mestaoui, 'Le « butin de guerre » camusien de Kateb Yacine à Kamel Daoud', *Babel*, 36 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.4000/babel.5002> [accessed 25 April 2020]
[204] Lia Brozgal, 'The Critical Pulse of the *Contre-enquête:* Kamel Daoud on the Maghrebi Novel in French', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 20.1 (2016), 37-46 (p. 37) <10.1080/17409292.2016.1120549>; Fazia Aïtel, 'Meursault, contre-enquête', *Journal of North African Studies*, 20.5 (2015), 884-886 <10.1080/13629387.2015.1070464>.
[205] Alice Kaplan, 'Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud', *Contreligne,* June 2014 <http://www.contreligne.eu/2014/06/kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete/> [accessed 8 January 2020]
[206] 'Kamel Daoud : Meursault contre-enquête ou contre-sens ?', *Salon littéraire*, November 2014 <http://salon-litteraire.linternaute.com/fr/kamel-daoud/review/1909673-kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete-ou-contre-sens> [accessed 10 January 2020]

and the reader, which has led some critics to label the work a 'mise-en-abîme'.[207] It is my hope that a close analysis of the spectral layers of intertextuality in *Contre-enquête* will not only clarify its relationship to *L'Étranger* but also shed light on the developing relationship of contemporary writers not only to their colonial past but, importantly, to their *post*colonial present and future.

Much of the fascination with French literature that is emerging now is likely a response to the aforementioned policy of Arabisation implemented post-Independence. As mentioned earlier, Daoud and Adimi's use of French is a conscious choice rather than a remnant of colonial education. Daoud taught himself French at age nine, largely from reading French books he found in his father's study,[208] and Adimi, whose first language is also Arabic, remembers reading in French long before learning to read in Arabic (due to living in Grenoble between the ages of four and eight).[209] While Daoud was born in 1970 in Mostaganem (north-west Algeria) and has remained in the country until very recently, Adimi, born in 1986 and raised in Algiers (excluding the short stint in Grenoble), moved to Paris in 2009 after the publication of her first book. For both authors, the French language represents freedom and creativity, despite its colonial associations. Daoud describes it as 'une langue d'infraction, de dissidence, d'imaginaire et de libération'.[210]

---

[207] Assia Belhabib, 'Le mal de mère. Le sanctuaire de la restitution dans *Meursault contre-enquête* de Kamel Daoud', *Babel*, 36 (2017) < https://doi.org/10.4000/babel.4985> (paragraphs 6, 13).
[208] Doreen Carvajal, 'An Algerian Author Fights Back Against a Fatwa', *New York Times*, 4 January, 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/books/an-algerian-author-fights-back-against-a-fatwa.html> [accessed 17 February 2020]; Anne-Sylvaine Chassany, "Kamel Daoud: 'I refuse to let fear take centre stage in my life'", Financial Times, 'Books' section, 11 April 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/a2f6393a-56f7-11e9-a3db-1fe89bedc16e> [accessed 10 January 2020].
[209] 'Saint-Yrieix: Kaouther Adimi à la rencontre des lecteurs', *Charente Libre*, 30 May 2012 <http://www.charentelibre.fr/2012/05/30/kaouther-adimi-a-la-rencontre-des-lecteurs, 1097636.php> [accessed 12 March 2020]. Adimi also recounts her genesis as a writer in the following interview : Mabrouck Rachedi, '« Nos richesses » : Kaouther Adimi, l'étrangère', *Jeune Afrique*, 15 September 2017 <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/472825/culture/nos-richesses-kaouther-adimi-letrangere/> [accessed 12 March 2020]
[210] Kamel Daoud, 'Kamel Daoud nomme l'invisible dans *Meursault, contre-enquête'*, radio interview with *France Inter*, 4 November 2014 <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/boomerang/boomerang-04-novembre-2014> [accessed 14 January 2020]

Contrastingly, he considers classical Arabic to be as much 'une langue de colonisation' as French was, since its imposition denies Algeria's longstanding multilingual history and heterogeneric population.[211]

While Part II of this thesis explores Algerian francophone interaction with the Arabic canon, the focus of the next two chapters remains on Algerian engagement with a French literary patrimony, which, as is clear above, is extensive and warrants a close examination. In particular, I will investigate how the current 'generation of postmemory' uses spectrality to reflect on these intertwined literary heritages and shared colonial history, re-evaluating the extent to which they can – or should – dictate the future.

Meursault, contre-enquête – Kamel Daoud

In 2013, Algerian journalist Kamel Daoud published a purported rewriting of what is arguably Camus's most well-known but also most controversial work: *L'Étranger*. He approaches the classic text from the perspective of the imagined brother of the anonymous '*Arabe*' who is killed in the 'original'.[212] The story takes place in Algeria, seventy years after the events recounted in Camus's novel, where, each night in a bar in Oran, the narrator leads his own counter investigation into the murder of his brother, emphasising that the latter has a name – Moussa. In this way, Camus's Arab is not only given a familial relation but also an identity in *Contre-enquête*. The narrative is framed as a sort of monologue since the narrator, Haroun, recounts his own 'version des faits'[213] to a young French academic who is only addressed as 'l'universitaire'.

---

[211] Kamel Daoud, 'Djazairi : le manifeste de ma langue', *Algérie Focus*, 4 June 2013 <algerie-focus.com/blog/2013/06/djazairi-le-manifeste-de-ma-langue-par-kamel-daoud/> [accessed 8 January 2020].
[212] I use 'original' loosely here, more in the sense of antecedent, because, as we will see, *Contre-enquête* is far more complicated than a traditional, straightforward rewriting of *L'Étranger*.
[213] Kamel Daoud, *Meursault, contre-enquête* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2014), p. 42.

The novel was met with critical acclaim in France, winning multiple literary awards,[214] but caused much controversy in Algeria. Abdelfattah Hamadache Zeraoui – a self-appointed imam from a Salafist group *Le Front de l'Éveil islamique* – even issued a death threat against Daoud in December 2014, calling the author an 'ennemi de l'islam et de la langue arabe'.[215] This accusation is not only a response to Daoud's use of French rather than Arabic but also to the fact that the novel criticises certain elements of contemporary Algerian politics and culture that Daoud considers repressive and undemocratic, such as the prohibition of alcohol and the covering of women's bodies. Indeed, the author is quite outspoken in his journalism and interviews about the rise of Islamism in the Maghreb and its implications for individual liberties, especially female sexual freedom. The most controversial of these articles is undoubtedly his 2016 opinion piece published in *Le Monde* (and subsequently in *The New York Times*), in which he denounces 'la misère sexuelle dans le monde arabo-musulman', blaming the Cologne attacks on Western women by Arab migrants that New Year's Eve on what he views as Islam's 'rapport malade à la femme.[216] Naturally, this incendiary piece was met with much criticism and outrage – not only in the Arab world but from European liberals as well. In response, a collective article was published in *Le Monde* by a group of French intellectuals accusing Daoud of Islamophobia,[217] and this spurred the latter to

[214] Notably le Prix Goncourt du Premier Roman (2015), le Prix François Mauriac (2014), and le Prix des cinq continents de la francophonie (2014).
[215] 'Une « fatwa » contre Kamel Daoud', *Paris Match*, 17 December 2014 <https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Livres/Une-Fatwa-contre-Kamel-Daoud-672278> [accessed 10 January 2020] ; Meziane Abane, 'L'écrivain Kamel Daoud gagne son procès contre un imam salafiste', *Le Monde Afrique,* 8 March 2016 <https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/03/08/l-ecrivain-kamel-daoud-gagne-son-proces-contre-un-imam-salafiste_4878558_3212.html> [accessed 10 January 2020]. See also Joseph Ford, *Writing the Black Decade*, p. 105.
[216] Daoud, 'Cologne, lieu de fantasmes', *Le Monde*, 29 January 2016, <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantasmes_4856694_3232.html>; 'The Sexual Misery of the Arab World', *The New York Times*, 12 February, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/the-sexual-misery-of-the-arab-world.html> [accessed 14 July 2020]
[217] Noureddine Amara et al, 'Nuit de Cologne : « Kamel Daoud recycle les clichés orientalistes les plus éculés »', *Le Monde*, 10 February 2016 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/11/les-fantasmes-de-kamel-daoud_4863096_3232.html> [accessed 28 July 2020]

announce his (temporary) retirement from journalism.[218] Ironically, Daoud himself was associated with radical Islam in his youth but soon became disillusioned with its dogma.[219] It is worth mentioning that the article published in *Le Monde* was originally written for an Italian newspaper and was Daoud's second response to the Cologne attacks; the first was written for *Le Quotidien d'Oran*.[220] As Kaouthar Harchi points out, there is a notable difference in tone between the two pieces, even if the overall sentiment remains the same, with the original emphasising the risk that the Cologne attacks could be used to justify racist views of inherent 'savagery' within Arab cultures.[221] While this reveals that each work is tailored to its respective readership, it also indicates that Daoud's views on the matter may be more nuanced than is often presumed.

The author describes the state of Algerian politics since Independence as degenerating from a 'fausse république' to a 'royaume tentaculaire',[222] referring to president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's dictatorial, twenty-year reign. It is clear that Daoud considers contemporary Algeria to be an oppressive environment, characterised by suffocating religious control, state censorship, language imposition, and political confusion.[223] However, this does not

[218] Daoud, 'Lettre à un ami étranger', *Quotidien d'Oran*, 15 February 2016 <http://lequotidien-oran.com/?news=5224963> [accessed 28 July 2020]; 'Kamel Daoud et les « fantasmes » de Cologne, retour sur une polémique', *Le Monde*, 19 February, 2016, <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/20/kamel-daoud-et-les-fantasmes-de-cologne-retour-sur-une-polemique_4868849_3232.html?xtmc=kamel_daoud&xtcr=1> [accessed 28 July 2020]; Alexandre Devecchio, 'Cologne, « islamophobie » : ce que révèle l'affaire Kamel Daoud', *Le Figaro*, 19 February 2016 < https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2016/02/19/31003-20160219ARTFIG00298-cologne-islamophobie-ce-que-revele-l-affaire-kamel-daoud.php> [accessed 28 July 2020]

[219] Daoud, 'On en naît pas djihadiste, on le devient', interview with *Europe 1*, 20 March, 2015 <https://www.europe1.fr/international/Kamel-Daoud-on-ne-nait-pas-djihadiste-on-le-devient-783882> [accessed 2 July 2020]

[220] 'Le corps des femmes et le désir de liberté des hommes arrachés à leur terre', *La Repubblica*, 10 January 2016 ; 'La « Colognisation » du monde', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 18 January 2016.

[221] See Harchi, *Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne* (Paris: Pauvert, 2016), pp. 211-218.

[222] Daoud, 'En Algérie, l'humiliation de trop', *Le Monde* [online], 9 March 2019 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/03/09/kamel-daoud-en-algerie-l-humiliation-de-trop_5433573_3232.html> [accessed 22 July 2020]

[223] This might cause one to wonder why, then, Daoud has remained in Algeria for so long. He explains, in an interview with Virginie Larousse that he does not wish to become the cliché of a 'writer in exile': 'Kamel Daoud : « Il est difficile de s'exprimer sur l'islam quand on est coincé entre islamistes et islamophobes »', *Le Monde des Religions*, 29 October 2018 <http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/une/kamel-

mean that he is a proponent of colonialism or would prefer that Algeria was still under French control, merely that he believes the anticipated freedom of Independence has not yet been realised. As the protagonist of *Contre-enquête* remarks : 'J'ai vu se consumer l'enthousiasme de l'Indépendance, s'échouer les illusions'.[224] Like Camus then, Daoud is a figure surrounded by controversy due to his political and religious opinions, similarly accused of renouncing his own country's values in favour of the French language and culture.

Contre-enquête engages with the debate surrounding Camus on two levels: it addresses not only the treatment of autochthonous Algerian characters in his works but also the author's refusal to support the liberation of his homeland. Daoud confides in an interview with *Middle East Eye* that he was not surprised by the mixed reactions to his novel because of Camus's polemical status in the francophone world:

> Pour être honnête, je m'attendais à ces réactions vives car Camus reste un terrain sensible. Certains revendiquent Camus comme une propriété exclusive, d'autres le considèrent comme un traître à la cause algérienne. À chaque dédicace, je voyais le même procès que celui fait à Meursault dans *L'Étranger*, mais là Camus était l'accusé. [225]

In addition to the parallels between the reception of *Contre-enquête* and *L'Étranger*, Daoud's career also mirrors Camus's in many ways, beginning with journalism before moving on to fiction.[226] His 2011 article entitled 'Les 36 millions de Meursault' evokes a distinctively Camusian sentiment, lamenting the apparent apathy of Algerians towards the

daoud-il-est-difficile-de-s-exprimer-sur-l-islam-quand-on-est-coince-entre-islamistes-et-islamophobes-29-10-2018-7562_115.php> [accessed 8 September 2020]

[224] *Contre-enquête*, p. 148.

[225] Hassina Mechaï, 'Kamel Daoud, à l'ombre de Camus', *Middle East Eye*, 9 avril 2015 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/reportages/exclusif-kamel-daoud-l-ombre-de-camus-612863598> [accessed 8 January 2020]

[226] From 1997 until 2016, Daoud was the editor of *Le Quotidien d'Oran,* an independent French language newspaper*,* in which he often wrote about Algerian politics in the column '*Raina Raikoum'* ('My Opinion, Your Opinion').

running of their country. Daoud questions why Algeria, a nation that fought fiercely for its independence, seemed so untouched by the spirit of revolution that was gripping the Middle East at the time, now known as the Arab Spring. The article draws a clear comparison to the antihero of *L'Étranger*, known for his pathological indifference to the world around him: 'Encore une fois, tout le monde est spectateur […] Des Meursault sans Camus, fabriqués par meurtre de soi et de l'autre, dans un monde absurde et sous un soleil sans raison.'[227] Daoud further explains this view in the interview cited above : 'Après l'indépendance, les Algériens ont comme acquis la psychologie de Meursault […] Ils ont le même rapport maladif au réel, comme s'ils vivaient dans une sorte d'univers désossé'.[228] For Daoud, then, it is not only his writing but also his country that is haunted by Camus's legacy.

As we will see, the relationship between *L'Étranger* and *Contre-enquête* is complex and multilayered, consisting of various modes of haunting between and across the two texts. I intend to analyse the politics of this intertextuality – as conceptualised through a lens of spectrality – with a view to exploring the ethical questions to which it gives rise for contemporary authors. In order to accomplish this, I will examine two primary layers of intertextual haunting in Daoud's novel. The first pertains to the way Camus's work (as well as its controversies and reception) explicitly haunts Daoud's on a textual level – both as an overshadowing presence and as creative inspiration, crystallising in parallels between the structures and protagonists. The second is a more literal, textual form of haunting enacted through the appearance of an actual ghost character in the text. There are several other, more peripheral forms of haunting in *Contre-enquête* that I wish to recognise but which exceed

[227] Daoud, 'Les 36 millions de Meursault', *Quotidien d'Oran*, 13 March 2011 <http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/?news=5150404&archive_date=2011-03-13> [accessed 4 December 2019]. The 'soleil' is another reference to *L'Étranger*, reminding us of the absurdity of destiny since, in *L'Étranger,* Meursault blames his murder of the Arab on the sun: 'c'était à cause du soleil' – *L'Étranger*, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi, vol. 1, 1931-1944 (Paris, Gallimard, 2006), p. 201.
[228] Mechaï, 'Kamel Daoud à l'ombre de Camus'.

the scope of this thesis. They include the looming presence of the narrator's mother; the spectral memory of Moussa from Haroun's childhood (immortalised in nightly bedtime stories by 'M'ma' and compounded by the former's lack of a grave and burial); a profound survivor's guilt that haunts Haroun; and the recurrence of the fatal *fait divers* that supposedly reports Moussa's death but without mentioning his name (an allusion to the real newspaper article that is thought to have inspired *L'Étranger*).[229] It is also important to note that *L'Étranger* is not the only intertext in Daoud's novel. In fact, *Contre-enquête* is riddled with ghostly echoes of other canonical works, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Thousand and One Nights*.[230] Most noteworthy, however, is the structural parallel with Camus's *La chute*, which also features a disenchanted protagonist – Jean-Baptiste Clamence – soliloquising in a bar to a silent interlocutor. This set-up frames Haroun's account as a confession (since Clamence's monologue hinges on his feelings of guilt for failing to help a drowning woman), even though we do not understand why until halfway through the novel. In addition, there are references to other famous Camusian works, including *La peste, Le mythe de Sisyphe,* and *Le premier homme*, such that Camus's entire oeuvre becomes a haunting presence in the novel. Nonetheless, I will be focusing on the spectral relationship between the two primary texts.

i. *Réécrire de droite à gauche*: Textual Echoes and Ghostly Doubling

From the outset, *Contre-enquête* presents itself as a 'postcolonial rewriting' of *L'Étranger* such that even before opening the book, the reader has the impression it will conform to the conventions of this body of literature – that is, retelling the story of *L'Étranger* from a

[229] The *fait divers* in question is Aïn-El-Turck's 'Une rixe sur la plage', *L'Écho d'Oran*, 31 juillet 1939, p. 3. Daoud's allusion to the article upon which *L'Étranger* is supposedly based adds another level of intertextuality to his novel, further blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality.
[230] *Contre-enquête*, pp. 26, 131, for example.

postcolonial perspective in order to expose its colonial oversights and either engender a nostalgia for pre-colonial times or extol the current post-colonial era. This *horizon d'attente* is established right from the work's paratext. The title itself evokes the idea of a 'counter-investigation' into 'Meursault', and this is reinforced by the cover image of the French edition which depicts a man in a suit on a sunny beach, echoing that of *L'Étranger*. This suggests that the novel will return to the scene of the crime in Camus's work and hence redress Meursault's murder of the Arab, which Haroun considers to be 'un acte absolument impuni'.[231] Daoud's choice of epigraph, taken from *Syllogismes de l'amertume* de D. M Cioran, also seems to confirm this: 'L'heure du crime ne sonne pas en même temps pour tous les peuples. Ainsi s'explique la permanence de l'histoire'. Famously in *L'Étranger*, Meursault, although supposedly tried for killing *l'Arabe*, was really convicted for his refusal to adhere to social conventions (notably, failing to cry at his mother's funeral). The narrator in *Contre-enquête* expresses his own incredulity regarding this, wondering 'pourquoi le procès a préféré juger un homme qui ne pleure pas la mort de sa mère plutôt qu'un homme qui a tué un Arabe'.[232] For this reason, he declares that 'il n'y a pas eu d'enquête sérieuse'[233] and thus that he has 'revenu à Alger, résolu à mener [s]a propre enquête'.[234] Therefore, it seems entirely reasonable to assume that the 'crime' to which the epigraph refers is Meursault's murder of the Arab – that which is only being addressed now, seventy years after the fact. This assumption is encouraged as the reader progresses through the first few pages of the novel.

[231] *Contre-enquête*, p. 15.
[232] Ibid., p. 65.
[233] Ibid., p. 27.
[234] Ibid., p. 33.

Haroun explains that his goal is to 'parler à la place d'un mort […] continuer un peu ses phrases',[235] and therefore 'raconter ce que Moussa n'a jamais pu raconter'.[236] The use of prosopopoeia here casts Haroun as a spiritual medium through which his dead brother is able to have a voice. This spectral ventriloquism frames *Contre-enquête* as a sort of ghost's story since Moussa speaks *through* Haroun. From the very beginning then, a ghostly narrative relationship is brought to the fore, and this is further emphasised by the religious significance associated with the brothers' names (Haroun and Moussa are the Qur'anic equivalents of Aaron and Moses). This implies that Haroun is a prophet-like character, who, through this 'contre-enquête', seeks to expose the Truth on behalf of his dead brother.[237] He declares that 'cette histoire devrait donc être réécrite, dans la même langue, mais de droite à gauche',[238] and this affirmation is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the choice to 'réécrire' the story of *L'Étranger* in the former colonial language seems at first glance to be a strange means of critiquing colonial treatment of indigenous figures in literature. Secondly, 'de droite à gauche' implies the Arabic language, written in this direction, and *not* 'la même langue', as Haroun states. Since the novel is indeed written in French rather than Arabic, this declaration seems to suggest that Camus's text must be rewritten from *another point of view*, that which this time privileges the perspective of the subaltern character.

Haroun insists on the importance of giving a name, and thus an identity, to the dead – 'autant qu'à un nouveau-né'[239] – suggesting that this is a way of remembering and respecting one's ghosts. His use of onomastics further accentuates this point, nicknaming his brother 'Zoudj'. This Arabic name means 'two' or 'a pair', and therefore serves to remind the reader of the

[235] Ibid., p. 12.
[236] Ibid., 14.
[237] In the Bible and the Qu'ran, Aaron served as his brother Moses's messenger when he confronted the Pharaoh to demand freedom for the Israelites (Exodus 7:1). Interestingly, they also had an older sister called Miriam/Meriem, just like Haroun's girlfriend in *Contre-enquête,* who introduces Haroun to *L'Étranger.*
[238] *Contre-enquête,* p. 16.
[239] Ibid., p. 32.

time of Moussa's murder: two in the afternoon. In addition, Haroun compares the usage of 'l'Arabe' in *L'Étranger* (of which he counts twenty-five mentions)[240] to that of 'Man Friday' in *Robinson Crusoe* – another classic text from the Western canon – in order to highlight the absurdity of traditional nomenclature in colonial works of fiction that deprives autochthonous characters of their individuality:

> Meursault aurait pu l'appeler [l'Arabe] 'Quatorze heures' comme l'autre [Daniel Defoe] a appelé son nègre 'Vendredi'. Un moment du jour, à la place d'un jour de la semaine. Quatorze heures, c'est bien. *Zoudj* en arabe, le deux, le duo...[241]

In this way, Daoud mocks a genre of colonial writing that reduces indigenous characters to mere ethnic signifiers, robbing them of a personal and even human dimension.

Interestingly, however, Haroun uses his brother's name, Moussa, in a similar way to Camus's use of 'l'Arabe'. He explains : 'Je donne à tous le prénom de 'Moussa'[242] […] Oui, le serveur s'appelle Moussa – dans ma tête en tout cas. Et cet autre, là-bas, au fond, je l'ai, lui aussi, baptisé Moussa'.[243] Consequently, 'Moussa' becomes a synecdoche for any Arab – a fictional parameter for an unknown identity, and, not incidentally, an echo of 'Meursault'. On one hand, this serves to counter the absence of 'Moussa' in *L'Étranger* but on the other – just like the '36 millions de Meursault'[244] that Daoud sees in Algérie – it indicates that 'Moussa est un Arabe que l'on peut remplacer par mille autres'.[245] Therefore, instead of replacing a name with an ethnicity such as 'Arab', Daoud gives each Arab a name. This can be read in two ways: as Haroun unwittingly undercutting his own attempt at individualising his brother, or as a more subtle suggestion that every Arab is his brother. Whether 'Moussa' or 'Meursault', Daoud sees '36 millions' of them in Algeria, and perhaps it does not matter

[240] Ibid., p. 140.
[241] Ibid., p. 13.
[242] Ibid., p. 32.
[243] Ibid, 34-35.
[244] Daoud, 'Les 36 millions de Meursault'.
[245] *Contre-enquête*, p. 58.

what they are called after all. Given the author's intentional nourishment of ambiguity, I think it is clear that he is at once criticising the dehumanising tendency of colonial novels that substitute indigenous identities with generic nouns while also drawing attention to the fact that a lot of the debate around Camus has centred on a name when, in Daoud's view, there are more important issues facing Algeria's 'Arabs' today. This confusing and contradictory use of 'Moussa' is more broadly indicative of the author's refusal to provide a straight-forward, easily interpretable novel, thwarting the (especially scholarly) reader's desire for a clear and definitive moral. Indeed, as Lia Brozgal claims: 'The ambiguity surrounding the naming of Moussa might be read as a two-fold critique produced within the text', one which interrogates narrative indeterminacy itself. [246]

Similarly, Haroun reverses the power dynamics in the colonial narrative between native Algerians and the French when he observes that under French rule, Algerian Arabs were treated as ghosts but now it is the *French* who hold this background status: 'Nous, nous étions les fantômes de ce pays quand les colons en abusaient et y promenaient cloches, cyprès et cigognes. Aujourd'hui ? Eh bien, c'est le contraire ! Ils y reviennent parfois […] Tels des spectres discrets et muets'.[247] This subversion of colonial literary conventions not only seeks to rectify the marginalisation of Moussa in *L'Étranger* but also to highlight the othering of subaltern figures in colonial writing more broadly by instead portraying the *colonial* figures as ghosts in Algeria's history, peripheral yet lingering presences that still haunt postcolonial consciousness today. As Sage Goellner observes, Daoud imitates the style, voice, and language of the coloniser in order to create what Homi Bhabha would call

[246] Lia Brozgal, 'The Critical Pulse of the contre-enquête: Kamel Daoud on the Maghrebi Novel in French', *Contemporary French and francophone studies,* 20.1 (2016), 37–46, p. 43.
[247] *Contre-enquête,* p. 21.

a ‘metonym of presence’[248] – that is, an act of mimicry that serves as ‘at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance’.[249]

Haroun’s use of French is another obvious example of this. He appropriates the language of the coloniser in order to ‘ordonner le monde avec [s]es propres mots’[250] and considers the French language his ‘*bien vacant*’.[251] Just like the Algerians after Liberation, who destroyed the houses left by the *colons* so as to use the stones for their own homes, Haroun constructs ‘une à une les pierres’ of his own ‘langue à [s]oi’.[252] He interweaves ‘[l]es mots du meurtrier’[253] with his own expressions and way of speaking to create a bric-à-brac language that reflects ‘l’étrange créole que fabrique la décolonisation’.[254] This use of French is empowering, enabling him to regain ownership of his past and finally tell his own story. After all, the French colonisers left three things in their wake: ‘des os, des routes et des mots – ou des morts’,[255] and it is the ‘mots’ that Haroun has chosen to adopt, channelling Kateb Yacine’s famous conception of French as a ‘butin de guerre’.[256] As Sami Alkyam explains, Daoud ‘must play the role of a mimic to write back and register his presence’,[257] and this mirroring (and reappropriation) of texts and styles not only casts the referenced literature and its heritage as a constant haunting presence in Daoud’s work, but also serves to perform – both in terms of content and structure – a commentary on the iterative nature of literature,

[248] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 122, cited in Sage Goellner, ‘Spectres Insistants: Primary and Secondary Hauntings in Kamel Daoud’s Meursault, Contre-enquête’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 56. 3 (2019), 21-233 <doi:http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2094/10.3828/AJFS.2019.16> [accessed 12 May 2021].
[249] Bhabha, Ibid., p. 172.
[250] *Contre-enquête*, p. 47.
[251] Ibid., p. 12 (original emphasis).
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid. ‘[L]’étrange créole’ refers to the hybrid Arabic dialects, interspersed with French, that are widely spoken today in Algeria.
[255] Ibid., p.40.
[256] Kateb Yacine, 1966, statement following the Algerian government’s declaration of obligatory Arabisation.
[257] Sami Alkyam, ‘Lost in Reading: The Predicament of Postcolonial Writing in Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 55 (2019), pp. 459-71.

as we will see. In this way, the author indeed 'construit un édifice scripturaire avec, pour pierre angulaire, la subversion comme procédé esthétique et stylistique'.[258] Daoud has also previously explored the complex duality of mimicking and writing back/for in his 2008 short story 'La Préface du nègre', which plays on the colonial connotations of 'nègre' to problematise the notion of 'ghost-writing' someone else's story.[259]

For these reasons then, upon beginning *Contre-enquête*, the reader presumes that the novel will fulfil the expectations of a straightforward postcolonial retelling. Whilst it does indeed offer a restitution of a canonical work, it becomes clear, through a comparison with other seminal 'postcolonial rewritings', that *Contre-enquête* resists a clear-cut classification and for two reasons. Firstly, the novel's discourse around contemporary Algeria and Camus is not what one would expect from a work seeking to redress a colonial text; and secondly, its intertextual relationship with *L'Étranger* is a lot more complex and nuanced than a simple 'writing back'. We will see that the ghostly representation of one text within the other, compounded by the spectral blurring of the protagonists, serves to ultimately subvert the expectations established by the paratext and beginning of the novel.

According to Bill Ashcroft et al, postcolonial literature centres around 'the importance of the need to privilege the African connection over the European'.[260] However, *Contre-enquête* refuses to conform to this convention by equally criticising the current state of independent Algeria, which we will see is more than just a ploy to appeal to a French readership. The second half of the novel diverges from the initial aim of rectifying the anonymous status of Moussa, and instead turns towards a critique of postcolonial Algeria.

[258] Yamina Bahi, 'Héros marginal, récit fragmenté, écriture transgressive : Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud', *Synergies Algérie* 24 (2017), 69-80 (p. 70).
[259] Daoud, 'La Préface du nègre' (Algiers: Barzakh, 2008).
[260] Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 33.

By taking a well-known French work and attributing a voice to the character who is 'mort dans l'insignifiance',[261] Haroun intends 'que justice soit faite'.[262] Initially, one presumes that this restitution is aimed at Meursault and the colonial system, but Haroun undercuts this assumption towards the end of the novel by saying: 'Détrompe-toi, il ne s'agirait pas d'une contre-enquête sur le cas de ton Meursault, mais d'autre chose, de plus intime.'[263] What, then, is the real aim of the 'contre-enquête'? According to Kaplan, Haroun is less interested in judging Camus and righting colonial wrongs than he is in examining how Algeria has handled its independence. She remarks:

> *Meursault,contre-enquête* ne se contente pas de s'approprier *L'Étranger* pour s'en venger. Le plus beau moment du récit renverse brutalement la colère de Haroun contre Meursault, et donne à Camus le rôle de procureur dans un procès imaginaire que fait Daoud, écrivain et chroniqueur politique, à son pays – à ce que l'Algérie indépendante a fait de sa liberté. [264]

Indeed, Haroun denounces Islam in Algeria on multiple occasions, describing Friday – the Islamic holy day – as 'la journée la plus proche de la mort'.[265] He laments the fact that the consumption of wine 'est considérée comme *haram*, illicite', confiding: 'Je me suis toujours demandé : pourquoi ce rapport compliqué avec le vin ? Pourquoi diabolise-t-on ce breuvage quand il est censé couler à profusion au paradis ? Pourquoi est-il interdit ici-bas, et promis là-haut ? Conduite en état d'ivresse.'[266] In addition, he blames Islamic conservatism for what he views as the sexual repression of women. This becomes clear in his description of Meriem, a young 'femme libre'[267] from Constantine with whom he falls in love in his youth: 'Elle appartient à un genre de femmes qui, aujourd'hui, a disparu

[261] *Contre-enquête*, p. 20.
[262] Ibid., p. 16.
[263] Ibid., p. 108.
[264] Alice Kaplan, 'Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud', *Contreligne,* June 2014 <http://www.contreligne.eu/2014/06/kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete/> [accessed 8 January 2020]
[265] *Contre-enquête*, p. 78.
[266] Ibid., p. 61.
[267] Ibid., p. 138.

dans ce pays : libre, conquérante, insoumise et vivant son corps comme un don, non comme un péché ou une honte.'[268] Nonetheless, despite his disillusionment with certain aspects of the current situation in Algeria, Haroun is clear that he does not yearn for a return to colonial times: 'Moi, nostalgique de l'Algérie française ? Non ! Tu n'as rien compris. Je voulais juste te dire qu'à l'époque, nous, les Arabes, donnions l'impression d'attendre, pas de tourner en rond comme aujourd'hui.'[269] Instead, by providing a balanced perspective on postcolonial Algeria, Haroun highlights the complexity of the relationship between ex-colonised peoples to their native country.

Of course, Daoud is by no means the first author to reinterpret a work from the Western Canon from a postcolonial perspective, but the ways he treats his hypotext distinguish *Contre-enquête* from other works that have been hailed as postcolonial rewritings. I am using Gerard Genette's definition of hypertextuality here, in which a 'hypotext' is an anterior work from which a later text (the 'hyp*er*text') derives its inspiration.[270] I am, however, expanding Genette's conception of intertextuality beyond purely literary terms to include the borrowing and reinterpreting of elements of another's culture more generally within literature. In Daoud's case, this involves the adoption and abrogation of colonial language, politics, and philosophy for a subversive purpose. As Bill Ashcroft et al assert, postcolonial responses to canonical works not only appropriate a text but more importantly appropriate 'the practice of writing from the centre' too,[271] with the goal of deconstructing and disassembling colonial logic and ideologies. *Contre-enquête* achieves this by first establishing an extremely close, even mimetic, relationship with its hypotext,

[268] Ibid., p. 145.
[269] Ibid., p. 41.
[270] According to Genette, hypertextuality is 'toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai *hypotexte*)'. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes : La littérature au second degré* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1982), p. 11.
[271] Ashcroft et al*, The Empire Writes Back,* p. 191.

and this is evident from the very first sentence, which constitutes an antithetical parallel to the famous opening of *L'Étranger*: 'Aujourd'hui, M'ma est encore vivante'.[272] Almost every element of Camus's novel is reflected in this meticulous way – to such an extent that *Contre-enquête* contains exactly the same number of words as the former: 33,000.[273] Furthermore, the personalities and preferences of each text's protagonist are strikingly juxtaposed throughout the novel. Haroun and Meursault both reject religion, vociferating against their respective authority figures – the priest and El-Cheik – and are equally disillusioned with 'la fatalité du mariage'.[274] In contrast to Meursault, Haroun detests milky coffee,[275] does not smoke[276], and 'n'aime pas [se] baigner'[277] – a favourite pastime of Meursault's. In addition, the latter's taciturn nature reflects Haroun's loquacity; the absence of Meursault's mother in *L'Étranger* opposes the omnipresence of 'M'ma' in *Contre-enquête*; and finally, the carnal relationship between Meursault and Marie contrasts notably with the more sensitive and intellectual union between Haroun and Meriem. In this way, in what one critic calls Daoud's '*intertextualité recto-verso'*,[278] Haroun is constructed as Meursault's foil. It is undeniable that *L'Étranger* haunts almost every aspect of *Contre-enquête* from its structure and style to its characters, events and even word count. Reading Daoud's novel, one cannot help but recall elements of *L'Étranger* such that the latter is always present in the background, influencing the reading experience.

---

[272] *Contre-enquête*, p. 11. This sentence is an inverse reproduction of 'Aujourd'hui, Maman est morte.' d'Albert Camus, *L'Étranger* in *Œuvres complètes,* p. 141.
[273] Alice Kaplan, *Looking for the Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 208.
[274] *Contre-enquête*, p. 29.
[275] 'Non merci, je n'aime pas le café au lait ! J'ai horreur de cette mixture'. *Contre-enquête*, 75.
[276] 'je n'étais pas fumeur', Ibid., p. 115.
[277] Ibid., 65.
[278] Zvezdana Ostojic, 'Le verso de la p(l)age de Camus: intertextualité militante dans *Meursault, contre-enquête'*, *Convergences francophones,* 6.3 (2020), 41-57 (p. 45) <http://mrujs.mtroyal.ca/index.php/cf/index>

Furthermore, the juxtaposition between Haroun and Meursault develops into to a ghostly identification between the two characters. Haroun himself regrettably admits this when he realises 'à quel point [ils étaient] les compagnons d'une même cellule dans un huis clos où les corps ne sont que costumes'.[279] Later, he describes the uncanny experience of reading *L'Étranger* as looking into a 'miroir tendu à [s]on âme',[280] explaining: 'J'y cherchais des traces de mon frère, j'y retrouvais mon reflet, me découvrant presque sosie du meurtrier.'[281] This notion of reflection encapsulates Achille Mbembe's spectral analysis of the mirror, discussed in the Introduction, in which Mbembe highlights the uncanny nature of seeing oneself from a detached, external point of view so that one's form is visible yet intangible, only half materialised. Haroun experiences such an encounter with himself on the beach where Moussa 'disappeared'. He explains that, all of a sudden, he notices 'une silhouette qui se confondait avec l'angle obscure de l'ombre'.[282] Mildly inebriated and overwhelmed by the heat, Haroun remarks a reclining figure 'en bleu de chauffe, allongé avec nonchalance'. This description matches that of the Arabs in *L'Étranger*,[283] which would suggest that this was Moussa; however, since Haroun was clearly confused at the time, it is possible that the vision was of either Moussa *or* Meursault – or perhaps some amalgam of the two. Indeed, Haroun explains: 'Je savais avec certitude que c'était un reflet mais j'ignorais de qui!'.[284] Indeed, there is a near-homophony between the two names when pronounced aloud, and we must remember that Haroun's tale takes the form of an oral recount to 'l'universitaire', which further fuels this uncertainty. Nonetheless, whomever the apparition represents, it is clear that he is

[279] *Contre-enquête*, p. 20.
[280] Ibid., p. 141
[281] Ibid., 141.
[282] Ibid., p. 66.
[283] 'j'ai aperçu […] deux Arabes *en bleu de chauffe* qui venaient dans notre direction.' *L'Étranger*, *Œuvres Complètes*, p. 172 (my emphasis).
[284] *Contre-enquête*, p. 66.

subsumed into Haroun's identity since the figure is eventually revealed to be the protagonist's own reflection ('[l]orsque j'ai levé la main, l'ombre en fit autant').[285] Haroun watches the wraith with 'peur et fascination' before declaring : [l]'un de nous deux était un spectre insistant...'.[286] Clearly, Haroun feels as if he is being followed by an unwanted presence; that an 'insistent ghost' is hanging over him, stealing his story – or perhaps that he is becoming the ghost in his own story. He confides that he sometimes returns to the fated beach with 'pistolet au poing, en quête du premier Arabe qui [s]e ressemble pour le tuer',[287] with the hope that this would put an end to the haunting – his 'deuil sans fin'[288] – and finally enable him to '[s]e débarrasser de son cadavre [Moussa]'.[289] By returning to the site of his brother's murder, looking to kill an innocent Arab, Haroun is assuming, quite consciously, the role of Meursault.

This ghostly doubling between the two protagonists becomes increasingly apparent during the second half of the novel. The pivotal moment occurs when Haroun reveals that he too has killed a random '*roumi*'[290] or 'étranger' – a Frenchman by the name of Joseph Larquais. Just like that of his antagonist, Haroun's act of murder occurs in an equally absurd manner – at two in the morning, significantly, rather than two in the afternoon (the hour of *l'Arabe*'s murder), and under the influence of the moon rather than that of the sun, which guided Meursault. However, instead of being imprisoned, Haroun's case does not even progress to trial. He commits the murder too late, on July fifth, 1962 – just after the official end of the Algerian war.[291] Haroun explains: 'Je savais que je n'étais pas là [à la gendarmerie] pour

[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid., p. 147.
[288] Ibid., 47.
[289] Ibid., p. 57.
[290] Ibid., p. 44.
[291] The Évian Accords issued a ceasefire on March 18th 1962 but full independence did not officially occur until the referendum for self-determination was passed on July 1st.

avoir commis un meurtre mais pour ne pas l'avoir fait au bon moment.'[292] The officer who interrogates him is not bothered by the fact that Haroun killed a Frenchman but rather by the fact that he did so after the War of Liberation, exclaiming exasperatedly: 'Le Français, il fallait le tuer *avec nous*, pendant la guerre, pas cette semaine!'.[293] In this way, just as Meursault was condemned for reasons other than his actual crime, Haroun was judged not for taking another's life but for doing so *after* Algeria had already gained its independence from France rather than when he had the opportunity to fight alongside his brothers to help free his country.

Furthermore, Haroun describes the killing of Joseph Larquais as finishing Meursault's work – as if it were merely a continuation of the same absurd murder: 'J'ai tiré deux fois. […] Au total, cela fait sept, pensai-je sur le champ, absurdement. (Sauf que les cinq premières, celles qui avaient tué Moussa, avaient été tirées vingt ans auparavant…).'[294] For Haroun and his mother, the spontaneous murder of a Frenchman represents belated justice for Moussa's senseless death and engenders some form of closure. As Haroun insists, '[c]e n'était pas un assassinat mais une *restitution*'[295] which 'furent comme deux coup brefs frappés à la porte de la délivrance'[296] (as opposed to the 'quatre coups brefs que [Meursault a] frapp[és] sur la porte du malheur').[297] These descriptions cement Haroun and Meursault as more than mere shadows of each other, suggesting that they are also linked by a shared destiny, perhaps even that France and Algeria's futures are also bound up together. As Haroun explains: 'La vérité est que l'Indépendance n'a fait que pousser les uns et les autres à échanger leurs

[292] *Contre-enquête*, p. 117.
[293] Ibid., p. 119, my emphasis.
[294] Ibid., p. 85.
[295] Ibid., pp. 85-86, original emphasis.
[296] Ibid., p. 95.
[297] Camus, *L'Étranger*, *Œuvres Complètes*, p. 176.

rôles',[298] and this transvalorisation[299] of *L'Étranger* further inverses traditional power relations in order to privilege the perspective of the other.

This ghostly mimesis has already revealed an extremely close relationship with *L'Étranger*, mirroring events, characters, and thematic concerns such as the absurdity of fate, the indifference of the world, and the oppressive nature of religion. However, even more striking is the fact that in stark contrast to other works that have been hailed as postcolonial rewritings – like Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*, Maryse Condé's *La Migration des cœurs*, and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea – Contre-enquête* makes explicit reference to its hypotext, even citing from it directly. Whilst this may not seem novel, it is important to realise that the majority of postcolonial appropriations merely allude to the works they are rewriting in indirect ways, relying on paralleled situations, events, and characters to establish the link with their hypotexts. This is certainly the case with the works mentioned above, widely regarded as classic postcolonial retellings.[300] None of these quotes directly from its hypotext, and the 'original' characters are often renamed. Rhys's work rewrites Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of Mr Rochester's 'mad' Creole wife who is locked in the attic for most of Brontë's story; Condé's novel largely reproduces the plot of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* but transposes it to a Caribbean context; and Césaire's play closely follows the major events of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* but alters character relationships in order to foreground colonial power dynamics. By way of contrast,

---

[298] *Contre-enquête*, pp. 20-21.

[299] A form of hypertextual transposition that implies a 'substitution de valeurs' between two texts through the form of either a 'dévalorisation' or a '(contre-)valorisation'. Genette provides the example of a rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe* from the point of view of Man Friday, a peripheral character in the original. *Palimpsestes*, pp. 418- 419.

[300] See, for example: Nese Senel, 'A Postcolonial reading of Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys', *Journal of Language and Literature Education* 11 (2014), p. 38 ; Karen Ya-Chu Yang, 'Rewriting Canonical Love Stories from the Periphery', *CLC Web: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.4 (2013), p. 2 <http://dx.doi.org/1481-4374.2304>; Russell West, 'Césaire's Bard: Shakespeare and the Performance of Change in Césaire's "Une Tempête"', *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 4. 3 (2007), 1-16 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40986206>.

Contre-enquête does not follow the same storyline as *L'Étranger* but rather, takes one catalytic event from it (the murder of the Arab) and invents a character that does not exist in the original work, using him as a vehicle through which to provide a fictional commentary on Camus's text and its global reception seventy years later.

Furthermore, Haroun consciously acknowledges the existence of the work he is 'retelling', mentioning the text explicitly and even declaring that he can 'le réciter en entier comme le Coran' (in so doing, mocking the fact that it has been received as a sort of sacred text in the francophone world).[301] The story of *L'Étranger* is reproduced not only through the replication of certain events and references to characters but also through direct quotations. For example, when Haroun spies 'un groupe de Français devant un bureau de tabac à l'aéroport', he notes: 'Ils nous regardaient, nous les Arabes, en silence, *ni plus ni moins que si nous étions des pierres ou des arbres morts'*.[302] This phrase comes directly from Camus's novel when Meursault notices the Arabs on the beach with Marie and Raymond, observing: '*Ils nous regardaient en silence*, mais à leur manière, *ni plus ni moins que si nous étions des pierres ou des arbres morts*'.[303] Similarly, Meursault's death-row monologue from *L'Étranger* is reproduced in its entirety in *Contre-enquête*;[304] and, not least, the famous final sentence of *L'Étranger* is cited in Daoud's work as well: 'C'est sûr, il y aura *beaucoup de spectateurs le jour de mon exécution et ils m'accueilleront avec des cris de haine'*.[305] The fact that these quotations are italicised indicates that Daoud *wants* us to notice them. In this way, he rewrites *L'Étranger* in the most literal sense of the term. Rather than ignoring the existence of the text to which he is responding, he makes a point of emphasising its

[301] *Contre-enquête*, p. 14.
[302] Ibid., p. 21 (original emphasis).
[303] *L'Étranger*, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 169 (my emphasis).
[304] *Contre-enquête*, pp. 150-152. *L'Étranger, Œuvres complètes*, pp. 211-212.
[305] *Contre-enquête* p. 152 (original italics); *L'Étranger*, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 213: 'il me restait à souhaiter qu'il y ait *beaucoup de spectateurs le jour de mon exécution et qu'ils m'accueillent avec des cries de haines*'.

perduring influence. By placing one work literally within the other through the inclusion of direct citations, Daoud highlights the intricate level of interfusion between not only the two stories but also the two literary worlds – French and Algerian – such that it can be difficult to determine which is which. In this way, Haroun is not the only one haunted by Meursault and his brother's unfinished story; the textual echoes are made explicit so as to haunt the reader too by constantly recalling to mind Camus's text, drawing us into the spectral *pas de deux* as active participants. And yet, the layers of intertextuality extend further still.

For it is not only the *text* of *L'Étranger* that is evoked in *Contre-enquête* but also the *book* that appears as a concrete, physical object – almost as a character itself. Firstly, Haroun's interlocutor, 'l'inspecteur universitaire',[306] brings a copy of the novel with him to the bar, keeping it 'dans [s]on cartable comme un fétiche'.[307] Later, Haroun recounts that Meriem – a doctoral student researching the book that is supposedly based on Moussa's murder – lends him the work so that he can better understand his brother's death. This is when Haroun learns that his story has already been told, only without any mention of him, his mother, or his brother's name. *L'Etranger* thus comes to life in *Contre-enquête* but only ever in partial form – like a ghost. Further obscuring the book's full manifestation is its change of title in the Actes Sud edition of *Contre-enquête*. The sole occasion Haroun mentions the book we know as *L'Étranger* by name, he calls it *L'Autre.*[308] In the diegetic world of *Contre-enquête*, this famous novel is actually an autobiographical account written by Meursault who is eventually released from prison and 'écrit un livre qui devient célèbre où il raconte comment il a tenu tête à son Dieu, à un prêtre et à l'absurde.'[309] This metaleptical conflation of author

[306] *Contre-enquête*, p. 30.
[307] Ibid., p. 100.
[308] 'Le titre en était *L'Autre*, le nom de l'assassin était écrit en lettres noires et strictes, en haut à droite : Meursault.' (p. 137). In the original Algerian edition of *Contre-enquête*, Daoud retains the title *L'Étranger,* but French copyright law prevents him from doing so in the subsequent French edition. See Brozgal, 'Critical Pulse of the Contre-enquête', p. 44 for a fuller explanation.
[309] *Contre-enquête*, p. 63.

and protagonist will be explored further in the next section but for now, it is abundantly clear that Daoud consciously casts *L'Étranger* as a ghostly presence in his own work in order to address not only Camus's novel but also his literary and political legacy in contemporary Algeria.

The last aspect of intertextual haunting that I wish to discuss in this section is the final stage of ghosting between Meursault and Haroun. As we have seen, the two protagonists are initially constructed as foils, seemingly opposed in every manner, but then Haroun realises that they are in fact doubles, sharing similar world views, the same detestation of religion, and committing parallel acts of murder with equally absurd responses from their respective judicial systems. By the end of the book, this identification increases to the point where the two characters appear to fuse entirely, and this is exemplified most clearly in Haroun's reproduction of Meursault's prison monologue. The difference here compared with other passages cited from *L'Étranger* is that the first-person pronouns are retained so that Haroun is not just quoting Meursault but literally takes his place. Initially, the circumstances are altered to fit Haroun's context (the priest becomes 'l'imam', and there is mention of 'Meriem' and the murder of Joseph Larquais) but as the expostulation progresses, Haroun identifies more and more closely with Meursault until he eventually refers to 'Marie' (Meursault's fiancée) as *his* girlfriend, despite having never met her: '*[…] Marie qui avait envie que* ***je*** *l'épouse'*.[310] It is as if Haroun actually becomes possessed by Meursault at this point, believing – if only momentarily – that they are one. Far from distancing himself from his brother's murderer then, as one might expect, Haroun instead becomes his alter ego. In so doing, he brings to the fore the parallels between what he views as Algeria's current climate of political apathy and the absurd indifference and existential angst that

[310] Ibid., p. 152. Original italics, my emphasis on 'je'.

characterised Meursault's Algeria of the 1940s. He sees Meursault's ontological nonchalance everywhere in Algeria today: 'Ils sont des milliers, crois-moi. À trainer la patte depuis l'Indépendance, à déambuler sur des plages, à enterrer des mères mortes et à regarder dehors pendant des heures depuis leur balcon. Putain!'.[311] Moreover, both Haroun and Meursault reject social norms, refusing to conform to the status quo: Haroun by continuing to frequent bars, speak French, and openly ridicule religion and the state of his country's politics; and Meursault by exercising his pathological honesty and refusing to play by societal rules. By constructing Haroun as Meursault's doppelgänger, Daoud leaves no doubt that *Contre-enquête* exceeds the bounds of a purely colonial critique, instead morphing into a deconstruction of *post*colonial Algeria. Meursault continues to haunt Haroun because he is not quite dead; because, in fact, he is all around him in Algeria today.

If we now reconsider the first half of the book's epigraph – 'L'heure du crime ne sonne pas en même temps pour tous les peuples' – we can discern a second meaning. On one hand, it appears to allude to the murder of the Arab in *L'Étranger*, for which Meursault was never properly held accountable, but on the other hand, it could equally refer to the polemic around Camus and the Algerian war, the effects of which were felt very differently in Algeria from in France, and still linger today – 'pas en même temps'. Moreover, the mention of 'peuples' suggests that the 'histoire' in the second half of the citation ('Ainsi s'explique la permanence de l'histoire') refers not only to the personal 'story' of Meursault and the Arab, but also to the collective 'history' of Algeria more generally. Indeed, Haroun appears to confirm this when he proclaims : 'Cette histoire – je me permets d'être grandiloquent – est celle de tous les gens de cette époque'[312]. It is therefore clear that *Contre-enquête,* by revealing the negative aspects of both colonialism *and* post-colonial Algeria, presents a more complicated

[311] Ibid., p. 35-36.
[312] Ibid., p. 71.

and nuanced view of contemporary Algeria than we are initially led to believe. As Dana Strand observes, *Contre-enquête* 'defies both postcolonial and neocolonial labels, rooted as they are in geography and borders, in order to occupy a transnational space evoking social and humanistic connections that transcend conventional national boundaries'.[313] While some critics like Joseph Ford argue that Daoud exploits cultural binaries that maintain the status quo in Algeria,[314] I hope I have demonstrated that there is a clear intent in *Contre-enquête* to undercut these binaries through spectral imagery, nourishing ambivalence all the way through and refusing to conform to reductive, partisan views of either postcolonial Algeria or Camus.

Daoud employs spectrality, then, not only to integrate and transform his hypotext in innovative ways but to issue a warning about the state of postindependent Algeria – a country 'entre Allah et l'ennui'.[315] Textual elements of Camus's work manifest in various forms throughout *Contre-enquête* – both explicitly and implicitly, intertextually and paratextually – and Camus's *book* is also placed within the novel as a ghostly character-object itself. Furthermore, Daoud's entire text is constructed as a dead man's story, revealed through the mediumship of Haroun. Of these multiple layers of haunting, however, it is the ghostly doubling between Haroun and Meursault that crystallises Daoud's critique of contemporary Algeria. The fact that the former ultimately identifies with Meursault rather than with his fellow Algerians reveals a concern for the future of his country. Haroun appears to be issuing a wakeup call to his compatriots: will they remain gripped by what he views as a Meursault-like apathy and allow their country to continue in the direction in which it has been heading since Independence – that is, becoming more conservative,

[313] Dana Strand, 'Reading Camus in Oran: Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête*', *Contemporary French Civilisation,* 41.3 (2016), p. 459.
[314] Ford, 'Specters of the Black Decade in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête'*, in *Writing the Black Decade*, pp. 99-119.
[315] *Contre-enquête*, p. 141.

repressive, and religiously dogmatic? Or will they choose instead to assert their own freedom – whether that involves the rejection of institutionalised religion, enjoying a drink in a bar, or refusing imposed monolingualism – in order to start telling their own story rather than letting Algeria's colonial past define their future narrative?

This section has detailed the primary aspects of what I have termed an intertextual haunting between *L'Étranger* and *Contre-enquête*, namely thematic parallels; character mirroring; onomastic devices; extra-textual and historical allusion; appropriation of form and narrative structure; inverse reproductions of events; and the inclusion of direct quotations. All this constitutes a figurative haunting between the two works, but there is another level of more overt haunting that occurs *within* the narrative framework of *Contre-enquête* – an *intra*textual haunting, I propose – whereby an actual 'fantôme' haunts Haroun and his interlocutor in the bar.

ii. *Auteur-assassin* and *le fantôme*: Camus as Ghost

Just as Daoud illuminates the negative aspects of both colonisation *and* postcolonisation in Algeria, he also resists a positive/negative dichotomy regarding Camus. Far from being the anti-Camusian story one might expect, *Contre-enquête* is in many ways an homage to the author, but it does not blindly extol him. In this section, I will analyse Daoud's conception of the French literary canon through a spectral lens in order to demonstrate firstly the extent to which an 'anxiety of influence' still affects postcolonial writers (but perhaps not as we might expect), and secondly how the intrinsically indeterminate nature of the phantom serves as an apt vehicle for reflection on Camus's status – and by extension that of the French colonial literary tradition – in contemporary Algeria. Daoud's ghostly representation of both writing and writer reveals an intractable conflict between

ethics and aesthetics in literature that encapsulates the complex memorialisation of Algeria's history – at once mourned and reified – but, importantly, it highlights how this can be reformed productively in a hauntological manner. My analysis will concentrate on the two principal dissimulations of Camus in *Contre-enquête*: as 'auteur-assassin' and as 'le fantôme'.

Although the name 'Camus' is never mentioned in the novel, the figure of the author – just like his book – appears in many guises throughout *Contre-enquête*, always lurking in the background as a shadowy, unstated presence – not unlike that of a ghost. Haroun speaks of Camus's work with an adulatory tone, referring to *L'Étranger* as 'un chef d'œuvre'[316] and its author as a 'génie'.[317] He frequently alludes to the fact that the author is known for his mastery of the written word, affirming that '[t]ous sont restés la bouche ouverte sur cette langue parfaite qui donne à l'air des angles de diamant'.[318] Clearly, Haroun feels overwhelmed by Camus's status as a celebrated literary figure. He admits to his interlocutor : 'j'aurai peut-être dû écrire […] si j'avais eu le don de ton héros'[319] but 'son histoire est trop bien écrite pour que j'aie dans l'idée de l'imiter'.[320] This reveals an acute anxiety of influence since Haroun is conscious of the fact that he writes in the wake of this globally renowned author, assuming the onerous task of retelling a classic work of literature, itself surrounded by controversy. However, this 'langue parfaite', according to Haroun, is employed for a duplicitous purpose. He claims that 'l'écrivian tueur'[321] uses 'l'art du poème'[322] to deceive the reader, concealing a crime in his literary masterpiece – that is, Meursault's murder of the Arab, which, in Daoud's novel, occurred

[316] *Contre-enquête*, p. 141.
[317] Ibid., p. 109, 110.
[318] Ibid., p. 14.
[319] Ibid., p. 131.
[320] Ibid., p. 12.
[321] Ibid., p. 64.
[322] Ibid., p. 12.

in real life. It is the precise and 'chiselled' ('ciselé') style[323] of *L'Étranger*, Haroun argues, that enables the plight of the Arab to be so easily overlooked. He explains:

> Si ton héros raconte si bien l'assassinat de mon frère, c'est qu'il avait atteint le territoire d'une langue inconnue, plus puissante dans son étreinte, sans merci pour tailler la pierre des mots, nue comme la géométrie euclidienne. Je crois que c'est cela le grand style finalement, parler avec la précision austère que vous imposent les derniers instants de votre vie.[324]

Haroun is referring here to the fact that the iconic neutral style of *L'Étranger* (that which inspires him to describe its narrator as 'un cadavre'[325]) attracted the attention of critics like Barthes who lauded this 'écriture blanche'[326] rather than commenting on the treatment of the Arab in the novel. It is for this reason that Haroun finds Meursault's style troubling and his account 'une terrible arnaque'.[327] Perhaps this is why his own narration emulates the more garrulous style of a different Camusian text – *La Chute*. Despite extolling the talent of the author/narrator of *L'Étranger*, Haroun seems to warn the reader of the dangers of textual seduction, asserting that Meursault 'savait raconter, au point qu'il a réussi à faire oublier son crime'.[328]

Furthermore, towards the end of the novel, Haroun speaks of 'committing' a book.[329] Whilst this turn of phrase is a standard collocation in French, it serves a dual purpose here, suggesting that the act of writing can itself be considered a crime, for it is not only the murder that Haroun is criticising but also its concealment through literature. Meursault killed the Arab but Camus is responsible for contributing to the invisibility of Arabs in real

---

[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid., p. 110.
[325] Ibid., p. 73 for example.
[326] Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1953).
[327] *Contre-enquête*, p. 74.
[328] Ibid., p. 11.
[329] 'Ah, tu sais, moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soucié d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un.' Ibid., p. 108.

life through this marginalisation – a form of what Colin Davis calls 'altericide'.[330] Haroun emphasises the absurdity of this when he remarks: 'je ne savais pas que le crime pourrait devenir un livre et la victime un simple rebondissement de lumière vive'.[331] As Zvezdana Ostojic notes, 'l'écriture et le crime ne feront qu'un : le corps du texte est comparé au corps-cadavre, le meurtre incite à la création littéraire et les mots «écrivain» et «tueur» deviennent des synonymes.'[332]

A clear conflict exists for Haroun between aesthetics and ethics in *L'Étranger/L'Autre*: he extols the author's talent as a writer but will never forgive him for betraying his fellow Algerians, instead indicting him for a 'crime philosophique'.[333] Brozgal praises Daoud for this nuanced critique of Camus, expressing admiration for the way he 'manages to recognize and problematize his work's relationship to its colonial past without becoming a prisoner of it'.[334] Like a ghost, the author of *L'Étranger* inhabits an interstitial space in Daoud's work, renowned as a writer *par excellence* but also one who, through his work, has reduced Haroun's brother to a mere spectre – a sidenote of colonial history, overlooked and ignored.

As the story progresses, the author's haunting presence becomes more overt. Haroun recounts that 'presque tous les jours' a 'fantôme' sits at the bar where he talks with 'l'universitaire'.[335] Haroun calls him 'le fantôme de la bouteille',[336]suggesting that the ghost is nothing more than a drunken hallucination. Nonetheless, this vague and ambiguous

[330] That which might be manifested by the repression of subaltern figures in literature and other artforms. Colin Davis, 'Altericide: Camus, Encounters, Reading', *Forum for Modern Language Studies,* XXXIII (1997), 129-41.
[331] *Contre-enquête*, p. 132.
[332] Ostojic, 'Le verso de la p(l)age', p. 42.
[333] *Contre-enquête*, p. 29.
[334] Brozgal, 'Critical Pulse'*,* p. 44.
[335] *Contre-enquête*, p.36.
[336] Ibid.

persona gradually concretises over the course of the novel until a distinct resemblance to Camus emerges. The figure is described as having an 'air intelligent' and being 'à la quarantaine peut-être' – the age at which Camus was at the height of his career.[337] With his 'éternelle cigarette'[338] and 'front de philosophe',[339] the ghost closely resembles the well-known image of Camus. In addition, he is 'apparemment tuberculeux'[340] and has 'l'air d'avoir des origines latines'[341] – allusions to the illness the author contracted in 1930 and to the fact that his mother was Spanish. Haroun further reinforces the link between the phantom and Camus when he observes that 'le fantôme […] nous tourne autour à sa façon, comme pour mieux écouter mon récit *ou me voler mon histoire*'.[342] This remark not only highlights the narrator's anxiety of influence but also reminds us, in a similar way to Wolfreys, of the inherently interconnected nature of literature; the impossibility of remaining uninfluenced by past works that inevitably resurface in some form, either repressed or explicit. As Helen Swift affirms, '[t]he prior text is always there as a ghostly presence'. [343] Swift, too, appropriates Derrida's *hauntologie*, albeit briefly, from a 'spectropolitics' to a 'spectropoetics' to highlight the spectral relationship between intertexts. By expiscating the representation of Camus and his literature as a *fantôme* in Daoud's text, I hope to shed some light on what Swift terms 'intertextual memory and literary inheritance'.[344]

[337] Ibid., p. 50.
[338] Ibid., p. 68.
[339] Ibid., p. 12.
[340] Ibid., p. 146.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Ibid., p. 81 (my emphasis).
[343] Helen J. Swift, *Gender, Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France, 1440-1538* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 30.
[344] Ibid., p. 34.

Despite his constant presence, the 'félon fantôme'[345] is a distant and silent character. He appears to have a 'mine de rien'[346] and takes no notice of anyone. Haroun explains that '[o]n se salue sans jamais s'adresser la parole'.[347] Upon encountering this phrase, the reader cannot help but be reminded of the manner in which Daoud's text engages with Camus's oeuvre and the wider political debates surrounding the author. That is, Daoud alludes to the principal events of the anterior story, refers to the work and its characters explicitly, and even cites entire passages, but all without ever mentioning Camus explicitly by name. In this way, just like the Arab in his own work, Camus has become the anonymous figure in Daoud's novel. In a further intertextual ploy, mentioned briefly earlier, Daoud intentionally conflates the author of *L'Étranger* with the work's protagonist, Meursault. In the original Algerian version of the novel, Haroun calls the man who killed his brother 'Albert Meursault' – a clear fusion of author and narrator – but this simply becomes 'Meursault' in the French edition since French copyright law does not allow an author to appropriate a canonical literary figure as his or her own fictional creation, only as a historical personage.[348] According to Sylvie Ducas, this serves to 'tone down' Daoud's critique of Camus and 'mieux orienter la réception du livre dans le sens d'un hommage à Camus, non pas d'un procès à charge'.[349] Nonetheless, by both performing and subverting a critique of Camus, I argue that Daoud manages precisely to avoid – to actively refuse, even – to 'take sides' on Camus and cast him as either a definitive hero or villain. As we will see in *Zabor*, the author laments that the figure of the writer (particularly in Algeria) must always fit into

[345] *Contre-enquête*, p. 90.
[346] Ibid., p. 67.
[347] Ibid, p. 36.
[348] For a more detailed explanation of this, see Kaplan, *Looking for the Stranger*, p. 201. Orlando also adds that '[t]he reworking of the edition published in France indicates just how sensitive and protective the French still are about their conflicted, canonical author, Albert Camus, and his legacy within the colonial context of French Algeria' (Orlando, op. cit).
[349] Sylvie Ducas, 'L'entrée en littérature française de Kamel Daoud: « Camus sinon rien ! »', *Littératures*, 73 (2015), 185-197, [Web], paragraph 22. See also Harchi, 'Kamel Daoud: de la tentation islamiste au salut littéraire. La reconnaissance au prix du malentendu' in *Je n'ai qu'une langue*, pp. 172-225.

one of these boxes. In both editions of *Contre-enquête*, the purposeful confusion of Camus and Meursault presents a means for Daoud to mock what Dana Strand calls 'the biographical fallacy, the blurring of the distinction between author and character'.[350] As Daoud himself explains, 'en Algérie, dans le discours autour de Camus, texte et auteur sont fatalement confondus' and many critics continue to hold Camus responsible for his character who kills an Arab *in a fictional world*.[351] Yet at the same time, since Haroun is also a homodiegetic narrator (a character in the story he recounts) and tells his tale in the first person, it is easy to associate his voice with Daoud's – a concept Genette calls 'l'auteur impliqué.[352] This constant blending of 'auteur' and 'autre', 'écrivain' and 'assassin' highlights literature's capacity for alienation and perfidiousness as well as connection and insight, since it further complicates the ways in which fiction and truths are (re)told. As a corollary, we are alerted to the mistakes we make as readers, such as confusing author with character and literary effacement for murder.

As an inherently paradoxical figure that actively defies binary oppositions and epistemological stability, the spectre is a fitting representation of Camus, reflecting the ambivalence that is felt towards him not only by Daoud but by francophone writers and critics more broadly. Despite his quasi-anonymous status, Camus is omnipresent in Daoud's novel and his influence is felt strongly by Haroun. Camus as *fantôme* observes the interaction between Haroun and *l'universitaire* from afar but does not join the conversation, which is particularly interesting if we consider that Daoud describes his book as 'a dialogue with Camus'.[353] Initially, Haroun remains at 'un bout du bar, et lui, l'autre bout',[354] as if the

[350] Dana Strand, 'Reading Camus in Oran', p. 452.
[351] Daoud, cited in Kaplan, 'Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud', *Contreligne*.
[352] Genette, *Nouveau Discours du récit*, pp. 94-95. This term was changed from 'auteur implicite' dans l'original 'Discours du Récit' in *Figure III* because Genette found the terminology to be too vague.
[353] Carvajal, 'An Algerian Author Fights Back'.
[354] *Contre-enquête*, p. 50.

two characters were mortal enemies. It is not clear if anyone else can see the ghost or if he only appears to Haroun. Nonetheless, he is 'diaphane' and even 's'efface presque'.[355] Haroun instructs his interlocutor: 'Ne te retourne pas, non, sinon il va disparaître',[356] which, through an allusion to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, implies that the ghost is only visible to Haroun and that if acknowledged by others, he would cease to exist. Daoud appears to be suggesting that spectres can only maintain their power and ability to haunt so long as they are ignored, which in turn implies that postcolonial authors should not be afraid to address their intertwined literary heritage directly if they wish to put an end to this haunting. Moreover, '[l]e garçon semble devenir ses commandes [du fantôme],[357] which indicates that even if he does not communicate with the ghost, the barman implicitly recognises the former's existence and prepares his drinks. The logical inference here is that one does not have to be conscious of Camus's ongoing presence in the literary sphere to be affected by it.

In stark opposition to Haroun, *le fantôme* does not speak. Noting his taciturn nature, the former exclaims: 'Dire que le seul témoin de notre rencontre est un sourd-muet que j'ai pris pour un enseignant et qui n'a d'autres plaisirs que de découper les journaux et de fumer des cigarettes !'.[358] The significance of the phantom's silence is multi-layered. Firstly, it implies that Camus's actual crime – in the novel and in real life – is his silence, whether it pertains to the anonymous Arab or to French Algeria;[359] however it could equally allude to France's notorious silence surrounding the Algerian War, as explained in the Introduction. According to Derrida, silence is a necessary part of the spectre's mystery and we must accept the lack

[355] Ibid., p. 68.
[356] Ibid., p. 50.
[357] Ibid., p. 68.
[358] Ibid., p. 153.
[359] Although Camus was vocal about his desire for Algeria to remain a part of France, he mostly refused to speak on the matter publicly after his truce appeal of 1957 and was heavily criticised for this lack of engagement.

of definitive knowledge it represents because 'le non-savoir n'est pas une lacune'.[360] After all, the spectre is the *manifestation* of silence, at once the presence of an absence – something that is not really there yet whose influence remains profound. Secondly, the ghost's silence seems to suggest that while contemporary culture cannot escape the indelible *traces* of the past, it does not need to remain indebted to them but rather is free to creatively reinterpret and reinvent them. The focus has moved from Camus's writing and views to the next generation of writers and what *they* make of him. Haroun, however, finds the ghost's silence unsettling, full of overwhelming possibilities rather than a clear meaning. It is for precisely this reason that he 'déteste ce mot [silence]', because 'on y entend le vacarme de ses définitions multiples'.[361] It is the silence of his brother's story that Haroun seeks to fill; indeed, his self-appointed role is that of 'revendeur d'un silence'.[362] It seems Haroun is advocating for the next generation to tell its own story, to no longer remain silent.

This corresponds with Daoud's own views expressed in a 2018 interview, wherein he explains that he and his contemporaries are the unwilling inheritors of a past from which they feel disconnected yet cannot escape:

> J'appartiens à une génération qui a été dépossédée de la vie ici-bas par deux choses : un discours religieux qui met par la vie en sursis, qui la promet pour après la mort ; et surtout, par le récit national, le poids de l'histoire de la colonisation et de la guerre d'indépendance. […] Ceux qui sont considérés comme vivants sont les héros de la guerre de libération. Nous sommes venus après, et en quelque sorte endettés.[363]

[360] Derrida, *Spectres*, p. 68.
[361] *Contre-enquête*, p. 49.
[362] Ibid., p. 11.
[363] Daoud in Virginie Larousse, 'Kamel Daoud : « Il est difficile de s'exprimer sur l'islam quand on est coincé entre islamistes et islamophobes »', Le Monde des Religions, 29 October 2018 <http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/une/kamel-daoud-il-est-difficile-de-s-exprimer-sur-l-islam-quand-on-est-coince-entre-islamistes-et-islamophobes-29-10-2018-7562_115.php> [accessed 8 September 2020]

It seems that the 'anxiety of influence' burdening Daoud actually takes the form of an overbearing state narrative (what Benjamin Stora calls *une histoire-fiction*[364]) rather than a French literary legacy. He rejects the prevailing cultural *récit* that casts those who fought for Algerian independence as the 'living' – constantly resurrected heroes – and, by implication, those who have come after as mere ghosts – unnoticed, overlooked, and indebted. According to Daoud, Algeria is stuck in a retrospective mindset, dwelling on the past rather than planning for the future. Yet it is the future that concerns the author. He is not so much haunted by a colonial past that he himself did not experience than by the future direction in which he sees his country heading. Just like the not-yet-materialised spectre of communism that Marx saw looming over Europe in the 1800s (and which Derrida evokes in *Spectres de Marx*), Daoud sees the rise of Islamist government and a collective sequacity on the part of the Algerian population as dangerous harbingers of a repressive and stagnant future; spectres portending imminent demise. He questions how his own generation and those that follow will define themselves, suggesting that Algeria needs a new national story – or *stories*. What these might look like will be explored further in Part II.

This idea of generational transition is played out towards the end of *Contre-enquête* when Haroun and Camus's ghost both realise that they are no longer a threat to each other, appearing almost to reconcile. Haroun remarks that *le fantôme* draws closer to the table at which he sits with *l'universitaire* each night: 'il est de plus en plus proche de nous, d'un soir à l'autre'.[365] Eventually, Haroun invites the phantom to join them because the former has 'plus rien à cacher',[366] and therefore welcomes Camus-as-ghost into his own story so that the author is no longer forced to haunt it from the periphery. This evolution is aided by the

[364] Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), p.57.
[365] *Contre-enquête*, p. 90.
[366] Ibid., p. 123.

progressive description of the ghost, which gives the impression that the character slowly materialises over the course of Haroun's narration and that it is indeed the latter's words which bring him (back) to life. Although the whole text is overshadowed by Camus, this solidification of the phantom figure reflects a change in attitude towards him as Haroun acknowledges the former's presence and ongoing influence more explicitly. According to Edyta Lorek-Jezińska, spectral figures 'can be perceived as […] evidence of the cultural renewal and the potential of myths and canonical texts for generating new possibilities and meanings'.[367] This is certainly true of *Contre-enquête*, which continually demonstrates the ability of texts and their international receptions to evolve over time. The representation of Camus as a ghost suggests that the writer will never be able to rest in peace, doomed instead to haunt Algerian consciousness precisely because he cannot be confined to a simple category and laid to rest once and for all. As Daoud questions:

> Faut-il donc enterrer Camus définitivement ? Non, ni le déterrer abusivement. Cet écrivain est l'une des plus intenses réflexions sur la condition de l'homme en ce siècle. L'homme sans nationalité. C'est ainsi qu'il faut s'en souvenir et c'est pour cette raison qu'il faut arrêter de disputer le cadavre de cet homme sans repos.[368]

Camus, then, will continue to generate debate and inspire a reappraisal of French-Algerian history. This debate, however, is exactly what Daoud believes is so vital to sustaining and enriching cultural dialogue on both a national and international level since it enables one to give new life to old stories in a hauntological cycle of renewal and reappropriation. Like Camus, Daoud has been viewed as 'la figure du traître au Maghreb et celle du dissident en Occident'[369] and, as noted earlier, he has received (perhaps not undeservedly) a strong

[367] Edyta Lorek-Jezińska, *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* (Turán, Poland: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, 2013), p. 8.
[368] Daoud, 'À qui appartient Albert Camus ?', 5 October 2011, *La Cause Littéraire* <https://www.lacauselitteraire.fr/a-qui-appartient-albert-camus> [accessed 21 Februrary, 2020]
[369] Larousse, 'Kamel Daoud'.

backlash from his responses to the Cologne attacks of 2016, accused not only of Islamophobia but, even more damningly perhaps, of betraying his fellow Algerians. Nonetheless, he unapologetically explains: 'Je ne suis pas un intellectuel de soutien ou de soumission'.[370] His reputation as 'résistant face aux pouvoirs établis'[371] strikes a chord with Camus's belief that the role of the writer and artist is to honour 'le service de la vérité et […] la liberté'.[372] Similarly, just like with Meursault, Haroun eventually develops an affinity with *Camus-fantôme*, despite his initial dislike of the figure, and this exemplifies Derrida's affirmation that '*l'effet de spectralité*' involves 'déjouer cette opposition, voire cette dialectique, entre la présence effective et son autre'.[373] Haroun observes : '[Le fantôme] m'a à peine regardé durant toutes ces années de voisinage. Ha, ha, je suis son Arabe. Ou alors, il est le mien.'.[374] Does this mean that Camus has become the Other in Haroun's story? Who is whose ghost? Daoud subverts the positions of power between author and reader, suggesting that both are equally involved in the construction of meaning and value in a text. As such, the figure of the ghost in *Contre-enquête* not only embodies the (non-)discreet presence of the author of the hypotext, but also the complicated and ambiguous relationship of ex-colonised citizens to their country of origin and to the metropole.

By foregrounding the different phantomatic levels of narration, Daoud reminds us that no text is written in isolation but is instead a mosaic constructed from various layers of intertwined literary references, influences, and inspiration. Through a haunting by Camus's text(s), characters, and politics, *Contre-enquête* deconstructs and reconstructs Algeria's past,

---

[370] Sylvie Tanette, interview with Daoud, *Les Inkoruptibles*, 23 Februrary 2017 <https://www.lesinrocks.com/2017/02/23/actualite/actualite/kamel-daoud-publie-chroniques-ne-suis-intellectuel-de-soutien-de-soumission/> [accessed 09 September 2020].
[371] Larousse, 'Kamel Daoud'.
[372] Camus, 'Discours du 10 Décembre 1957, delivered at a ceremony for Nobel Prize winners, L'Hôtel de Ville de Stockholm, published in *Discours de Suède, Œuvres complètes IV : 1957-1959*, ed. by Raymond Gay-Crosier (Paris: Gallimard 2008), pp. 237-243 (p. 240).
[373] Derrida, *Spectres,* p. 72 (original emphasis).
[374] *Contre-enquête*, p. 68.

present, and future, extending Camus's philosophy of fraternity and collective revolt against the indifference of the world to a postcolonial setting. As Sarah Horton asserts, 'Daoud's novel brilliantly reminds us that we must live in solidarity with others even if they hate us for acknowledging the absurd, even though no one – not Meursault, not Camus, and not Haroun – can offer a final, certain account of how to do so.'[375]

The fact that Camus's ghost is 'sourd-muet' in Daoud's novel represents the former's refusal – or even inability – to yield definitive responses to questions about his works, suggesting instead that it is incumbent on current and future generations to provide these answers.[376] Similarly, Daoud refuses to give any definitive version of events in his own story. *Contre-enquête* revolves around a single incident – Moussa's death – that is told and re-told in various forms by various characters throughout the story, whether this is M'ma's fabulated bedtime stories; the *fait divers* Haroun is forced to translate and embellish to satisfy his mother's grief; the account given in Meursault's book itself (the supposedly autobiographical *L'Autre*); Meriem's scholarly interpretation of the work; or Haroun's own meandering monologue in the bar. It falls to the reader to sift through these differing accounts in order to form his or her own interpretation, but Haroun does not make this easy. At the end of the novel, he even seems to undercut his own authority, sewing seeds of doubt in the reader's mind about the veracity of the entire story:

> Mon histoire te convient-elle ? C'est tout ce que je peux t'offrir. C'est ma parole, à prendre ou à laisser. Je suis le frère de Moussa ou le frère de personne. Juste un mythomane que tu as rencontré pour remplir tes cahiers… C'est ton choix, l'ami. […] Deux inconnus avec deux histoires sur une plage sans fin. Laquelle est la plus vraie ? Une question intime. À toi de trancher […] Ha, ha ![377]

[375] Sarah Horton, 'Solidarity and the Absurd in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête', Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* XXIV, 2 (2016), 286-303 (p. 286).
[376] The ghost's silence could also be a reference to Camus's mother, who was mute, although this is more obviously reflected in the character of Haroun's mother, who, after the murder of Joseph Larquais, 'ne dit plus rien' (*Contre-enquête*, p.49, 'muette' p. 147).
[377] *Contre-enquête*, p. 153.

Ashcroft et al maintain that this absence of explanation is an integral aspect of postcolonial writing, asserting that a postcolonial text's 'capacity to "mean" […] is circumscribed […] by that post-colonial silence […] which cannot be overwhelmed by any interpretation'.[378] Instead, this silence 'indicates a potential and shifting horizon of possible meanings' – just like the essential flux and ambiguity of the spectre.[379] Indeed, 'the subversion of a canon' is achieved by 'alternative reading practices',[380] and this is exactly what Daoud challenges his readers to do through a hauntological portrayal of narrative: approach a text they think they know well from a different perspective in order to gain a deeper insight. Just as Meriem taught Haroun, Daoud is instructing us to 'lire le livre d'une certaine manière, en le faisant pencher de côté comme pour en faire tomber les détails invisibles.'[381] There are many ways we can read Algeria's history, and it is high time, according to Daoud, that we retire the current national narrative as the only valid one. Indeed, he explicitly calls for Algeria to '[a]bandonner le récit national comme récit unique' and '[d]ésacraliser l'Histoire et sacraliser le présent'.[382]

Contre-enquête is not simply a 'counter-investigation' into Meursault or Camus, or even the colonial system; it is, above all else, an investigation into writing – and re-writing – itself, encouraging us to 'uncover the silences of the text' [383] and fill them with our own interpretations. Enacting a form of what Maryse Condé calls 'literary cannibalism', [384]

[378] Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back,* p. 184.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ashcroft et al, p. 186.
[381] *Contre-enquête*, p. 142.
[382] Daoud in Farid Alilat, 'Kamel Daoud : « Le fond du problème en Algérie va au-delà du politique »', 12 September 2017, *Jeune Afrique* [online], <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/471200/societe/kamel-daoud-le-fond-du-probleme-en-algerie-va-au-dela-du-politique/> [accessed 2 February 2021].
[383] Ibid, p. 190.
[384] Condé, interview with Rebecca Woolf, 'Maryse Condé by Rebecca Wolff', Bomb Magazine*, The Author Interviews*, Soho Press, 1 July 1999 <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/maryse-cond%C3%A9/> [accessed 20 January 2020]. Condé really borrows here from Suzanne Césaire's dictum: 'la poésie martiniquaise sera cannibale ou ne sera pas' in 'Misère d'une poésie', *Tropiques* IV (1942), pp. 48-50 (p. 50). This notion of text as cannibalistic is investigated more extensively in Felisa Vergara Reynolds, *The Author as Cannibal: Rewriting in Francophone Literature as a Postcolonial Genre 1969-1995* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021).

Daoud's model of postcolonial rewriting involves taking from the other, consuming it, and then regurgitating it as a new creation. As Ruth Parkes affirms, we cannot escape the 'ghosts of texts past',[385] but, I add, we can choose how we respond to them. Indeed, Haroun invites *l'universitaire* to write his own work on Haroun's story, continuing the process of what Mary Poteau-Tralie calls 'yet-to-be written future retellings and future reckonings with the original text'.[386] In this way, the text mobilises *différance* not just in terms of oppositional difference but also in terms of a future deferral of justice, suggesting that the process of revision and reinterpreting is – and must be – perpetual. The startling complexity of *Contre-enquête*'s relationship with *L'Étranger* renders the task of unravelling the anfractuous narrative thread quite a challenge – Haroun himself acknowledges that '[t]u peux retourner cette histoire dans tous les sens, elle ne tient pas la route'[387] – but it is this active involvement on the part of the reader that enhances the reading experience. After all, as Brozgal affirms, *Meursault, Contre-enquête* 'does not deliver Moussa's story but rather a story of narrative impossibility'. [388] Furthermore, 'through its ultimate sabotage of the genre of the postcolonial remake, […] it reminds us that "fiction is a way of thinking,"' and a hauntological one at that. [389]

[385] Ruth Parkes, 'Dealing with Ghosts: Literary Assertion in Statius' *Thebaid*' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 20. *Cambridge Core: Journals and Books Online* <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0048671X00000515>.
[386] Mary Poteau-Tralie, 'Fictionalizing Fiction through the Metaphor of (De)Construction in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête'*, *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature,* 43.2 (2019), p. 3 <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2039>
[387] *Contre-enquête*, p. 63.
[388] Brozgal, 'The Critical Pulse', p. 43.
[389] Ibid., p. 38.

Nos richesses – Kaouther Adimi

Like *Contre-enquête*, Kaouther Adimi's 2017 novel *Nos richesses* depicts a haunting by French literary figures. However, rather than responding to a classic French text, it retells the history of a little-known French bookshop and publishing house in Algiers called 'Les Vraies Richesses' (a tribute to Jean Giono's work of the same title), which became a monumental testament to Mediterranean literature and the free press. In this way, Adimi, like Daoud, has chosen to address a literary legacy known for its commitment to freedom of expression. In 1936, Edmond Charlot (1915-2004), a *pied-noir* aged only twenty-one at the time, opened the bookshop-cum-publishing house with encouragement from his philosophy teacher, Jean Grenier. Charlot, often considered part of 'L'École d'Alger' along with Camus (though they both rejected the association), envisioned an inclusive haven of writing from both Europe and North Africa, aiming to publish everything in French, Arabic, and English. His bookstore became a creative refuge for young writers, intellectuals, and artists, with its slogan 'Des jeunes, par des jeunes, pour des jeunes'. Indeed it was where Camus, Charlot's classmate, published his first works. Other literary greats that Les Vraies Richesses helped mould are: Jean Sénac, Jules Roy, Kateb Yacine, Jean Amrouche, Mohammed Dib, Himoud Brahimi, Max-Pol Fouchet, Saveur Galliéro, and Emmanuel Roblès. Charlot also translated works from celebrated American and European writers, such as Gertrude Stein, Virginia Wolf, and Rainer Maria Rilke, as part of his attempt to make international writing accessible to a wider audience.

This literary and cultural engagement extended to lending books to impoverished students and exhibiting artwork by up-and-coming artists. Charlot refused the censorship regulations imposed by the collaborative Vichy government and was imprisoned for being a suspected Gaullist as a result. Upon his release, however, he continued to publish – even when paper

and resources were scarce – and circulated forbidden works such as Stein's *Paris France* and Vercors's poem 'Le Silence de la mer'. The poet James Kirkup described Charlot as:

> a man whose life was devoted to international understanding between Arabs and Europeans; an impassioned bibliophile and literary enthusiast who started the careers of many famous authors. He also defended the idea of "Mediterranean civilisation" as a force for peace and artistic excellence in a world rent asunder by politics and war.[390]

Nonetheless, despite being a symbol of resistance for locals and those in the literary sphere, Charlot's contributions to literature, visual arts, and francophone culture have been little recognised until recently. As Adimi herself states in an interview with *L'Humanité Magazine*, 'Charlot est le grand éditeur résistant de la France libre. […] Pourtant, à la fin du conflit, il est quasiment oublié.'[391] In this way, it is fair to say that Charlot has become a literary ghost in real life, a legendary figure confined to the periphery of French-Algerian memory. This is likely due to the fact that Les Vraies Richesses ended in ruins, now a scarcely visited annex of the Bibliothèque nationale d'Alger. Upon being called to Paris in 1945 to work at the Ministry for Information, Charlot left guardianship of the bookshop to his sister-in-law and briefly opened another in Paris. Unfortunately, despite its initial success, it soon went bankrupt. Forced to return to Algiers, Charlot established yet another *librairie*, appropriately named Rivages, but in 1961, it was bombed twice by the Organisation d'Armée Secrète (a French paramilitary group against Algerian independence), which left Charlot's entire archive reduced to ashes. He valiantly rebuilt the business but, sadly, it

[390] James Kirkup, 'Edmond Charlot: Discoverer and Publisher of Camus', *Guardian UK*: 'Obituaries', 20 April 2004 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/edmond-charlot-549790.html> [accessed 25 April 2020]
[391] Muriel Steinmetz, 'Littérature. Entrée dans Les Vraies Richesses d'Edmond Charlot', Interview with Adimi in *L'Humanité*, 31 August 2017 <https://www.humanite.fr/litterature-entree-dans-les-vraies-richesses-dedmond-charlot-641313> [accessed 27 April 2020]

never recovered and has since been largely forgotten.[392] Adimi's novel seeks to redress this oversight in French-Algerian literary history. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the bookshop, although intended as a cross-cultural initiative, still represents a colonial legacy since it was run by French students and writers whose presence in Algeria was a reminder of France's political and cultural domination. Throughout *Nos richesses*, this legacy – including Charlot himself – is represented in ghostly terms, and therefore, like *Contre-enquête*, it casts French literature as a spectral presence in order to expound its complex and problematic status in contemporary Algerian culture and memory, as well as to express fears that a certain spirit of literariness is dying out in Algeria.

Generational Haunting: From Literary Havens to Doughnuts

Adimi's novel, which won the Prix du Style 2017, opens in modern-day Algiers, walking the reader through rue Hamani (previously rue Charras) all the way up to number 2b, where an inscription is faintly visible on the window: 'Un homme qui lit en vaut deux'. This is, of course, the façade of Les Vraies Richesses, which, in Adimi's novel, has been sold by the government to a private buyer who intends to turn it into a doughnut shop. Young Algerian-born student Ryad, who has just finished studying in Paris, is recruited to empty and repaint the remains of the bookstore for this purpose. His instructions read : 'Jette tout ou fais détruire. Ne discute pas avec les voisins, surtout les commerçants. L'important c'est que tu puisses vider cette librairie de tout ce qui s'y trouve'.[393] The novel alternates between past and present, interspersing the narrative with a fictionalised *carnet* from Charlot's youth in order to captivatingly re-imagine the trials and tribulations involved in the establishment of

[392] Vincent Jaffeux, 'Alger au temps des « Vraies Richesses » : l'ascension d'une génération littéraire nord-africaine autour d'Edmond Charlot (1936-1944)', *Les cahiers d'Histoire Immédiate*, 2013, pp.19-29 < https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01865765> [accessed April 12 2020]; Kirkup, 'Edmond Charlot'.
[393] Kaouther Adimi, *Nos richesses* (Paris : Seuil, 2017), p. 45.

Les Vraies Richesses and assess its legacy today. In this way, the novel could be considered an 'anarchival study' since it privileges the role of literary scholars rather than historians in piecing together history and cultural memory.[394] During the course of cleaning out the *librairie*, Ryad encounters several ghost-like figures which he attempts to dismiss as archaic remnants of a time no longer relevant to him but which perturb him nonetheless. Chief among them are Charlot and his literary circle, as well as Abdallah – self-appointed guardian of the store's heritage.

As one critic notes, Adimi portrays Les Vraies Richesses as 'une librairie peuplée de silhouettes remarquables'.[395] The bookshop is not only haunted by its founder but by the memory of and traces left by all the authors and artists whose works graced its shelves. These well-known figures appear to Ryad in various forms such that it seems impossible to rid the bookshop of their presence, despite his attempts. Black and white photographs fall out of old, dusty volumes; letters, personal dedications, and notes by Camus are found scribbled in the margins of manuscripts; and a stately portrait of Charlot himself hangs on the wall, overseeing all. On Ryad's first full day at the bookshop, the narrator remarks that 'Edmond Charlot surveille ses faits et gestes,'[396] almost as if judging the young student for destroying his literary metropolis. Later, as he is collecting books for disposal,

> Ryad ne peut s'empêcher de lancer un regard à Edmond Charlot figé sur la photo. Étrange et désagréable sentiment d'être observé, peut-être à cause des clichés en noir et blanc de tous ces écrivains. Il hésite à les retirer tout de suite mais y renonce.[397]

---

[394] Lia Brozgal, *Absent the Archive: Cultural Traces of a Massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).
[395] Alexandra Oancea, 'Compte rendu : Kaouther Adimi, Nos richesses, Paris, Seuil, 2017', *Revista Cercurilor studenţeşti ale Departamentului de Limba şi Literatura Franceză*, 6 (2017), 129-130 (p.30), *The Central and Eastern European Online Library* <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=757229> [accessed 27 April 2020]
[396] *Nos richesses*, p. 47.
[397] Ibid., p. 72.

Ryad is clearly unnerved by the disconcerting sensation of being observed by a phantom presence. But why is he so uncomfortable with this place? Despite the bookshop's 'air acceuillante', Ryad 's'y sent vulnérable'.[398] Being surrounded by reminders of a history that is supposedly his yet about which he knows very little has forced an introspection that is both illuminating and unsettling – like Mbembe's notion of a spectral confrontation with the self. Ryad feels out of place not only because Algiers is so foreign to him (despite his Algerian roots, he has only ever visited the city once when he was six years old), [399] but also because he 'n'a jamais aimé lire [et] ne trouve aucun charme à tout ce papier imprimé, relié, collé'.

This antithetical parallel between Charlot and Ryad – two students in their early twenties with starkly differing views on literature – is foregrounded throughout the novel. Ryad feels no connection to the place he is destroying, nor to the literary history it represents, or even to the books themselves: 'Il y a longtemps, au même endroit, se sont tenus des écrivains, des poètes, des peintres, pense-t-il. *Ça suffit, toutes ces histoires me donnent la migraine.*'.[400] Whilst it seems as though Adimi is implying here that the current generation is apathetic to both its past and literature in general, she is equally highlighting the possibility that these French works might not quite resonate with contemporary Algerian youth, who often have a conflicted relationship with their joint cultural heritage. By way of contrast, Charlot, in Adimi's novel, writes in his diary : 'qu'est-ce qui peut être plus important que […] la littérature?'.[401] Through this juxtaposition between the generations' respective engagement (or lack thereof) with literature, it is clear that Charlot and his fellow writers are figured in quite nostalgic terms, despite Adimi's insistence that *Nos richesses*

[398] Ibid., p. 47.
[399] Ibid., p. 46-47.
[400] Ibid., p. 148 (original emphasis).
[401] Ibid., p. 36.

'n'a rien de nostalgique'.[402] In this way, Adimi's novel differs strikingly from *Contre-enquête*, wherein the author's concern for the future in no way stems from a yearning for the past. It is interesting, however, that Daoud also focuses on a perceived apathy in contemporary Algerian youth but with regard to politics rather than literature.

Nonetheless, these 'écrivains […] poètes [et] peintres' are not the only ghostly figures in Adimi's novel. Ryad's arrival is closely monitored by Abdallah, the 'preposé au prêt des *Vraies Richesses* que nous appelons le libraire'.[403] This elderly local is incredibly fond of the bookshop, whose closure has left him with 'le cœur brisé'. He is 'taiseux' with 'immenses yeux noirs, pénétrants' that follow Ryad's every move[404] – not in a menacing way but rather in a concerned and wise, grandfatherly manner – almost, as Alexandra Oancea notes, like a 'professeur face à son disciple'.[405] Abdallah is also depicted in spectral terms, manifesting out of nowhere and always wearing a white sheet over his shoulders like 'un étrange voile céleste'.[406] When Ryad inquires as to why the old man wears this cloth, Abdallah explains: 'C'est mon linceuil. […] C'est le drap dans lequel on m'enterrera'. He is even explicitly described as an apparition – 'Le voilà, Abdallah, de nouveau à l'intérieur du 2 bis, avec son drap blanc sur les épaules. On dirait un étrange mage, une apparition.'.[407] The paternal figure assumes this ghostly form because, it seems, he is becoming irrelevant, invisible, out of date – just like Charlot's bookstore, which is making way for a more popular and economic enterprise. Abdallah acts as guardian of the past, overseeing Ryad's emptying of the bookshop and questioning him along the way, attempting to 'faire vibrer [son] cœur'.[408] The latter, however, remains unfazed. For him, all these old books are dead and

[402] Adimi, quoted in Steinmetz, 'Entrée dans Les Vraies Richesses'.
[403] *Nos richesses*, p. 16.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Oancea, 'Compte rendu', p. 130.
[406] *Nos richesses*, p. 56.
[407] Ibid., p. 100.
[408] Oancea, p. 130.

irrelevant, but Abdallah refuses to leave the young man alone until he reconsiders. He forces Ryad to justify his role as 'destructeur de librairie' until the latter exasperatedly explains: 'Je dois faire un stage manuel pour valider mon année d'ingénierie. Je vide le lieu, je repeins, je pars. Sans réfléchir.'. To this, Abdallah chidingly replies: 'Tu vas dans une librairie pour ne pas réfléchir, toi ?'.[409] Over time, his scrutiny of Ryad begins to have an impact and the latter eventually becomes reluctant to dispose of the bookshelves on the street 'à cause […] d'Abdallah qui veille, il le sait, même si aujourd'hui encore, il n'est pas là'.[410] In this way, Abdallah acts as an intermediary between the two generations and cultures.

Through the inclusion of imagined snippets from Charlot's journal (based on Adimi's research), the author contrasts the construction of Les Vraies Richesses and its close-knit and politically engaged community of the 1930s with its destruction in 2017. These paralleled timelines, sustained throughout the novel, enable the author to expose a generational shift regarding the appreciation of literature and the recognition of its potential as a tool for political change. Charlot and his literary milieux used their writing as a means of activism. The first text Charlot published, for example, was a play co-written by Camus, Jean-Paul Sicard, Bourgeois, and Poignant in 1936 called *Révolte dans les Asturies*. The work depicts the Spanish mining revolt of two years prior, focussing on the brutal government response. Despite the fact it was banned by the mayor of Algiers, Charlot published the play and even attempted to stage it. From the very beginning of Charlot's career, then, writing and publishing have been acts of resistance, standing against repression and censorship. For his contemporaries, literature was symbolic of freedom, creativity, and dissent. Notwithstanding this idealistic representation of Charlot, we must bear in mind that the editor's presence in Algeria was inevitably bound up with a colonial agenda. Although

[409] *Nos richesses*, p. 54.
[410] Ibid., p. 171-172.

his goal was to forge a unifying collection of Mediterranean literature, he was still a somewhat complicit figure, even if passively, in France's colonisation of Algeria since his family were early French settlers and therefore forged their livelihood through the occupation of Algerian land, benefitting directly from France's imperial enterprise. The predicament of the *Pied-noirs* – particularly later, repatriated generations – is exceedingly complicated, as they fall into a confusing, liminal space that could perhaps be described as 'ni victimes, ni bourreaux' to borrow Camus's terminology[411] (a concept also expounded in Michael Rothberg's notion of implicated memory, as mentioned in the Introduction[412]). Adimi, however, seems mostly to ignore this problematic aspect of Charlot's legacy, depicting the editor instead in wholly utopian terms as a reconciler of French and Algerian literary cultures. This portrayal of Charlot is notably less nuanced than that of Camus in *Contre-enquête*, who is represented as a complicated political figure with tied loyalties, at once a literary 'criminal' and a creative genius. Adimi's rather idealised portrait of Charlot could be inflected by a desire to depoliticise Charlot's legacy for a French readership, given the novel's publication by *éditions du Seuil*, and the author's relocation to France in 2009.

At the end of *Nos richesses*, Adimi quotes Jules Roy, who remembers his time with Charlot as 'une sorte de mirage' – an almost ghostly hallucination of greatness.[413] In the passage cited, Roy attributes the 'creation' of his literary contemporaries to Charlot, declaring that he 'fut un peu notre créateur à tous, tout au moins notre médecin accoucheur'.[414] The choice to include such eulogising citations helps to further paint Charlot as an idolised literary hero. That said, there are also references, in Charlot's fictionalised diary entries, to

[411] The collective title of a series of essays Camus published in Resistance journal *Combat* in 1946, repr. in *Œuvres complètes II*, 1944-48, ed. by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), pp. 436-456.
[412] Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).
[413] *Nos richesses*, p. 176 (cited from Jules Roy, 'Preface' in Michel Puce, *Edmond Charlot éditeur* [Paris: Domens, 2015]).
[414] Ibid.

the tensions that existed within his literary relationships, such as his falling-out with Jean Amrouche. In this way, although it is not highlighted throughout the text, the reader is reminded that Charlot is also an embattled and contradictory figure at times. The constant challenges his career faced, combined with the fractious nature of his social and business relations, are perhaps reflective of the larger and more long-lasting tensions between literary cultures. Charlot's status as a ghost is therefore laced with notions of colonial haunting that serve to further highlight the uncertain place of French literature in contemporary Algerian society.

Ryad, however, representative of the Algerian youth of today, is less interested in literature. For him, it is nothing more than an out-of-date mode of communication, and he has no qualms discarding original volumes of classic works. Rather than eliciting notions of creativity, wonder, adventure, or escape, literature produces anxiety for Ryad. He is 'angoissé par tous ces livres […] Il regarde ces caractères noirs imprimés sur du papier blanc et pense aux acariens'.[415] This analogy, likening letters to small parasites, recalls to mind Daoud's conception of literature as a potentially deceptive and parasitic force, stealing or living off someone else's story. Acarids, more commonly known as tics or dust mites, are a highly allergenic subclass of arachnids, and thus the image emphasises Ryad's aversion to literature by suggesting that he is 'allergic' to it in some way. More tellingly still, he is afraid that the books might 'lui tombent dessus' and crush him under their weight, like he heard once happened to a famous author.[416] According to Oancea, this insensitive and bibliophobic portrayal of Ryad is an indictment upon the current generation: 'une réflexion profonde sur le monde actuel où les vraies valeurs commencent peu à peu à s'aliéner, à

[415] Ibid., p. 71.
[416] Ibid.

changer.' [417] This generational distinction is foregrounded when Ryad overhears two elderly men in the bar disparaging the purported apathy of today's youth. 'Et que fait la jeunesse? Rien!', one of them laments. 'Rien, ils ne feront rien', the other confirms. 'Mon fils a vingt ans et il passe sa journée devant son ordinateur. L'imbécile !'. They conclude that their sons belong to a '[g]énération foutue !',[418] and Adimi explains that this mutual incomprehension is a common theme in her works : 'Dans tous mes romans, les générations n'arrivent pas à se parler'.[419] So what does this mean for the generational ghosts in the novel ?

The appearance of these spectral figures – Abdallah, guardian of this bookshop with his shroud and phantomatic qualities, and Charlot's literary elite returning from a past era through various objects, photos, and memorabilia – encourages a re-evaluation of the role of literature in contemporary society. While Abdallah is desperately trying to hold on to the literary ghosts of the past, objecting to the closure of Les Vraies Richesses, Ryad is attempting to exorcise them from his own history, refusing to recognise a literary tradition to which he cannot relate. Abdallah serves as a reminder of this heritage that Ryad rejects but of which, try as he might, he cannot rid himself. His replacement of Abdallah as caretaker (of sorts) of Les Vraies Richesses represents one generation ceding cultural guardianship to the next, but it also constitutes a critique of the Algerian government. As Ania Ouldlamara declaims, 'la transformation des Vraies Richesses en restaurant à beignets dans l'ouvrage de Kaouther Adimi illustre à merveille les priorités du gouvernement algérien, misant sur la consommation de masse plutôt que la culture pour tous'.[420] This is

[417] Oancea, 'Compte rendu', p. 130.
[418] *Nos richesses*, p. 51.
[419] Adimi, cited in Mabrouck Rachedi, '« Nos richesses: Kaother Adimi, l'étrangère »', *Jeune Afrique*, 15 September 2017 <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/472825/culture/nos-richesses-kaouther-adimi-letrangere/> [accessed 30 April 2020]
[420] Ania Kaci Ouldlamara, 'Edmond Charlot, reviens - la Littérature algérienne a besoin de toi', *Libération : Chroniques algériennes* [online], 19 October 2017 <http://chroniques-algeriennes.blogs.liberation.fr/2017/10/19/un-homme-qui-lit-en-vaut-deux/> [accessed 30 April 2020]

further emphasised when Ryad's father states in a letter to his son: 'Tu sais comment nous sommes, nous ne nous rendons compte de nos richesses qu'une fois que nous les perdons ! […] Ici, un beignet vaudra toujours plus qu'un livre'.[421] Even the significance of the bookshop's title reinforces this disillusionment with capitalism, since Jean Giono's *Les vraies richesses*, after which the store was named, criticises the 'false values' promoted by consumer society at the expense of the 'real riches' found in the natural world around us. Combined with the immanent commercialisation of the bookstore, this suggests that Adimi is championing Charlot's society of the 1930s and 40s over the superficial materialism of the present. However, this is again at odds with her assertion that *Nos richesses* 'n'a rien de nostalgique'. Perhaps what she is referring to here is the novel's forward-oriented outlook rather than its utopian view of the past. Indeed, the work's reflection on Charlot's era, whilst undeniably adulatory in tone, serves to highlight a *current* condition, which in turn invokes anxiety about the future. The central questions Adimi raises seem to be: 'How will the youth of today define themselves for the future?'; 'In what direction is Algeria's literature and culture heading?', and 'What, if anything, needs to change?'. Like *Contre-enquête,* then, *Nos richesses* is advocating an openness to, and a welcoming of, literary ghosts in order to sustain a connection to a past tradition that can help reform the present and hopefully alter an encroaching future where literature and history are forgotten, and historic bookshops become fast-food chains.

While Charlot and his circle are the ghosts of what was, Abdallah is like 'the ghost of Christmas present', warning Ryad to change his course lest he remain a 'crétin' for life.[422] In this way, the old man is a helpful spectre, alerting his hauntee (for want of a better term)

[421] *Nos richesses*, p. 44.
[422] Ibid. p. 54.

to what Avery Gordon terms a 'something-to-be-done'.[423] Ryad, however, refuses to recognise this and simply views him as a nuisance, pitying the way the old man desperately clings to a past that no longer exists. It is not quite clear why Abdallah has such a positive view of francophone literature given that he lived through the oppression of French colonisation; nor is it apparent why Ryad is so dismissive of it when he finds Algiers 'froide' and has chosen to move to France instead.[424] The fact that the characters' reactions are not self-evident further highlights the ambivalent status of the French literary heritage in Algeria today. What *is* evident is that a disconnect exists between the generations that remains unresolved in Adimi's novel: not only does Abdallah's message fail to get through to Ryad but moreover, the ghosts of Charlot, Camus and other literary greats who frequented Les Vraies Richesses do not inspire a sense of awe or pride or even respect in the student, only annoyance and unease. As Oancea remarks : 'Une librairie, trésor et gardienne des temps passés, des âmes des écrivains et des livres d'antan à la fois, échoue dans sa mission de faire transmettre un message si des gens comme Ryad ferment leurs cœurs.'[425] Perhaps Ryad sees Abdallah as a ghost because to him, the old man is already dead – merely a remnant of a past that no longer matters. Adimi, however, suggests that the past *does* matter and moreover, that it can and should contribute meaningfully to the regeneration of Algerian literary consciousness.

The importance of collective memory in sustaining the legacy of Les Vraies Richesses is accentuated through Adimi's use of the first-person plural in her narration. Every now and again, a chapter of *Nos richesses* is written from the perspective of an unspecified 'nous', the implied inhabitants of Algiers watching over all that is happening. These onlookers act

[423] See Introduction.
[424] *Nos richesses,* p. 49.
[425] Oancea, p. 130.

as ghostly observers of local affairs; invisible yet omnipresent onlookers. Adimi explains: 'Dans le texte, j'utilise le « nous », qui me permet de raconter en même temps la petite et la grande histoire. Ce « nous » appartient à la mémoire collective, c'est le « nous » de ceux qui habitent le pays.'.[426] In this way, it becomes clear that the bookshop is a synecdoche for the wider cultural significance of the French literary heritage in Algeria, reinforced through the narratorial commentary: *'notre mémoire est la somme de nos histoires*'.[427] This sentiment of loss associated with the destruction of the bookstore is akin to the loss of culture, language, and literature suffered under more than a century of French rule. Perhaps this is why Abdallah is so reluctant to relinquish his ties to this publishing house dedicated to Mediterranean literature – that which was neither the sole preserve of the French nor the Algerians. As the narrator explains, 'Abdallah pense qu'on n'habite pas vraiment les lieux, que ce sont les lieux qui nous habitent.'[428]

If it is places and their history that inhabit and possess us, and literature is the vehicle through which they can do this, then it is government in Adimi's novel that threatens this process of communal and generational solidarity. Two mysterious, unnamed figures appear to be spying on Ryad and Abdallah throughout the novel, though only mentioned a handful of times: 'Depuis la Renault grise, dont le pare-brise est givré, les deux hommes observent Abdallah et Ryad en prenant des notes sur un calepin.'.[429] Although their identities are left ambiguous, one might assume they are government officials, covertly surveying their citizens. In the final chapter of the novel, the men's authority is undercut by the narrator: 'Vous ne ferez pas attention à la Renault grise garée sur la côté. Ceux qui sont à l'intérieur n'ont aucun pouvoir.'.[430] It seems Adimi is suggesting that ultimately, no form of censorship

[426] Steinmetz, 'Entrée dans Les Vraies Richesses'.
[427] *Nos richesses*, p. 14.
[428] Ibid., p. 172.
[429] Ibid., p. 173.
[430] Ibid., p. 175.

or government surveillance can deter creative progress. The Algerian government, in Adimi's novel, has sold (out) Les Vraies Richesses to a private buyer rather than keeping it publicly available to citizens, so it is possible that these intimidating agents with their sunglasses, dark uniforms, and tinted car windows have been sent to ensure Ryad completes his job with minimal interference from Abdallah and the locals. Adimi once again contrasts the nonchalance of today's youth with the activism of Charlot's youth, suggesting that the latter would have resisted the government's closure and selling of the bookstore. Today's laissez-faire attitude is epitomised at the end of the novel with the tragic image of Charlot's portrait 'drowning' in a river somewhere, stuffed into a garbage bag along with other rejected items of historical and emotional significance: 'Le portrait de Charlot se noie dans l'eau d'Alger'.[431] The present generation, it seems, has buried – or drowned – him for good.

Adimi, however, is appealing to the *next* generation to resurrect him, to continue to reread and retell his legacy. The first and last chapters of *Nos richesses* – both entitled 'Alger, 2017' – directly address the reader and future generations using 'vous'. The first sentence of the book is as follows: 'Dès votre arrivée à Alger, il vous faudra prendre les rues en pente, les monter et les descendre.'[432] The narrator insists on an appreciation of the finer details of the city, encouraging future visitors to '[p]ren[dre] le temps de [s']asseoir sur une des marches de la Casbah [et é]coute[r] les jeunes musiciens jouer du banjo'.[433] The novel ends cyclically, with a final plea to the reader not to let Charlot's history be forgotten : 'Un jour, vous viendrez au 2 bis de la rue Hamani, n'est-ce pas ?'.[434] It seems that Adimi's answer to the question 'What needs to change?' is a recognition and acceptance of France and Algeria's intertwined literary heritage – for better or for worse. This is reinforced by the use of the

[431] Ibid., p. 173.
[432] Ibid., p. 11.
[433] Ibid., p. 12.
[434] Ibid., p. 177.

inclusive, possessive pronoun 'nos' in the novel's title, which suggests that both countries have a shared ownership of the bookshop and the literary heritage it fostered. As Christine Marcandier reminds us,

> *Nos richesses* est avant tout une déclaration d'amour à la littérature, aux livres en tant qu'objets, aux librairies comme lieux de vie et de rencontres, à un homme de lettres qui a conçu son existence dans et par la littérature comme acte de résistance.[435]

In this way, the novel is not only about the appreciation of a Franco-Algerian literary heritage but also about the conservation of literature more broadly, as a form of expression and as a means for each generation to define itself – 'Des jeunes, par des jeunes, pour des jeunes'.

For Abdallah and the Algiers locals, the literary ghosts that inhabit *Les Vraies Richesses* are positive reminders of a resistant and hopeful past, eliciting affection and pride; whereas for Ryad, they represent a negative haunting, making him feel judged and uncomfortable. As such, the effect of this haunting by French literary figures is almost the opposite of that depicted in *Meursault, contre-enquête*, where the French legacy provokes an anxiety of influence for current Algerian authors but is revered by French youth (represented by Meriem and the young 'universitaire' who idolises Camus as '[s]on héro'). In Adimi's work, rather than Algerian writers trying to seek some distance from its historically oppressive ties to France, a young French subject is trying to exorcise his Algerian roots. The current generation is portrayed as dismissive of its predecessors who were, in Adimi's estimation, trying to forge a joint and unified literature between Algeria and France, instead ceding this intercultural ideal to a far more capitalist agenda. At times, however, *Nos richesses* risks creating an over-simplified dichotomy between Charlot's era and the present, with its

[435] Christine Marcandier, 'Kaouther Adimi: « Cette libraire a une grande histoire » (Nos richesses)', *Diacritik*, 6 September 2018 <https://diacritik.com/2018/09/06/kaouther-adimi-cette-librairie-a-une-grande-histoire-nos-richesses/> [accessed 25 April 2020]

veneration of a past literary tradition. Charlot's idealised notion of fraternisation between the two heritages may indeed have been well-intended but it still formed part of a colonial enterprise since such an international literary space could never be completely de-politicised in a colonial environment. It seems Adimi is commenting on the dwindling appreciation of literature and the lack of engagement from Algerian youth today, while Daoud is suggesting that intergenerational complicity persists in the form of an ongoing literary dialogue that continues to resurrect and reform older texts. Nonetheless, both works look to the future, concerned with how their country will respond to what appears to be a growing political and literary indifference respectively on the part of its youth.

Conclusion

Daoud and Adimi both portray literature as a spectral medium and its authors as haunting presences at once lingering, overshadowing, and inspiring today. In the works discussed, texts, like ghosts, are depicted as neither living nor dead but rather inhabiting the liminal space in between. They can therefore be constantly resurrected by readers and critics in the present to perform or assume new meanings. Both novels emphasise that characters, voices, and past interpretations of a work (particularly a canonical work) cannot help but haunt future readings, and that literature, especially fiction, lends a voice to the other, enabling apprehension if not always comprehension of that which is foreign to us. As such, writing and reading provide forums for the ghosts of past works to reassert themselves through the mediumship of current authors and readers, who, consciously or not, conjure and re-appropriate them in the present to extract and create new meanings that resonate with their current contexts. By consciously doing so, Daoud and Adimi's works develop a certain spirit of self-questioning that offers the space for reflection on a complex and intertwined literary heritage. They encourage a hauntological reappraisal of not just canonical works and writers

but also their relationship to national politics and history, considering in particular the ways their works have promoted or challenged certain conceptions of French Algeria across time. By promoting openness to alternative readings through a recognition of narrative indeterminacy, Daoud and Adimi show that ultimately there can be no right or wrong interpretation but that, crucially, each generation has to make up their own mind about their relationship to this heritage – both literary and cultural. By reassessing both the positive and negative reception of Camus and Charlot in contemporary Algeria, the works examined in Part I highlight a changing dynamic and appreciation regarding this colonial legacy, and explore how it might inform or impact potential literary futures.

In *Meursault, contre-enquête,* the relationship with the French literary patrimony remains ambivalent and complicated whereas in *Nos richesses*, it is presented in almost wholly positive terms. Both novels, however, highlight the importance of keeping this legacy alive. Through the spectral representation of the French literary sphere and its influence, both works strikingly foreground the still contested place of this heritage in contemporary Algerian society – at once a source of nostalgia and pride for many in Abdallah's generation, but a source of discomfort and exclusion for Algerian youths like Ryad, with whom this literature does not resonate. This heritage is also demonstrated, simultaneously, to be a cause of anxiety for current Algerian writers trying to disassociate from an oppressive colonial heritage as well as a source of creative inspiration to re-invent or appropriate. Both Daoud and Adimi blend real historical and literary figures with fictional characters in order to provide a rich metacommentary on the fraught processes of reading and storytelling, highlighting the importance of continually reinterpreting not only the works themselves but also their legacies as they evolve across generations and contexts.

Adimi's depiction of the ghosts of Les Vraies Richesses is remarkably celebratory. Her novel tends to idealise the past, lauding the rebellious spirit of the previous generation's writing while largely ignoring Charlot's colonial status. The ghost of Charlot remains, in *Nos richesses*, a benevolent figure rather than a reminder of past tensions both between French and Algerian culture and within Charlot's own literary circles. Nonetheless, his character provides an illuminating insight into the ongoing debate regarding the place of French literature in Algeria, which remains complicated and problematic to this day. Elisabeth Zerofsky elucidates this ambivalence in her review of *Nos richesses*, making an observation that could equally apply to *Contre-enquête*:

> the problem of literature in a colonized state – often wielded as a tool of domination, separating those who could read, let alone write, from those who couldn't – brings Adimi straight to the heart of modern-day Algeria's ambivalence about its inheritance, and, not incidentally, of France's, too. [436]

In both texts, the persistent ghostly presence of the French literary legacy in Algeria is a cause of ongoing confusion and, at times, contradiction that not only impacts the present, but also threatens literary futures. By problematising the current response to this heritage half a century after Independence and in the wake of ongoing domestic turmoil, *Contre-enquête* and *Nos richesses* engender a palpable sense of anxiety about the future direction of Algerian writing, whether this involves feeling 'held back' by a burdensome anxiety of influence or doomed to a fear and distrust of the French legacy that is passed on to future generations. Adimi and Daoud suggest it is time to reconceptualise Algeria's relationship to the French cultural and literary sphere in order to find this generation's own voice as it moves forward.

[436] Elisabeth Zerofsky, 'A Novel Imagines the Life of the Man Who Discovered Camus', *New York Times*, April 28 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/28/books/review/our-riches-kaouther-adimi.html> [accessed 5 May 2020]

Above all else, the novels explored in Part I are odes to French-Algerian writing, encouraging readers to re-evaluate their connection to classic works and to their own literary history/ies. It is clear that the ghosts depicted in these works cannot be ignored but instead continue to beleaguer both French and Algerian collective psyches. How this might inform postcolonial futures – whether by restricting or expanding them – will now remain the focal question for the rest of this thesis. We have addressed the legacy of French literature, and French-Algerian literature, but what could be considered distinctively *Algerian* literature and, to complicate matters, can this even exist in French?

PART II

The Thousand and One Ghosts: Appropriating the Arabic Canon in French

Pourquoi écrit-on et lit-on des livres ? […] Parce qu'il y a la mort, il y a une fin […] Écrire ou raconter est le seul moyen pour remonter le temps, le contrer, le restaurer ou le contrôler. Il y a un lien entre la conjugaison et la métaphysique, j'en suis sûr.[1]

Having examined the various ways in which ghosts of the French canon continue to haunt contemporary Algerian literature, both positively and negatively, let us now turn to an analysis of the ways in which an Arabic storytelling heritage influences and shapes Algerian works today – even (and especially) those written in French. In this part of the thesis, I will examine two recent Algerian novels that borrow heavily from the *Thousand and One Nights* – a collection of classic Arabic tales based on stories circulated orally for millennia – to expound the ghostly representation of this narrative tradition in contemporary Algerian francophone writing. The *Nights* has been, and still is, a popular hypotext in Maghrebi literature, and it is often figured as ghostly primarily due to the fact that the stories take place in the presence of, or to stave off, death. In addition, the oral nature and timeless dimension of the tales make them largely adaptable to new contexts, a trait which several contemporary authors have exploited for creative reinterpretation. This is certainly the case in the first novel analysed here: Salim Bachi's *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin* (2010). This work appropriates the classic Arabic tale of 'Sindbad the Sailor' to a modern context, using the protagonist's travels as a means of reflecting on current affairs in Algeria and the Mediterranean. Similarly, Kamel Daoud's *Zabor ou les psaumes* (2017) replicates the frame story of the *Nights* to follow a social outcast, described as 'le fantôme du village', who 'réveille les morts' by writing stories about ailing villagers to prolong their lives.[437]

[437] Ibid., p. 53.

Both works reflect in various and complex ways on the mortifying and revivifying forces of narratives and literature.

In contrast to the literary ghosts expounded in Part I, the spectral entities in these novels are not simply particular authors or individual works from the past (although references to these are often incorporated in explicitly ghostly terms), but rather a collection of disparate legends and tales that, as a whole, reflect a certain Arabic tradition of storytelling that continues to resurface in francophone Maghrebi writing and underpin the way stories are told, encouraging a hauntological conception of narrative as an interconnected and ongoing process of cross-generational and cross-cultural reformulation. As I have stated, it is not only the stories and characters from the *Nights* that are depicted as ghostly in these texts but, more importantly, the art of storytelling itself. In both novels, this mode of narration is closely associated with immortality, portrayed as a life-affirming process that can both conjure and banish ghosts. By reviving and invoking the legendary tales from the *Nights* (itself associated highly with narrative revision) in various guises throughout their works, Bachi and Daoud emphasise the elusive and amorphous potential of these stories – ever-changeable, ungraspable, and uncontainable – like ghosts. Moreover, they highlight the particular ability of stories to transcend and resist linear time by combining historical eras and non-synchronic events in a Derridean 'disjointure temporelle'[438] that is quintessentially spectral, and this is contrasted starkly to more stagnant forms of narrative and cultural storytelling used to oppress. Derrida's assertion that apparitional entities break the bounds of chronological time resonates profoundly with these works, wherein the appearance of characters from other realms, eras, and story traditions not only unites past and present but also heralds possible futures – both daunting catastrophes and liberating alternatives.

[438] Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p.42.

Ultimately, the novels assess the implications and importance of this spectral form of narrative malleability for both disrupting and (re)shaping the future of national(ist) narratives, in particular those pertaining to contemporary Algeria.

Alf Layla wa-Layla and World Literature

Alf Layla wa-Layla[439], or *The Thousand and One Nights* (also known as *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* and various derivatives thereof) is a vast compendium of stories from all over the Arab world, with written fragments dating from the late ninth century and oral versions of the tales thought to have been circulating well before then. This kaleidoscopic collection of stories is a prime example of what might be called 'world literature'– that is, literary works that did not develop not within the confines of a single national border but which instead encompass multiple cultural influences – since it draws upon a variety of sources, cultures, and traditions across the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe.[440] Interestingly, a recent unearthing of North African manuscripts has revealed a little-known Maghrebi precursor to *The Thousand and One Nights* entitled *Mi'at Layla wa-Layla*, or *One Hundred and One Nights*, which is now believed to be much older than its illustrious cousin.[441] Furthermore, the *Nights* contains a large degree of cross-pollination with

[439] Arabic for 'A Thousand Nights and One Night'.
[440] The study of 'world literature' is a growing field of scholarship that is broad in its scope and difficult to define. It investigates intercultural works as well as those that have 'travelled' or can be considered part of an international canon, however, as David Damrosch explains, it is not simply 'an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading' across national borders and languages. Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.5. For a detailed discussion of the interrelation between 'world literature' and overlapping fields such as comparative literature', translation, and postcolonial studies, see Theo D'Haen, 'World literature, (post)modernism, (post)colonialism, littérature-monde', in *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 133-151. For a specific analysis of world literature as it relates to francophone writing, see Alec Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (eds.), *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).
[441] For more information on the fascinating history of the transmission and translation process of these stories, see Robert Irwin's foreword and the editor's introduction in Bruce Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), pp. ix-xi, xiv-xxvii; and Nick Leech, 'The other Arabian Nights: New Translation of Arab Folktales, 101 Nights', *National News* ('Arts and Culture'), 8 September 2016

European works too. For example, there are striking similarities between several of Sindbad's adventures and those that occur in Homer's *Odyssey*, indicating that the Sindbad story cycle may have borrowed elements from, or share a common source with, the Greek epic.[442] As Robert Irwin notes, similar narrative templates can also be found in Estonian folklore, the medieval *Gesta Romanorum*, and later in *Aesop's Fables* and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm; even Chaucer and Shakespeare seem to borrow at times from the *Nights*.[443]

The *Nights* was first translated from Arabic into French by orientalist scholar Antoine Galland in the early eighteenth century,[444] and his versions of the tales were then rendered into English by an anonymous translator between 1706 and 1721 and have since been re-translated innumerable times.[445] Although it is largely owing to Galland that the West has a complete written collection of the *Nights*, the translator has been criticised for his degree of creative licence and betraying an insufficient understanding of Arabic culture. Husain Haddawy, who himself has translated the *Nights* into English, goes so far as to accuse Galland of producing 'not a translation, but a French interpretation, or rather a work of his own creation'.[446] Indeed, some of the most well-known fables from the *Nights*, such as 'Aladdin; or, the wonderful lamp' and 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', were not actually

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/the-other-arabian-nights-new-translation-of-arab-folk-tales-101-nights-1.232453> [accessed 25 January 2020].

[442] A notable example occurs in Sindbad's third voyage when he encounters a giant cyclops. The description of the beast and of how Sindbad manages to avoid being roasted alive are reminiscent of Odysseus's narrow escape from Polyphemos in Book IX of the *Odyssey*. Bachi himself also frequently evokes the *Odyssey* throughout his work.

[443] Examples include Chaucer's 'The Squire's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales,* which shares an uncanny resemblance to 'The Tale of the Enchanted Horse' in the *Nights*, and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, which might have been based on the story of 'The Sleeper Awakened'. Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 65, 101.

[444] A keen arabophile who spent many years in the Middle East (and who would later translate the Qu'ran into French in 1710), Galland meticulously translated the *Nights* over thirteen years, publishing the first volume in 1704 and the twelfth and final volume in 1717 (this included seven volumes within two years).

[445] Notably by Edward Lane, John Payne, and Richard Burton.

[446] Husain Haddawy, 'Introduction' to *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Text Edited by Muhsin Mahdi* (New York; London: WW Norton & Co., 2008), p. xvi.

part of the original, circulating collection of tales but are thought instead to be European inventions, most likely Galland's attempts at emulating the style of these Arabian stories as related to him by travelling friends.[447] Similarly, the Sindbad story cycle is considered to be an addition of Galland's but not one of his own devising; rather, it is thought to be based on a Turkish manuscript he discovered on one of his voyages. Nonetheless, the fact that these ancient tales have been popularised as children's bedtime stories, Disney cartoons, and even musicals in Western cultures is a testament to their pervasive reach and enduring allure across the globe.[448]

The *Nights* has clearly had a complicated, dialogic genesis from its pluralistic origins to its multiple modern adaptations. As Marina Warner affirms:

> The *Arabian Nights* holds out for scrutiny an extraordinarily productive case of cross-fertilisation, retellings, grafts and borrowings, overwriting, imitation, and dissemination back and forth between Persia, India, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Europe.[449]

Even before the tales were written down as a coherent body of work, united by the frame tale, they were constantly being told and retold, transformed and rewritten, with whole story cycles added and changed over the centuries.[450] The *Nights* is truly a dynamic body of work that has travelled and evolved throughout the ages, refusing to heed national boundaries and instead borrowing from and lending to other cultures and traditions in order to grow and

---

[447] Specifically, it is thought that Galland transcribed these 'orphan tales' after hearing them from Hanna Diab, a Syrian Christian who was visiting France and to whom Galland was introduced by a mutual friend, Paul Lucas.

[448] For an in-depth analysis of the *Nights*' influence on English literature, see Peter Caracciolo's 'Introduction' to *The Arabian Nights in English* (New York, 1988), pp. 1-80; and for a more global study of the collection's legacy of 'rewritings', see Richard Van Leeuwen, *The Thousand and One Nights and Twentieth-century Fiction: Intertextual Readings* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Publishing, 2018), Section 1: 'The Near and Middle East', vol. 124.

[449] Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 25.

[450] Further complicating matters, no definitive or official edition of the *Nights* existed within Arabo-Islamic tradition until the nineteenth century, by which time standard European versions had already been circulating for well over a century.

adapt according to its audience. As Haddawy confirms, the tales were 'endlessly modified to suit the role of the story-teller or the demand of the occasion'.[451] Like a spectre, then, the *Nights* has many incarnations through which the ghostly echoes of other texts and cultural influences resound, and today there is no definitive version of the stories. It remains a masterpiece of intertextuality which 'shuns singularity and revels in multiplicity'.[452] As Warner emphasises:

> The stories in the book are not confined by the texts they inhabit, or by the nights over which they are told. They form a book but also a genre which is still changing, still growing. The tales spill out from the covers of the volumes in which they appear, in different versions and translations, and escape from the limits of time that the narrative struggles to impose. They keep generating more tales, in various media, themselves different but alike: the stories themselves are shape-shifters.[453]

This polymorphous quality of the tales renders them inherently spectral; not fixed presences but rather shadowy outlines that continually return in new forms as *revenants* not only to haunt their listeners but also to influence a new cycle of stories. Bachi's Sindbad could equally be described as a 'shape-shifter' since he is constantly reincarnated as different characters in different eras throughout *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le marin*, weaving a personal history that is almost as tangled as the labyrinth of stories in the *Nights* itself.

Bachi, of course, is not the first North African author to engage with this tradition of transnational writing, invoking the multiple matrices of the Maghreb in order to resist the imposition of a monological history and the repression of difference. Most famously, perhaps, Abdelkébir Khatibi's 1983 *Maghreb pluriel* argues for a recognition of the inherent plurality of the region, positing a 'third way' out of the coloniser-colonised bind – a '*pensée-autre'*. More recently, scholars have sought to explore Mediterranean correctives to

[451] Haddawy, p. xi.
[452] Mack, p.ix.
[453] Warner, p.7.

nationalist projects as they have animated francophone Maghrebi literature. Edwige Tamalet Talbayev and Claudia Esposito, for example, examine Mediterranean plurality through a multilingual corpus of Maghrebi novels. While Talbayev concentrates on the deterritorialised space of the sea as a metaphor for the fluidity of North Africa's 'double position on the edge of two metaphysical systems – Arab theology and Western rationalism',[454] Esposito analyses the 'Baroque' style of writers like Tahar Ben Jelloun and Mahi Binebine, which she argues enacts a blurring of history and fiction that reflects the shifting space of the Mediterranean.[455] Similarly, Olivia Harrison opens up analysis of the Algerian novel beyond the France-Algeria binary to which it is so often reduced, exploring Algerian (and Maghrebi) works of the post-independence period that look to other colonial sites in order to engage in a 'transcolonial solidarity' by weighing in on issues like the Palestinian occupation, the Holocaust, and the 'war on Terror'.[456]

The difference with Bachi's work is that it is not only about intercultural dialogue but intertextual dialogue too, for the choice to use the *Nights* as a primary hypotext entails a particular focus on storytelling and mobilises its central metacommentary about retelling and recycling narratives. In the Maghrebi context specifically – that which Mireille Rosello theorises as a paradoxical border space both separating and connecting the Metropole and Maghreb[457] – this rhizomatic nature of narrative is in many ways a reflection of the hybridity of Mediterranean culture, history, and languages. Indeed, the 'fuzziness' of 'the Maghreb's

[454] Edwige Talbayev, *The Transcontinental Maghreb: Francophone Literature across the Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), p. 11. See also Talbayev, 'The Languages of Translocality: What Plurilingualism Means in a Maghrebi Context', *Expressions maghrébines* 11.2 (2012), 9–26.
[455] Claudia Esposito, *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), Ch. 5, pp. 117–136.
[456] Olivia Harrison, 'Beyond France-Algeria: The Algerian Novel and the Transcolonial Imagination', in Patrick Crowley (ed), *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism, 1988-2015* (Liverpool University Press, 2017), pp. 222-241; and *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization*, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016).
[457] Mireille Rosello, *Encontres méditerranéennes: littératures et cultures France-Maghreb* (Paris: Harmattan, 2006).

liminal position'– both as a topographical site between Orient, Occident, and Africa, and as an ontological threshold – is precisely what I argue makes the region so conducive to hauntological analysis.[458] As Talbayev emphasises, '[t]his privileged position [of the Maghreb] is both marginal, on the threshold of totalizing thought systems, and central, as the meeting point of broader civilizational blocs.'[459] Furthermore, it is the domain of what yasser elhariry calls the 'Mediterranean lyric': a 'literary aesthetic of persistent deferral (translation) and referral (intertextuality), of untimeliness and anachronism'.[460]

As we will see, Bachi seeks to bring this duality of the region to the fore through his self-conscious reappropriation of Sindbad's tale, which he interweaves with myriad other intertextual references and borrowings. Above all, a preoccupation with storytelling is central to the *Nights,* since it is primarily a collection of stories *about* telling stories. Each tale takes place within the frame story in which Scheherazade regales Sultan Schahriar with tantalising tales to prolong her life. Upon learning that his wife has been unfaithful, and subsequently of his sister-in-law's adultery, Schahriar becomes convinced that no woman is chaste and so resolves to wed a virgin each night and have her killed the following morning. Scheherazade, however, devises a cunning plan to end these barbarous murders by offering herself to the sultan as his next bride on the condition that her sister, Dinarzade, be allowed to stay in their bedchamber. That night, an hour before day-break, as pre-arranged, Dinarzade wakes her sister and begs for one last story. As Scheherazade begins the tale, Schahriar quickly becomes enraptured but, alas, must leave at sunrise. Perceiving his eagerness to hear the rest of the tale, Sheherazade promises to continue it that night if he would spare her life for one more day. And thus she proceeds to trade her life for stories

[458] Talbayev, *The Transcontinental Maghreb*, p. 11.
[459] Ibid.
[460] yasser elhariry, 'The Mediterranean Lyric', in *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Æsthetics & Deployments of a Sea in Crisis*, ed. by yasser elhiary and Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (London: Palgrave, 2018).

over one thousand and one nights until, according to most versions, Schahriar eventually pardons Scheherazade as reward for her service of entertainment (not forgetting that by this stage, she has mothered some of his children). The sultaness's seemingly inexhaustible imagination and talent for storytelling, coupled with her wit and bravery, impress Schahriar and force him to reconsider his prejudice against women.

In this way, storytelling serves a plethora of purposes throughout the *Nights*: it placates; consoles; heals wounds and grudges; provides enjoyment and diversion for the listener; and, most importantly, instructs, reforming Schahriar's worldview and ending his murderous rampage. For the teller, stories offer an opportunity for creative expression, personal fulfilment, connection, and, not least, salvation. The fact that storytelling is associated with preventing death imbues the act with a salvific, redemptive quality. Through the stories they tell, the characters in the *Nights* are able to assume multiple identities and constantly reconstruct themselves from new narrative experiences. The fact that the stories are told with an awareness of the narrator's mortality sets life and death in proximity with one another in a spectral manner. These legendary characters tell (and retell) their stories as a means of affirming their own existence – not only to escape death but often to ensure that their legacy lives on too, at the very least in the minds and memories of others. In this way, mastery of the art of storytelling is shown to enable a degree of self-validation and control over one's fate, but it is also presented as a perilously difficult task. Scheherazade maintains the Sultan's attention with the promise that each story will be more wondrous than the next, but she must navigate a fine balance between novelty and familiarity in order to achieve this. Her tales must be original enough to satisfy the curiosity of the sultan but not so far-fetched as to provoke confusion or disbelief – an idea that is particularly important in *Zabor*. According to Robert Mack, Scheherazade's stories are successful because they are:

> both profoundly original and playfully derivative, both capable of stunning and compelling innovation, while at the same time remaining endlessly familiar and reassuringly self-referential. What ultimately […] emerges as the common denominator of all the tales in the *Nights* itself, is the fact that story-telling – the telling of tales and the desire to listen to the tales of others – is the consuming human activity. Story-telling, simply put, is the quality which defines mankind.[461]

In Mack's estimation, then, storytelling, as portrayed in the *Nights*, is an intrinsic part of the human experience; it is a means of ordering and making sense of a sometimes incomprehensible world, enabling us to better understand those around us and, ultimately, ourselves. However, Jane Hiddleston reminds us that whilst the *Nights* celebrates the power of storytelling, it also exposes its dangers, illustrating how multiple versions and retellings of events can obstruct the quest for truth, revealing the uncertain foundations upon which we base our understanding of the world and our role in it. She explains:

> [T]his does not mean that narrative is accorded with excessive power. Rather, it serves to foreground the contingency of knowledge and the potential for events to be endlessly reformulated and reconceived. Storytelling and literature can not only be productive and influential, but they also display the fragility of human perception and the limitations of the understanding we believe we possess through the fictions we tell ourselves.[462]

The recognition that events are 'endlessly reformulated and reconceived' is particularly pertinent when we consider that Scheherazade, although she employs a great deal of creativity while telling her stories, does not *invent* these tales but rather relays what has in turn been told to her, embellishing or altering the narratives as she sees fit.[463] In this way, she is not the author of these stories but the messenger. It could equally be argued that, since there is no single, definitive creator of these stories, authorship remains collective and

[461] Mack, p. x.
[462] Jane Hiddleston, *Writing After Postcolonialism: Francophone North African Literature in Transition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2019), p. 48.
[463] Irwin underscores this point in his Introduction to the *Nights*, p. 87.

ongoing. If this is the case, then it poses a challenge to contemporary and future writers, who must recognise that sometimes a communal effort is required to sustain a story – something both Bachi and Daoud bring to the fore in their novels.

It is clear that the *Nights* is a truly palimpsestic work; not only because of its mixed origins and manifold versions and translations, but also because of the way that stories within the volume riff off, refer to, and retell each other in a seemingly endless cycle of revision such that the ghost of a previous story is always lurking in the background. Sindbad, for example, recounts his journey to almost every character he meets and then finally to the caliph upon his return, with each version slightly different from the last. This all occurs, however, within the narrative frame of a much older Sindbad recounting these escapades to a porter he invites into his home. In turn, we must remember that this tale, too, is being told by Scheherazade to Schahriar. Such an infinitely cyclical structure creates a *mise-en-abîme* that Ibrahim Muhawi describes as 'the Arabesque practice of narrative embedding'.[464] Scheherazade even appears to borrow from her own stories, with each an echo of the 'Introductory Tale' in some way, mirroring her own plight of having to narrate herself out of a near-death scenario. In this sense, one could say that the *Nights* becomes a rewriting of itself, performing a complex meta-commentary on the narrative process. Sarah Naddaff links the ad libitum nature of Scheherazade's storytelling to the performance of an actor, since the sultaness must not only convey these stories to the sultan captivatingly – indeed her life and the lives of many others depend on it – but, of course, the stories of the *Nights* themselves were intended to be performed and interpreted aloud. Naddaff explains that 'Scheherazade ventriloquizes the voices of the multiple characters she calls into being as she tells her

[464] Ibrahim Muhawi, 'The "Arabian Nights" and the Question of Authorship, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 36. 3 (2005), pp. 323-337 (p.324).

stories […] In homage, perhaps, to the original improvisational nature of oral narrative'.[465] She highlights the fact that Scheherazade conjures these characters into being, as if she were resurrecting various ghosts from the vast reservoir of tales that have been recounted to her throughout her life.

Recalling to mind Derrida's notion that the spectre obfuscates temporal boundaries, Scheherazade's narration is riddled with prolepsis and analepsis, and even seems at times to be prophetic. Although the sultaness appears to live in the age of the Sussanians (an ancient Persian dynasty that reigned from 226-641 AD), some of her tales involve Biblical kings and Qur'anic caliphs while others reference guns and more modern machinery. This serves as a reminder that the *Nights* is not bound by linear chronology but that instead, it inhabits the realm of magical realism and myth (reinforced by the slew of mythical creatures that are evoked throughout the stories, such as demons, giants, spirits, ghouls, wizards, *rochs* – giant birds, and *jinn* – shape-shifting genies). As Warner explains: 'the Nights inspires a way of thinking about writing and the making of literature as forms of exchange across time – dream journeys in which the maker fuses with what is being made, until the artefact exercises in return its own fashioning force.'[466] In this sense, stories are a means of mental transportation; 'dream journeys' that occur in the space between waking and sleeping, remembering and forgetting, consciousness and unconsciousness – a liminal state that is itself spectral in its in-betweenness but which might also be haunted by spirits. The nocturnal and oneiric setting of Scheherazade's stories, then, offers the perfect environment for the spectral to emerge, bridging the threshold between life and death, the real and the imagined.

[465] Sandra Naddaff, 'The Thousand and One Nights as World Literature' in David Damrosch, Djelal Kadir, and Theo Haen, *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 487- 496 (p.495).
[466] Warner, *Stranger Magic*, p. 27.

Furthermore, the *Nights* has provided creative impetus for countless other works throughout history. The global influence of the collection has become so intricately woven into our cultural fabric that it is difficult to escape; indeed, many modern fantasy tales are unwittingly derivative, featuring magic carpet rides, treasure caves, secret passwords such as 'Open Sesame!',[467] magic lamps, and genies. As discussed in Part I, this intertextual relationship between works across generations (and cultures) is intrinsically ghostly. However, in addition to this unintentional evocation, there are also a number of works that aim explicitly to retell one (or several) of the stories of the *Nights*, some even imagining sequels as in the case of Théophile Gautier's short story 'La Mille et deuxième nuit' (1842) and Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade' (1845). As one might assume, these sorts of re-imaginings have been a popular undertaking in Arabic literature, but also, perhaps more surprisingly, in contemporary francophone writing. The sheer scope of the *Nights* seems to invite each generation to create its own versions, and that is exactly what has been happening in Algeria. Some recent examples include: Leïla Sebbar's *Shérazade* trilogy (1982, 1985, 1990 respectively); Assia Djebar's *Ombre Sultane* (1987); Mourad Djebel's *Les Cinq et Une Nuits de Shahrazède* (2005); Boualem Sansal's *Petit éloge de la memoire: Quatre mille et une années de nostalgie* (2007); Amin Zaoui's *La Chambre de la vierge impure* (2009); Chawki Amari's *Balak* (2018); and, of course, the two texts examined here.

It is undeniable, then, that the *Nights* 'continues to trigger reflection on literary representation, storytelling and also reading, in ways that remain wholly relevant to the present generation of writers.'[468] The constant recycling of stories from this collection has created a spectral network of interweaving tales and infinite self-reflexivity in modern

[467] This phrase is famously used to open the cave of riches in the 'Story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'.
[468] Hiddleston, *Writing After Postcolonialism*, p. 55.

rewritings, abounding with the ghosts of ancient stories, characters, legends, and cultural traditions, but also infused with the acute awareness that storytelling itself is intimately linked with (im)mortality. The question then becomes: If (hi)stories repeat themselves *ad infinitum*, how can they be rewritten or retold to avoid the mistakes of the past and secure a more productive or liberating future? How can contemporary writers ensure that stories are used as catalysts for positive reform, just as Scheherazade employs them as a device to teach Schahriar the error of his ways and secure freedom and safety for the kingdom? With this in mind, I shall proceed to an analysis of Salim Bachi's modern-day 'Sindbad the Sailor'.

Amours et aventures de Sindbad le marin - Salim Bachi

Bachi's 2010 novel reinvents the classic sailor from the *Nights* as a disenchanted, philandering figure, equally as adventure-seeking but more of an antihero than his ancient counterpart. In the 'original' Sindbad tale, the eponymous traveller embarks on seven wondrous yet treacherous voyages in search of fortune, after having squandered his inheritance. He returns each time to a comfortable life, seemingly satisfied with the riches he has acquired, and swears never to leave again. Nonetheless, he soon becomes restless and sets sail once (or six times) more. As I have mentioned, however, the Story of Sindbad the Sailor is not so much the story of these voyages as it is the story of Sindbad *recounting* them to a poor porter who is also named Sindbad.[469] Not only does this highlight the primacy of oral narration in the *Nights*, but it also instigates a doubling between the two characters, with the sailor's condition 'as happy as [the porter's] was deplorable'.[470] Bachi maintains this focus on both storytelling and foils by having his own Sinbad relate his

[469] In some versions, this character is called Hindbad, but he is still clearly intended to be the sailor's double.
[470] 'The Story of Sindbad the Sailor', *Arabian Nights' Entertainment,* ed. by Robert Mack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 141.

journeys to various alter egos throughout the novel, most notably an enigmatic figure known as 'le Dormant'. In Bachi's version, Sindbad is a young adventurer with a lust for life who leaves his restrictive and war-torn homeland in search of (physical) love, art, culture, and new experiences – a quest that takes the reader through Rome, Florence, Damascus, Paris, Aleppo, Baghdad, and beyond.[471] Throughout the novel, storytelling is linked to travelling, movement, and growth, but Bachi also alerts us to the stagnancy that can arise when stories are treated or received anachronistically rather than being revised to suit the current context. He seems to say that the ghosts of past stories must be incorporated into future ones as part of an ongoing process of cultural renewal that is necessarily incomplete and indefinite.

There are three main layers of narrative spectrality in the text that I will address in this chapter. Firstly, like in *Contre-enquête*, there is a strong and pervasive element of intertextual haunting; the ways in which Bachi engages with not only the *Nights* but also a host of other classic stories, myths, legends, and literary figures are explicitly ghostly. For example, Sindbad encounters the spirits of dead artists and writers when in Paris, and shadowy characters come to life through the books he reads (often causing him to experience a spectral doubling that both perturbs and inspires him. As with many of Bachi's works, *Amours et aventures* is highly allegorical, drawing on a wealth of cultural and Qu'ranic myths to produce what has been described as a '[f]able sur notre temps'.[472] The nature of these quasi-historical legends means that they are shrouded in mystery and still heavily debated today, and this ambiguity and doubt add a further degree of spectral uncertainty to the novel since it reminds readers of the futility of seeking an absolute truth. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, both novels analysed portray storytelling as an inherently

[471] Rome is an especially significant city in the book for Sindbad and it may be worth mentioning that Bachi himself spent a year in Rome in 2005 as a writer in residence at the Villa Médicis (he now lives in Paris).
[472] Salim Bachi, *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le marin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), back cover.

ghostly process, precisely because of its intertextual engagement with other narratives (including constant revision of its own). It is not only represented as a bridge between life and death, the real and the imagined, but Bachi in particular emphasises the intangible and non-definitive nature of oral stories as shape-shifting entities that are able to be resurrected and recycled in various forms. Lastly, both Sindbad and le Dormant are cast as ghostly figures in *Amours et aventures*, with the former's stories sustaining him. Each of these levels of spectrality reflects or projects concerns about the repressive state of politics and religion in Algeria, such as the conservative sexual politics of Islam, the censoring of literature, and the imposition of classical Arabic – 'cette langue vieille et oubliée de tous'.[473] By foregrounding multiple versions and interpretations of events, Bachi forces readers to question orthodoxy and authoritarianism, thereby revealing the reductiveness of state narratives that rely on dogmatic truths. Moreover, this spectral portrayal of storytelling also serves to highlight and critique what Bachi, like Adimi, perceives as Algeria's devaluation of art, culture, and stories.

i. From Mythological Temporalities to State Myths

Like Sindbad of the *Nights*, Bachi's sailor is an errant, nomadic figure, but for a different reason: he is in exile. Although he initially sets sail with the same intention of regaining his squandered fortune, this Sindbad is glad to flee the city-state of Carthago – a dystopic future Algiers 'où le sang coulait, où les morts appelaient les morts'[474] and where he is imprisoned for a period for supposedly poisoning the president, a dictatorial figure known as Chafouin I[er].[475] This city, which 's'appelait jadis Alger',[476] is described in violent and anarchic terms;

[473] Ibid., p. 25.
[474] Ibid., p. 41.
[475] Ibid., p. 173.
[476] Ibid., p. 17.

it is 'une prison à ciel ouvert'[477] where 'l'on fusillait les partisans, égorgeait les femmes, torturait les enfants'.[478] The name Carthago draws on a couple of myths: firstly, it is a clear allusion to Carthage, the capital of the ancient Carthaginian civilisation, but, to a lesser degree, it also connotes the medieval Catharist Order. Carthage, with its longstanding colonial associations, served as the primary trading port of the Mediterranean for several centuries, exchanging hands between the Punic, Roman, and Arab empires. Today, it is a region on the outskirts of Tunis in Tunisia. In French culture, and specifically colonial propaganda, Carthage is very much representative of the cultural Other, viewed in opposition to ancient Rome, which was considered the model of European imperialism. The use of the Latin version of the city's name echoes the famous refrain of Cato's speeches declaring the need to defeat Carthage ('Carthago delenda est'[479]). In this way, Bachi foregrounds the obsessive European desire to dominate Africa, if only to elucidate the false dichotomy between the two poles by interweaving both cultures' stories and histories together in his narrative. As Michel Buter proposes, Carthage is 'la face cachée de la Rome antique',[480] at once denied and belittled by the Roman superpower but also evoking it in a manner not dissimilar to Derrida's conception of *différance*. As such, Carthage is the spectral other so by naming his future Algiers 'Carthago', Bachi is consciously recalling the ghosts of the colonial past in order to demonstrate how they continue to affect Algeria's present and future. For a French readership, Carthage also evokes Flaubert's novel *Salammbô* (1862), set in the ancient city-state, as well as French colonial-era writings such

[477] Ibid., p. 158
[478] Ibid, p. 17.
[479] 'Carthago must be destroyed.' This phrase was supposedly pronounced by Roman statesman and soldier Cato at the end of all his speeches to the Senate in the lead up to the Third Punic War (149-146 BC).
[480] Michel Butor, 'À propos de *Salammbô* in *Improvisations sur Flaubert* (Paris: La Différence, 1984), p. 117.

as Paul Adam's *Notre Carthage* (1922), and Algerian settler literature by the likes of Louis Bertrand, all of which depict France as the rightful heir to the 'Latin' Mediterranean.[481]

This is also not the first time Bachi has used a mythical setting to represent Algiers; in what is known as his 'Cyrtha' trilogy – *Le Chien d'Ulysse* (2001), *La Kahéna* (2003), *Les douze contes de minuit* (2007) – the author merges the ancient Numidian metropolis of Cirta (now Constantine) with both the city in which he was born (Algiers) and that where he grew up (Annaba) to create the fictional hybrid city of Cyrtha.[482] These mythic backdrops unsettle historical, geographical, and temporal certainties, calling into question the polarising logic of narrative dichotomies. According to Bachi himself, 'le mythe est polymorphe, il échappe à toute volonté de lui donner une seule signification'.[483] The significance of this onomastic choice, then, is two-fold. Bachi deploys it to highlight Algeria's (and by extension, Africa's) portrayal in the media and politics as the West's mythical 'other'. At the same time, however, he rejects this Occident/Orient, centre/periphery dichotomy through his assiduous referencing of the Western literary and cultural canon, as well as through an inversion of classical orientalist tropes (as we will see) such as those found in Flaubert's Carthaginian novel.[484] It is also possible he is suggesting that Algeria is becoming a neocolonial power in the East but one that, rather than chasing global dominance, is seeking authoritarian control over its own people.

---

[481] Most notably his first novel, *Le Sang des races* (Paris: Éditions Ollendorff, 1899).
[482] For a more in-depth exploration of possible interpretations of Cyrtha, see Bernard Aresu, 'Arcanes algeriens entés d'ajours helléniques: *Le Chien d'Ulysse*, de Salim Bachi', in Echanges et mutations des modèles littéraires entre Europe et Algérie, vol. 2 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), p. 178; and Patrick Crowley, 'Mythologizing the City, Rethinking the Nation: Salim Bachi's Cyrtha Trilogy', in Federica Frediani (ed.) *Mediterranean Cities: Real and/or Imaginary*, (Florence: Nerbini Editore, 2014).
[483] Bachi in Patrick Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form: An interview with Salim Bachi', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies* 4.1 (2013), p. 8 (pp. 2-11).
[484] It is generally accepted that Flaubert's novel exoticises its titular heroine – a Carthaginian *femme fatale* and fictional priestess of Tanit who serves as a metonym for the city itself – and largely fetishises the oriental 'Other'. Nonetheless, some critics argue that *Salammbô* is actually a more subtle critique of 19th century orientalist literature. See, for example, E. L. Constable, 'Critical Departures: "Salammbô's" Orientalism, *MLN* 111.4, Johns Hopkins University Press, September 1996, pp. 625-646.

It is clear that Carthage still looms as a spectral presence in North African cultural memory today, as works like Jacques Martin's 1976 graphic novel '*Le Spectre de Carthage*'[485] testify. Bachi is not the only contemporary Maghrebi writer to transpose the Phoenician city-state to a future setting either. Tunisian author Abdelaziz Belkhodja, for example, constructs a fictional Republic of Carthage in his novel *2103, Le Retour de l'éléphant,*[486] which is set well beyond the year 2050 and through which the author presents an alternative vision of his country's future by constructing Tunisia as an emerging hegemonic power in the twenty-first century while the West undergoes a steep political and economic decline.[487] Whereas Belkhodja has created an idealised future Carthage, Bachi envisions a dystopia. The latter's 'Carthago' is more aligned with the modern myth that the Romans, after eventually conquering the city in the third Punic War, burnt Carthage to the ground and sowed the ruins with salt to ensure its lack of fecundity in the future.[488] This adds another layer of cultural myth to Bachi's setting, reinforcing the idea that his future Algiers is an inhospitable place of sterility rather than growth.

In addition to this evocation of Carthage, there is a further possible resonance conjured by 'Carthago': that of the medieval sect of the *cathares* ('Cathars' in English) – an incredibly

---

[485] Jacques Martin, 'Le Spectre de Carthage'*, Aventures d'Alix No. 13* (first published in *Tintin,* 1976).
[486] Abdelaziz Belkhodja, *Le Retour de l'éléphant* (Tunis: Éditions Apollonia, 2003).
[487] For a more comprehensive analysis of this text, as well as another Tunisian novel that reprises Carthage, see Debbie Barnard (2016) 'Old Stories, New Histories: The Past in the Francophone Tunisian Novel', *Contemporary French and* Francophone Studies 20:1, 94-101 <10.1080/17409292.2016.1120556>.
[488] Whilst there is no evidence of this (and indeed it seems unlikely given the high cost of salt at the time and the fact that the Romans much later rebuilt and colonised the city), the myth is widely referenced in literature and probably based on the Biblical Story of Shechem, in which the Israelite Abimelech sowed his own capital, Shechem, with salt following a revolt against him, in order to discourage future insurrection or invasion (Book of Judges, Old Testament 9:45). See Bertrand Hallward, 'The Fall of Carthage', Chapter XV of the *Cambridge Ancient History* Vol. VIII: 'Rome and the Mediterranean 218-133 BC', 1st edition [there is no mention of the salting in subsequent editions], edited by F.E Adcock, S.A Cook, and M. P Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 466-94 (p. 484); Gérard Walter, *La destruction de Carthage* (Paris: A. Michel, 1947), pp. 508-9; Gilbert Picard, *Le monde de Carthage* (Paris: Éditions Buchet/Chastel, 1956), p. 76 ; and B. H Warmington, *Carthage* (London Pelican Publishing, 1960), p. 205. For a detailed analysis of the myth's evolution throughout literature and historical accounts, see R. T Ridley, 'To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt: The Destruction of Carthage', *Classical Philology* 81. 2, 1986, pp. 140–146 <www.jstor.org/stable/269786> [accessed 23 March, 2021]

strict Christian cult that was persecuted by the Catholic Church for its dualism. The sect believed in one benevolent god, who presided over the spiritual world, and one malevolent one, who reigned over everything physical. This diametric opposition is reflected in the relationship between Sindbad and le Dormant: 'Ces deux êtres étaient à l'opposé l'un de l'autre. L'un était la vie, la jeunesse, l'amour, l'autre en était la négation. Sindbad était contaminé par la présence noire du Dormant'.[489] The latter is even sent by the 'maître des malefices que les gnostiques appelaient le Démiurge'(itself a figure derived from Platonic myth) in order to wreak havoc on the world.[490] Furthermore, the Cathars purportedly believed sex to be wholly evil – even within the context of marriage or simply for procreation – and this reflects the conservative sexual politics dictated by Islam, which Sindbad believes has 'emprisonné les femmes'.[491] In defiance of this repression, *Amours et aventures* is rife with explicit sexual imagery and graphic descriptions of lustful encounters, with Sindbad 'consomma[nt] les femmes comme d'autres une pâtisserie'.[492] These frequent and lengthy scenes of physical conquest appropriate the Orientalist objectification of *femmes orientales* in colonial literature by depicting instead a *male* Occidentalist seduced by multiple *femmes occidentales* (neatly distributed to embody several Western cultures mirroring the 'seven seas/voyages' of the classic Sindbad tale). By casting his future Algeria as a barren land on the one hand and a type of Gnostic cult on the other, Bachi highlights what he views as the nation's stagnancy and religious conservatism. The stories surrounding both Carthage and Catharism, whether based in truth or entirely fabricated, invoke the ghosts of the ancient colonial, orientalist, and religious pasts as warnings to forestall a dangerous future. Simply from the setting of the novel, it is clear that *Amours et aventures*, like *Meursault, contre-enquête,* will present an acerbic critique of modern Algeria. However,

[489] *Amours et aventures*, p. 47.
[490] Ibid., p. 224.
[491] Ibid., p. 38.
[492] Ibid., p. 218.

it is not only the setting of the novel that mobilises classical mythology for this purpose but also several of its characters.

Bachi's Sindbad first recounts his adventures to le Dormant, a mysterious figure who appears to have awoken from a very long slumber, unsure initially of who he is and how he arrived in Carthago. In this sense, he is a figure of postmemory,[493] haunted by a past he cannot remember yet clearly having lived through Algeria's colonial and wartime eras. More specifically, he is what Abraham and Török would call a 'transgenerational phantom',[494] going on to continue the cycle of 'possession' by projecting this burden and confused history onto Sindbad. Bachi plays here on the myth of the 'seven sleepers', according to which seven Christians took refuge in a cave outside Ephesus around 250 AD in order to escape persecution by the Romans but fell asleep for 300 years.[495] Upon waking, they are welcomed by a completely different world but promptly die, renewed in their faith. The legend is referenced in the Qur'an but has many disputed origins.[496] In the Qur'anic version, the sleepers are guarded by a large black dog, which would explain the presence of le Dormant's rugged canine companion. However, while the porter in the *Nights* serves to remind the sailor of what he might have been were it not for his wealth, the shadowy figure of le Dormant in Bachi's novel represents Sindbad's darker side. The association mentioned above between le Dormant and the Démiurge, which might be an allusion to Catharist dualism, casts Sindbad (le Dormant's opposite) as the saviour or benevolent god, and this in turn suggests that perhaps telling stories – or reformulating others' stories, as Sindbad does – has the power to prevent the destruction heralded by le Dormant or the past re-awoken. Perhaps the ending of a national story, then, is not a foregone conclusion but one

[493] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory* (see the Introduction to this thesis, p. 39).
[494] Abraham and Török, *L'Écorce et le noyau* (see the Introduction for a more detailed explanation).
[495] This number varies widely but is generally given as 300 years in Islamic versions of the myth (309 lunar years).
[496] 'Al-Kahf' (The Cave), Qur'an 18: 9-26.

that can be rewritten by each generation. Interestingly, according to Harold Bloom's conception of poetic doubling, '[t]he strong poet peers in the mirror of his fallen precursor and beholds neither the precursor nor himself but a Gnostic double, the dark otherness or antithesis that both he and the precursor longed to be, yet feared to become'.[497] Is Bachi presenting the citizens of Carthago with a choice here as to which future they wish for their country: that of the poet or the devil, the light or the shadow? His use of literary legends creates an ambiguous and atemporal backdrop for the novel, establishing Carthago as a spectral city that is haunted by death and destruction. Bachi revels in the indeterminant status of these myths, mobilising their ambivalence and uncertainty to suggest that Algeria is in a transitory stage in its history, drifting aimlessly in a liminal period that requires decisive intervention for immediate course-correction.

This engagement with mythology, however, is only one aspect of the interweaving of cultural stories that is rife throughout *Amours et aventures*. The whole novel is in fact densely intertextual, littered with references to classic works of literature, art, poetry, and music, as well as further allusions to mythology (such as the tale of Romulus and Remus and the allegory of Plato's Cave), Greek and Roman epics, and historical literary figures – all in addition to the obvious engagement with the *Nights*. During his voyages to Italy, Bachi's Sindbad becomes enamoured with Dante, Sciascia, Michelangelo, Botticelli, and da Vinci, amongst others, '[s]e promen[ant] dans le royaume des morts'.[498] Later, he is inspired by Keats, Wordsworth and Tennessee Williams; and while studying in Paris, he retraces the hallowed steps of renowned French writers, '[s]e remémorant Apollinaire' and '[s]e prosterna[nt] devant la tombe de Balzac'.[499] The constant evocation of these literary and

[497] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 147.
[498] *Amours et aventures*, p. 145.
[499] Ibid., p. 177. For further analysis of Bachi's use of intertextuality through the evocation of deceased Parisian writers and artists, see Siby Mariamou's 'Un Paris littéraire sous les yeux d'un Arabe dans le roman

artistic ghosts suggests, according to Hiddleston, that 'the experience of a place is always enhanced, developed, and altered through a simultaneous imagined journey into comparable literary worlds.'[500] In this way, Bachi encourages us to pay attention to the stories and histories that haunt these spaces but not simply to recall them for their own sake, rather to build on them in order to create our own 'imagined journey[s]'. Indeed, it was the discovery of French literature that provided an escape for the author from the tragic events of his childhood (his sister died of sickle cell anaemia when he was nine – a disease Bachi also suffered from – and then a close friend died a few years later.).[501]

These different stories and legends interact with each other in a dialogue across time and space. The notion of literary doubling, initiated between Sindbad and le Dormant, is nourished throughout the novel with Sindbad identifying with a host of other historical and literary figures. He sees uncanny representations of himself in, for example, a fellow African traveller named Robinson (most likely a reference to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*), Don Quixote, Casanova (on whom Sindbad writes his doctoral thesis at La Sorbonne), and of course in Sindbad of the *Nights*, whom he calls his 'double ancien'[502] and 'double oriental.'[503] Regarding his namesake, however, it is not only the legendary sailor to whom this refers, but also the impoverished porter. When visited in a dream by Don Quixote, who proceeds to recount the original Sinbad tale to Bachi's hero, the latter assumes the role of listener rather than storyteller for once and feels an unsettling connection with the porter. He explains:

---

de Salim Bachi, *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin'*, *Altre Modernità*: *Rivista di Studi letterari e culturali*, 23 (May, 2020), pp. 1-10. <https://doi.org.10.13130/2035-7680/13389>

[500] Hiddleston, *Writing After Postcolonialism*, p. 50.

[501] Bachi includes a short story he wrote about his sister's death in *Dieu, Allah, moi et les autres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), pp. 28-35, and discusses the loss of his friend on p. 43 and in *Autoportrait avec Grenade* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2005), pp. 138-139.

[502] *Amours et aventures*, p. 242.

[503] Ibid., p. 260.

> Don Quichotte se pencha sur moi pour me conter les aventures de mon double, l'autre Sindbad qui vécut il y a plus de mille ans et continuait son chemin dans la mémoire des conteuses. Et moi de l'écouter, fasciné, comme jadis l'écoutait le Portefaix, ce Sindbad de la Terre entré par hasard dans la demeure de mon double.[504]

Also highlighted here is the ongoing nature of the Sindbad stories, sustained over thousands of years by the memory of storytellers *and* by the willing and 'fascinated' listeners who provide a destination for the tales – a reason for them to be told, for what use is a story without someone to hear it? Stories demand an audience to bring them into being and imbue them with meaning, and this is the often-overlooked dualism of the storytelling partnership. Just like Daoud highlights the role of the reader in *Contre-enquête*, Bachi stresses that both the porter and the sailor, le Dormant and Sindbad, are required for the narrative relationship to function. In the *Nights*, this collaboration is brought to the fore by the gift of one hundred gold coins that Sindbad bestows upon the porter each night – seemingly a reward for listening to the sailor's story. Wen-Chin Ouyang suggests that it is the porter's 'faith and patience' which are upheld as ideal virtues here, and to that I would add the willingness to hear another's tale and bear witness to their story.[505]

Not long after his vision of Don Quixote, Bachi's Sindbad is visited by another artistic figure, this time a painter named Ingres (an incarnation perhaps of the French orientalist painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres), who appears at the former's door, 'silencieux comme le sont les apparitions'.[506] This 'spectre'[507] believes Sinbad to be the sailor from his childhood stories, despite the latter's affirmation to the contrary, and proceeds to 'remind' Bachi's voyager of his famous adventures, casting him once more in the role of the porter. As Sindbad recounts: 'Et moi, Sindbad le Portefaix, je l'écoutais comme s'il fût question pour

[504] Ibid., p. 113.
[505] Wen-Chin Ouyang, 'Whose story is it? Sindbad the sailor in literature and film', *Middle Eastern Literatures* 7.2, (2004), 133-147, p. 145 <10.1080/1366616042000236 83> [accessed 21 December 2020]
[506] *Amours et aventures*, p. 133.
[507] Ibid., 142.

moi de sonder dans l'âme de mon double, de me contempler dans un miroir de mots et de chatoyances'.[508] These encounters suggest not only that stories and art can reveal truths about our own natures, but also that Bachi's Sindbad is perhaps not as much a reflection of the sailor we presume him to be but rather that of his less remembered alter ego, here to provide another side to the original story – just as Haroun lays bare an alternative perspective on Meursault's story in *Contre-enquête*. Once again, this is indicative of contemporary writers' desire to revise classic works. The idea of literature being a revelatory source of self-knowledge and self-recognition is upheld throughout the novel, but also shown to be in danger in Algeria. Upon finding an unfinished manuscript of *Les nouveaux voyages de Sindbad* while travelling in Italy (a reference to Moroccan author Négib Bouderbala's 1987 book[509]), Sindbad yet again experiences the 'sensation étrange de se rencontrer dans un roman, de voir son double agir à sa place et se comporter comme un vaurien'.[510] He continues, however, to reflect on the importance of this literary capacity and how it has been the downfall of many of his contemporaries:

> Mais n'était-ce pas la raison d'être de la littérature : nous tendre un miroir voyou ? Voilà pourquoi les écrivains étaient détestés de leurs contemporains […] [À] Carthago, nous sommes très fiers de compter dans nos rangs des lettrés tortionnaires. […] Ces emplumés sont célébrés dans le monde entier pour leurs exploits guerriers et leur néant littéraire. Quelque chose pue au royaume des lettres à Carthago.[511]

Bachi evokes *Hamlet* in the last line of this passage with an appropriation of 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark'[512] in order to foreground the corruption and censorship that reigns supreme in Carthago. In addition, 'nous tendre un miroir voyou' echoes Hamlet's

[508] Ibid., p. 134.
[509] N. Bouderbala, *Les Nouveaux voyages de Sindbad : Chez les Amazones et autres étranges peuplades* (Casablanca, Morocco: Le Fennec, 1987). Interestingly, this is the title chosen for the 2012 English translation of Bachi's *Amours et aventures – The New Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor*, trans. Sue Rose (London: Pushkin Press).
[510] *Amours et aventures*, p. 82.
[511] Ibid., pp. 82-83.
[512] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, (c.1601), I,iv, l.90.

famous proclamation that the arts 'hold a mirror up to nature',[513] but Bachi emphasises that this mirror is 'cheeky' or deceptive – just like Mbembe contends is the nature of spectral self-confrontation. Nonetheless, this unreliability of literature is precisely what enables the artform to provide an accurate reflection of real life, according to Bachi. As he explains in an interview, '[l]e statut même d'ambiguïté de la littérature, l'incertain qui la constitue, est le reflet le plus fidèle sans doute de notre monde et de la manière dont nous rêvons nos vies.'[514] This notion of narrative ambivalence leads us to a discussion of the duality of storytelling as presented in *Amours et aventures*: at once a positive force for healing and growth but also a duplicitous device used to subjugate or present a false reality. This is the second level of spectrality in the novel, moving from an purely intertextual haunting – through literature, myths, and characters – to a portrayal of the art of storytelling itself as a ghostly and ghosted process.

ii. Stories as *Revenants*: Nomadic Narratives and Verbal Voyage

Throughout Bachi's novel, stories and storytelling are accorded paramount importance, with all events that occur in the book presented to readers through a character's narration; that is, in the awareness that they are not *happening* but being *recounted*. In this way, the narrative act itself is the story. Tellingly, both Sindbads are rarely referred to as sailors but rather as storytellers, suggesting that this is in fact their primary role. Moreover, Bachi frequently uses the verbs 'conter', 'narrer' and 'raconter' instead of the more common 'dire' or 'expliquer' to emphasise the particular art of storytelling over simply recounting an event or stating facts. Sindbad is described as 'l'homme qui parlait parlait parlait',[515] which not

[513] 'the purpose of playing [is]/ to hold, as 'twere, the/ mirror up to nature'. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, ii, l. 21-23.
[514] Bachi in Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form', p. 11.
[515] *Amours et aventures*, p. 36.

only reinforces the oral nature of these stories but also suggests that the character's need to tell them is almost as compulsive as his desire for travel – a connection that is reinforced throughout the novel. Furthermore, the absence of commas in the above collocation highlights the endless, unbroken stream of speech that flows from the sailor's mouth. This almost involuntary divulgence of tales reflects Bachi's conviction that the drive to tell stories is an innate and inalienable part of the human experience. As the author states in an interview: 'On se raconte des histoires depuis la naissance du monde, […] seule la manière change à chaque fois.'[516] In this way, he agrees with writers like Michel Tournier that we are 'mythic creatures', needing stories to explain the world around us and to construct meaning from our experiences.[517] The stories we are told, as well as the ones we tell ourselves, unconsciously shape and contribute to the formation and solidification of our individual and communal identities. Tales that have been passed down from generation to generation, or which have been rewritten and retold so many times that their true forms remain elusive and unknowable, incarnate the precise impossibility of complete knowledge that characterises the spectral. As Hiddleston notes, Bachi 'continues the intensely self-reflexive work of the *Thousand and One Nights* and conceptualizes literature itself as a contingent space for worldly self-doubt and self-questioning'.[518] This uncertainty applies particularly to oral narratives, which are intangible like ghosts yet whose haunting influence is difficult to efface and can last well into the future. Bachi emphasises the power of stories to shape alternative futures through their ability to be continually revised and updated.

Unlike Sindbad of the *Nights*, Bachi's hero not only travels across the seas but also through time, traversing multiple eras and epochs from ancient Baghdad to warring Libya, through

[516] Bachi in Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form', p. 6.
[517] In his autobiographical essay, Tournier famously declares: 'L'homme n'est qu'un animal mythologique.'. Michel Tournier, *Le Vent paraclet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p.186.
[518] Hiddleston, *Writing After Postcolonialism*, p. 51.

France and Italy to a future Algeria. He describes himself as 'un touriste'[519] whose 'unique trésor' is his 'capacité à se réinventer'.[520] With his insatiable urge to travel, then, this modern Sindbad is an apt embodiment of a diasporic tradition of storytelling that resists hermeticism and linear temporalities. His ability to reinvent himself casts Sindbad as a spectral entity – a 'wandering ghost'[521] drifting through time with no fixed form. He does not wholly belong to any single period of history or any particular land but will continue to regenerate and be reincarnated in new roles as his story is retold in different versions all over the world. Sindbad is a character who exists more clearly in people's imagination and in cultural legend than in any single text – or any one *version* of a text; instead, his story will continue to be evoked and reinterpreted by each generation. It is precisely for this reason that 'Sindbad était immortel: il renaissait à chaque génération et il s'incarnait dans un jeune homme à l'âme voyageuse'.[522] He vacillates between different worlds, languages, identities, eras and political regimes in order to remain truly universal – the perfect example of what Abdelkébir Khatibi calls 'un étranger professionnel'.[523] Emblematic of both storytelling and movement, the protagonist demonstrates that stories too must travel and evolve in order to survive. A powerful tale, then, must be adaptable and universal, ready to be conjured anew upon the reader's request, much like a shape-shifting genie from a lamp – or a ghost. Bachi himself affirms the importance of this type of intercultural exchange when he declares:

> Je m'élève et je m'élèverai toujours contre cette conception d'un monde fermé par des frontières que les autres nous imposent […] ou que nous nous imposons au nom du nationalisme ou de la religion comme valeurs ultimes. […] La vie est dans le mouvement perpétuel des hommes et des idées, dans la rencontre et l'échange, dans le partage des biens et des valeurs. Nous ne devrions plus avoir peur de cela.[524]

---

[519] *Amours et aventures*, p. 81.
[520] Ibid., p. 149.
[521] Mbembe, 'Life, Sovereignty, and Terror'.
[522] *Amours et aventures*, p. 141.
[523] Khatibi first uses this term to describe himself and his approach to writing as 'un *exercice d'alterite cosmopolite'* in *Figures de l'étranger dans la littérature française* (Paris: Denoël, 1987), p. 211.
[524] Bachi in Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form', pp. 10-11.

Much like Édouard Glissant's notion of *le Tout-monde*,[525] then, Bachi promotes a rhizomatic and relational conception of identity that can be constructed and affirmed through shared and evolving cultural narratives.

Nonetheless, whilst emphasising that stories are integral to the human experience, allowing us to grow and discover who we are, Bachi also exposes their limitations. Sindbad often feels suffocated and trapped by the legend that precedes him, that which has already laid out his life for him and which everyone he meets seems to know better than he does. He describes this endless cycle of having to satisfy the role society expects of him as 'l'impression étrange et taraudante de revivre la même chose, tout le temps, comme si mon histoire appartenait à tous'.[526] It is clear that he does not feel like his story is truly his, nor that he has any control over his destiny, despite the profound sense of agency stories have the potential to engender. This is reinforced when he describes himself as 'un vivant tableau',[527] reflecting the protagonist's feeling of being forever frozen in a particular image for the viewing pleasure of others. In this way, 'le conte […] cherchait à l'emprisonner',[528] mummifying him, so to speak, in a static state; and for a character for whom movement and travel are so vital, this is especially stultifying, resulting in what Carole Delaitre describes as an 'immobilité mortifière'.[529] Nonetheless, as has already been established, Sindbad manages to 'échapp[er] au conteur'[530] and break free from the mould these stories have imposed on him due to his readiness to recreate himself in new contexts. This suggests that in order to continue maturing and developing, we need to keep telling stories but, crucially, that we must revise them to reflect evolving concerns rather than contriving to make them

[525] This concept is addressed in most detail in *Traité du tout-monde: Poétique IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).
[526] *Amours et aventures*, pp. 148-9.
[527] Ibid., p. 260.
[528] Ibid., p. 141.
[529] Carole Delaitre, 'Enfers et paradis touristiques dans *Autoportrait avec Grenade* et *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin'* in Agnès Schaffauser, *Salim Bachi* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020), p. 83.
[530] *Amours et aventures*, p. 141.

fit an all-purpose template. In *Contre-enquête*, this rejected template is one of nostalgia and mourning for a pre-colonial era; a story defined exclusively by a colonial past and which refuses to acknowledge new threats to Algerian society such as Islamism, imposed Arabic monolingualism, and political censorship. In *Amours et aventures*, similar concerns are expressed in the form of cultural myths; we have already discussed Qu'ranic and historical myths, such as those surrounding Carthage, Catharism, and the Seven Sleepers, but I now wish to turn my attention to what Bachi calls 'Le mythe de […] l'Algérie'.[531]

Bachi repeatedly alludes to Algeria's nationalist myth in his works, which he believes projects a two-fold 'réalité fantomatique'.[532] Firstly, according to the author, this myth is built on an erroneous assumption of cultural unity and homogeneity, which is oppressing its citizens by imposing a limiting and unrepresentative model of identity whereby all Algerians are considered to be Arabic-speaking, ethnically Arab (not Amazigh, *pied-noir*, or of any mixed heritage) and Muslim. Secondly, as we have explored in the Introduction, it seeks to mythologise the War of Independence as the defining moment in the country's history, projecting a burdensome legacy of colonial victimhood and anticolonial heroism onto current, post-independent generations. This is brought to the fore when Sindbad asserts: 'On avait bien raconté au peuple de Carthago, prêt à gober une baliverne de plus, que la guerre s'était achevée au début des années soixante ; en vérité, elle ne se terminerait jamais'.[533] This statement not only implies a temporal continuity, suggesting that the aftermath of the War of Independence still resonates with the Algerian people, but also punctures the myth that Algeria's problems remain solely in the past. By insisting on the end of the war, the political rhetoric of Carthago/Algiers actually cements this event as *the*

[531] Bachi in Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form', p. 7.
[532] *Amours et aventures*, p. 33.
[533] Ibid., p. 241.

determining one in the country's history, ignoring the fact that there has been devastating conflict since, as if to say: 'now that colonialism is over, the Algerian people have nothing to worry about'. Yet this ipsedixitism overlooks and invalidates contemporary concerns, especially those resulting from the more recent civil war, which, Bachi suggests, the government is less inclined to talk about, preferring instead to cast the French as the enemy in attempt to discourage scrutiny of internal affairs.

The focus of this political narrative, then, remains on a 'finished war' from which Algeria has purportedly fully recovered and which therefore warrants rejoicing. Sindbad, however, flatly contradicts this assumption, declaring: 'On vivait dans l'enfer de nos indépendances ratées'.[534] It is clear that he is not convinced by the idyllic state narrative promulgated by the government, suggesting instead that although Algeria is now free from external colonisation, its quest for independence has failed since it is still under the tyranny of an authoritarian domestic power. In this way, Sindbad is haunted by a future that *failed* to happen (a successful independence) as much as by the impending destruction threatened by le Dormant. Furthermore, by declaring the War of Independence unfinished, *Amours et aventures* depicts war and violence as political issues that spectrally repeat themselves – or rather, that resist completion entirely. According to Corbin Treacy, the atemporality of much of Bachi's work is due to the author's desire 'to enfold the political realities of life in black decade Algeria into a literary casing that was precisely *not* of the moment',[535] and this is why the author rejects the label of purely testimonial writer, affirming: 'Je ne suis pas un écrivain-témoin au sens *traditionnel* du terme'.[536] Through an emphasis on mythological

[534] Ibid., p. 128.
[535] Corbin Treacy, 'Reading Joyce in Algiers', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 22 (2018), 170-77 (p. 174).
[536] Bachi in Yassin Temlali, 'Entretien avec Salim Bachi', *Babel Med*, 20 june 2007, republished as 'Salim Bachi: « un romancier et non un témoin »', in Temlali, *Algérie: Chroniques Ciné-Littéraires de Deux Guerres* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2011), p. 92. See also Leperlier, 'Témoin du doute: *Le Chien d'Ulysse* de Salim Bachi', in Agnès Schaffausser (ed.), *Salim Bachi* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2019), pp. 45-56.

temporalities, Bachi is able to generalise the experiences portrayed in order to make broader comments on the myths surrounding state violence, power, nationalism, and religion. Indeed, Sindbad exemplifies these concerns when he declares: 'Je me souciais peu de l'Histoire avec un grand « h », de cette déesse sanguinaire qui me rattrapa pourtant sous la forme insinuante d'une guerre civile.'[537] In this way, he clearly reflects the author's view, expressed as a rhetorical question in his 2011 essay 'À la recherche d'Ulysse': 'N'est-ce pas là la destinée même de l'artiste, ce prisonnier du temps, ce cauchemar dont on ne s'éveille pas, capable pourtant de toutes les formes, de tous les voyages?'.[538]

The danger with narratives that seek to present such an absolutist view of events is that it is easy to forget the extent to which they can influence our worldviews and resulting behaviours. As Hanna Meretoja stresses in her article 'Narrative and Human Existence: Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics', our 'interpretations have real, material, world-constituting effects' and therefore the stories we tell about ourselves and our nation have the power to influence our actions and futures, challenging 'the dichotomous view that we either interpret the world or change it'[539] – a conflict that is explored further in Daoud's *Zabor*. To exemplify 'the ways in which cultural narratives can serve destructive political ends',[540] Meretoja discusses Nazi ideology, which, like any other, arises from a certain 'intersubjective world' that, in turn, is created through a series of communal narratives that have been internalised and (re)interpreted based on one's personal experiences, observations, and beliefs.[541] It is therefore crucial that we scrutinise these stories before they become

[537] *Amours et aventures*, p. 78.
[538] Bachi, 'À la recherche d'Ulysse', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 15.4 (2011), 381-387 (p. 387).
[539] Meretoja is drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur here to 'conceptualis[e] narrative in terms of (re)interpretation' in 'Narrative and Human Existence: Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics', *New Literary History* 45, 1 (2014), pp. 89-109 (p.101), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542583> [accessed Jan 21 2021]
[540] Ibid., p. 100.
[541] Ibid, p. 101.

subsumed as facts upon which we base our perception of self and others. This nefarious usage of indoctrinating political narratives is examined in more depth in Part III.

In a similar fashion, *Amours et aventures* beseeches its readers to remain aware that some stories are presented as truths and intended to breed complacency. As such, they can become an insidious means of controlling a population (an idea that Sansal takes further in his *2084*). It is for this reason that 'les habitants de Carthago ressemblaient à des zombis ; on leur avait supprimé âme et conscience ; on les avait tyrannisées, terrorisés comme des rats de laboratoire'.[542] One cannot help recalling here Daoud's image of 'les 36 millions de Meursault' that he sees inhabiting his country.[543] Sindbad warns us of the pernicious nature of the Algerian Myth, sharply undercutting the illusion it creates with the following observation: '*Nous vivions à présent sous une grisaille permanente. C'en était fini de notre âge d'or… Carthago brulait.*'.[544] This depiction of the Algerian capital as burning paints a picture of an apocalyptic future for the nation, one that awaits if the country continues to replay a false or overbearing representation of the past. Bachi encourages his readers to understand stories as existing in multiple versions rather than representing a definitive truth, echoing Derrida's assertion that stories are never wholly reflective of reality nor wholly fictional but rather operate on a spectral plane that hovers between the two.[545] Stories are powerful, then, but we must be wary of the intention behind them. Scheherazade has already famously demonstrated how tales can be used as a ruse, but Bachi further lays bare how they can create harmful illusions that promote conformity and homogeneity at the expense

[542] *Amours et aventures*, p.241.
[543] Daoud, 'Les 36 millions de Meursault', *Quotidien d'Oran*, 13 March 2011 <http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/?news=5150404&archive_date=2011-03-13> [accessed 4 January 2020]
[544] *Amours et aventures*, p. 107 (original italics).
[545] As explained in the Introduction, this is the crux of much of Derrida's argument in *Spectres de Marx*, but it is also further explored in his essay 'Marx, c'est quelqu'un' in Derrida, Marx Guillaume, and Jean-Pierre Vincent, *Marx en jeu* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1997).

of personal creativity, freedom, and an awareness of current issues. The difficulty, then, is knowing when stories are oppressive and when they are empowering.

The crux of the problem, Sindbad seems to say, resides not so much in the content of the stories themselves but in the ways in which they are told and received. The first danger occurs when we lock ourselves into a particular version of a narrative and are unwilling to adapt it as times change or new evidence comes to light; and the second arises when stories are presented or received as unalterable fact. Bachi implores us to remember that stories are *revenants* and that we must each interpret them ourselves but, crucially, remain conscious that this is only one possible interpretation. This hauntological mindset encourages an awareness and appreciation of the multivalence of narrative, and its ever-revisable nature. Indeed, it is this essential aspect of storytelling that enables Sindbad to 'inventer sa vie', [546] and he emphasises the importance of telling one's *own* story rather than letting it be told by others – especially not 'les dirigeants fous de [s]on pays'.[547] *Amours et aventures*, then, highlights the contrapuntal nature of storytelling; at once a liberating force that encourages freedom of expression and creative licence – especially in oral format – but also one that can serve to confine its subject to a certain role if not checked. In this way, he presents narratives as a sort of *pharmakon*, a highly spectral concept that is at once the cause of, as well as the solution to, society's ills.[548] But how far does its salvific potential extend?

[546] *Amours et aventures*, p. 47.
[547] Ibid., p. 121.
[548] This is an ancient Greek word which can mean either 'poison' or 'antidote'. Derrida mobilises this idea in *La Pharmacie de Platon*, first published in *Tel Quel* no. 32, 33 (Paris: Seuil, 1968), then collected in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 77-214 (esp. pp.118-144), wherein he argues that writing is a pharmakon since it contains multiple levels of indeterminacy.

iii. Le Dormant and Apocalypse: Is Storytelling Dying or Death-Defying?

We have so far examined how Bachi engages with cultural myths and works of literature to produce a spectral relationship with intertextuality that foregrounds the ghostly capacity of (oral) stories as fodder for continual revision and adaptation. Furthermore, we have seen how Sindbad is cast as a shape-shifting revenant through his anachronistic reincarnations, obfuscating temporal and geographical borders. Finally, we have analysed the contingency and fragility of narratives, highlighting their inherent duality as simultaneous sources of self-empowerment and imprisonment, serving to deceive when they are imposed as rigid, definitive 'truths' rather than understood as an evolving chain of spectral versions that blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. We will now investigate in more detail the character of le Dormant, who, despite his apparent apathy throughout most of the novel, must fulfil the destiny set out for him by the Démiurge in accordance with the myth from which he is borne. Like Sindbad, he is a ghostly figure, appearing from a forgotten underworld that is shrouded in mystery, talking of ancient prophecies and hovering over the voyager like a dark shadow. It is worth mentioning here that le Dormant is not actively hostile towards Sindbad, he merely represents his opposite; the two characters are 'deux personnes solitaires, séparées par l'âge et l'histoire'.[549]

Nonetheless, this mythical figure has also 'vécu plusieurs vies' and, as a result, feels 'hors du temps'.[550] Moreover, when asked his name, le Dormant replies: 'Mon nom est Personne' (a reference to the *Odyssey*, wherein Ulysses tells the cyclops that his name is 'No-one'), and this further reinforces his ghostly status, allying him with Homer's heroic traveller at the same time as it highlights his lack of fixed identity.[551] The Seven Sleepers referenced in

[549] *Amours et aventures*, p. 56.
[550] Ibid., p. 24.
[551] Ibid., p. 25 (and later, 'Je suis Personne', p. 53).

Bachi's novel are described as 'des justiciers dont le réveil sonnerait la fin des temps',[552] and le Dormant, as the last of these, 'était celui qui avertit l'Avènement'.[553] In this sense, the significance of his title could also play on connotations of 'sleeper agent', casting le Dormant as a sort of human weapon programmed to awaken and activate a destructive plan at the critical moment (in this case, 'quand le temps était venu de recommencer').[554] We have already noted that time is not chronological in *Amours et aventures* and that, instead, the novel employs a Derridean temporality rife with analepsis and prolepsis, within which characters fluidly traverse different epochs. However, there is another layer of temporal distortion which diverges once again from the chronological. Much of the novel hinges on a kairological perspective whereby emphasis is placed on the significance of certain moments in time – potential peripetaeias – rather than a linear progression.[555] Bachi clearly believes that Algeria is at a crossroads, having secured its independence from France yet battling internal division and ongoing trauma from both a colonial period and civil war. He sees a country still struggling to come to terms with its identity as an independent nation and believes that now is the critical time to act in order to decide how Algeria wishes to define its story for the future. Will Algerians ever awaken from their prolonged slumber or will they remain 'hors du temps' like le Dormant, always living retrospectively and perhaps unwittingly contributing to their own destruction? In this way, Bachi repurposes the myth of the seven sleepers to present a challenge to what he views as the myth of a free, post-Independent Algeria. Just as le Dormant 'es[t] là pour le Jugement' and has 'venu voir ce

[552] Ibid. This apocalyptic setting features in previous novels of Bachi's too, notably *Le Chien d'Ulysse* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).
[553] Ibid., p. 36.
[554] Ibid., p. 41.
[555] In opposition to *chrono*logical or sequential (quantitative) time, *kairo*logical refers to an opportune or imperative (qualitative) moment to act. It derives from the Greek 'kairos', meaning 'a propitious moment for decision or action'; in other words, a climax or point of no return.

qu'ont fait les hommes de ce pays',[556] *Amours et aventures* is presented as a judgement on how Algeria has managed its independence.

Now, one might wonder why Bachi appears to be appealing to an Algerian public here given that his works are first and foremost published in France where, unlike Daoud and Sansal, he also lives. But as Leperlier explains, 'quoique publiée en France, [la littérature algérienne] reste « algérienne » [et] s'inscrit en priorité dans le champ littéraire algérien'. In fact, 'rares sont les texts romanesques d'écrivains algériens qui ne supposent pas un déstinataire algérien'.[557] While there is a tendency to either over ascribe a testimonial role onto Algerian authors or alternatively consider them 'sell-outs' to a French market, I believe a careful reading of recent works reveals that many are in fact what Leperlier calls 'des oeuvres Janus', referring to the two-faced Roman god of transitions, thresholds, and dualities. Although it can be difficult to tell whether these texts are intended for a French or Algerian readership, this actually presumes a false dichotomy since 'la plupart [des romans algériens écrits à l'étranger] sont en réalité bifaces, […] regardant seulement avec plus ou moins d'intensité vers l'une ou l'autre rive.'[558] Indeed, this dualistic predicament presents somewhat of a 'catch twenty-two' for Algerian writers since, on one hand, their engagement with domestic politics can lead to accusations of exploiting a national crisis for commercial success; but on the other, to *not* write about Algeria's political situation is seen as evidence of apathy or not fulfilling their duty as overseas ambassadors. This is clearly demonstrated by the international responses to Daoud, whose exponential success in the French and Western literary spheres in the last decade has earned him as much criticism and cynicism as it has acclaim.

[556] *Amours et aventures*., p. 54.
[557] Leperlier, *Algérie*, pp. 264, 263.
[558] Ibid, p. 262.

With this in mind, it is clear how *Amours et aventures*, despite being published in France largely due to the constraints of the Algerian publishing industry, remains at its core for and about Algerians. The novel ends with the promise of immanent apocalypse, and thus le Dormant ultimately triumphs over Sindbad, who represents life, love, and adventure. Is this the bleak future, then, that awaits Algeria if it continues to adhere religiously to ancient myths and repressive dogma rather than create its own stories? Indeed, it seems that adopting a mode of thinking that accepts the contingency of stories is the only way to release the country from its turmoil – and Sindbad's multiple, reworked and travelling tales very nearly do, until he realises that no-one is listening anymore. Nonetheless, his storytelling manages to engage le Dormant for a while and gradually establish a sort of mutual sympathy between the two foils, causing Chien (le Dormant's accomplice) to worry: 'Sinndabaaad pouvait-il contrarier le Plan du Démiurge ? Pouvait-il empêcher la destruction totale qui grouillait dans le ventre de Chien comme une faim dévorante […]?'.[559]

By depicting Sindbad, with his 'babil sans fin',[560] as an obstacle to this destruction, Bachi extends a salvific power to the act of storytelling; not only can it prolong an individual's life, as both Scheherazade and Sindbad of the *Nights* discover, but, he proposes, it can even contribute to the survival of the world around us. Unfortunately, however, this modern Sindbad's stories are not enough to ensure the future of the planet, and the traveller appears to relent, believing that his quest is futile because few people today appreciate the art of storytelling. Like Abdallah in *Nos Richesses*, Sindbad expresses a concern for this lost artform, wondering: 'À part lui, qui se souciait des contes ?'.[561] The syntactical isolation of this question, given its own line in the novel, highlights the raconteur's despair as he

[559] *Amours et aventures*, p. 41.
[560] Ibid., p. 42.
[561] Ibid., p. 47.

proceeds to affirm that 'Homère et Schéhérazade appartenaient à une humanité disparue'.[562] Perhaps this is why he describes Ingres the painter, and other artists and writers throughout the novel, as 'spectres' – to highlight that they belong to a class of creative individuals who are fading into oblivion and becoming mere relics of a time when their arts were appreciated, unlike 'à présent [quand] on conchiait les artistes'.[563] In this sense, storytelling becomes ghostly on another level: it represents a dying artform and, moreover, a dying spirit of creativity and artistic endeavour that is no longer practised with the same fervour and regard as in the past. Sindbad is brought 'au bord des larmes' to think of how '[p]lus personne n'enchanterait le monde à nouveau'.[564] Nonetheless, he has grown tired of the responsibility of constantly sharing all his stories and so relinquishes this duty for the next generation, acknowledging that his time has come to an end: 'Je sais bien que vous attendez de moi d'autres contes, d'autres mystères, d'autres femmes. Il n'y en a plus. C'est terminé.'.[565] Although he is ostensibly addressing le Dormant here, Sindbad could equally be directing this statement to the reader or scholar attempting to impose their expectations of heroism onto the character. This is where Sindbad's story diverges from his ancient counterpart's, for there is no recurrent trope of prosperous returns in Bachi's tale, nor do his stories triumph over evil; instead, this Sindbad has exhausted his arsenal of tales and can therefore prevent 'l'Avènement' no longer. Resignedly, he almost begs le Dormant to destroy the dystopic world in which he finds himself, stating: 'Si vous voulez l'effacer, surtout n'hésitez pas. Mais je vous en conjure, pour l'amour de Dieu, ne proposez rien d'autre.'.[566]

Such capitulation, however, is at odds with Sindbad's determination throughout the rest of the novel to continue telling and retelling his story no matter what. As the narrator declares

[562] Ibid.
[563] Ibid., p. 79.
[564] Ibid., p. 47.
[565] Ibid., p. 260.
[566] Ibid., p. 261.

early on: 'Son histoire n'avait plus aucun intérêt, il ne renoncerait pas à conter pourtant.'.[567] Despite this assertion, Sindbad, just like his compatriots, in his estimation, eventually admits defeat. He reflects on this infectious laissez-faire attitude, wondering who is really to blame for the current state of affairs: 'Qui à Carthago était innocent ou coupable? Et dans le monde? Personne. La réponse lui donnait envie de rire. Personne. N'était-ce pas ainsi que se présentait le Dormant.'.[568] The use of a full stop rather than question mark after this last interrogative implies certainty, suggesting ironically that no-one is willing to assume accountability for Carthago's demise, but also that there is no individual culprit. The anonymity implies a collective culpability for the present situation, which in turn implies a shared responsibility for the solution. Whilst being careful not to impute the voice of a character to its author, Bachi does seem to suggest here that it is not only the government but also the people of Algeria who have played a role in the current impasse by blindly accepting rather than critically examining the status quo. Their unwillingness to listen to stories or to tell their own has helped stall the country's progress and paved the way for an opportunistic government to create its own self-serving master narrative, one in which the Algerian population remains forever victimised by a constantly rehashed colonial war rather than allowed to grieve for the past but also address current, internal issues in an attempt to 'move on' and construct productive, *post*colonial futures.

This locks the Algerian people into a certain mould from which, like Bachi's protagonist, they find it difficult to extricate themselves. According to Sindbad, this is due in large part to the current generation's complacent consumption of media, preferring to 'télécharger une musique idiote que de lire *l'Odysée*'.[569] He further denounces the common belief that

[567] Ibid., p. 47.
[568] Ibid., p. 265.
[569] Ibid., p. 142.

mythical tales – like the *Odyssey* and the *Nights* – are simply children's stories, emphasising that such narratives encourage imagination and escape. He even suggests that adopting a childlike perspective of wonder, curiosity, and enchantment might actually be the solution to widescale disillusionment and apathy, wondering:

> Un enfant pouvait-il sauver le monde? C'était une question sérieuse […], j'en étais persuadé, et je ne voyais plus d'enfants sur cette terre, je discernais de terribles et puissants adultes de tous les âges, une sorte de village des damnés. L'innocence, si elle avait jamais existé, était morte en l'espace d'un quart de siècle.[570]

This loss of innocence which Sindbad observes is reinforced through the memory of a photo depicting a young girl on her way to school, standing in front of two armed soldiers and some graffiti that reads 'Vive le FIS'.[571] The juxtaposition of war and violence on the one hand, and youthful naïveté on the other accentuates how constant conflict in Algeria has stolen the carefree nature of childhood, that which should be filled with magical tales instead. Bachi suggests that we should look at the world through a child's eyes, and that stories such as the *Nights* allow us to do so. Adopting the mindset of a child, in his view, would enable Algerians to regain a certain faith in the world and, along with this, the motivation to change it, since a child's outlook is open to all possibilities, not yet blinded or limited by the resigned cynicism of adulthood. Similarly, stories teach us to be creative and think for ourselves, and this is what a community loses when it limits itself to a single, unalterable narrative.

Finally, Bachi's novel casts stories, and the characters within them, as helpful phantoms, emphasising their role as empowering moral and social guides across generations. Sindbad's

[570] Ibid., p. 200.
[571] Ibid., p. 199-200. FIS is the acronym for the *Front islamique du salut*, the Islamic political party that gained popularity in 1991 before the elections were cancelled by the FLN (*Front nationale de libération*), in power at the time.

mission throughout the novel is to protect the lost art of storytelling in an attempt to prevent further suffering for his country. Halfway through the book, he has a dream in which a Bedouin Arab is tasked by Allah with the sacred duty of 'sauver les arts et les sciences'.[572] Just like Sindbad's visitations from Don Quixote and the painter Ingres, this messenger also appears before the protagonist in a vision of the night, like a ghost. In one way or another, these apparitions have been guiding him throughout the novel, ensuring he stays on the right path. As such, they act in a way not dissimilar to Avery Gordon's conception of the friendly ghost who appears as a warning that something is amiss and must be rectified to avoid an impending tragedy.

Interestingly, Sindbad also appears to perform this role for le Dormant. At the end of the novel, the latter has an epiphany that is described as follows:

> Un pressentiment lui disait que ce qu'il voyait depuis son retour: la ville, les rues et les gens, et même Sindbad […], avaient été des ombres dans une autre vie, avant son grand sommeil, et elles revenaient non pour le hanter comme il auraient pu le penser mais pour lui indiquer le chemin.[573]

In this way, Sindbad ends up being a ghost himself – or was he simply a figment of le Dormant's imagination all along? It is left ambiguous; but either way, for le Dormant, who 'ignorait tout de la voie en question, de sa mission, de son destin', Sindbad has served as an unintentional shepherd.[574] Is this, then, what stories do – show us the way and provide us with direction to move forward in constructing our own tales? As we will see, this is certainly the case in *Zabor*, where storytellers are prophets and stories are talismans, 'socles', and 'amarres'.[575]

[572] Ibid., p. 111.
[573] Ibid., p. 266.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Daoud, *Zabor ou les psaumes* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2017), p. 315.

Since Sindbad's heritage stems from the *Nights*, he belongs to a vibrant yet heretic world of legend and magic, one in which storytelling is valued as a powerful artform that promotes healing, encourages imagination, and clarifies one's purpose in life. Le Dormant and Chien, however, who hail from a world of Qur'anic myth, are symbolic at once of a past which has finally 'awoken' and is ready to exact vengeance, and also an apocalyptic future. Both these ghost-like figures then (Sindbad and le Dormant) represent different aspects of an Arabic story-telling tradition – classic oral, fantasy tales on the one hand (themselves worldly in nature) and Qu'ranic legend on the other, associated with divine, absolute truth and an untranslatable text. By pitting them against each other but also bringing them together as a duo in the same story and in an all-encompassing temporal setting, Bachi joins a transnational corpus of Maghrebi literature that reminds us how stories are most productive when they draw on each other, and that they only stand to be enriched by the inclusion of, and interaction with, different forms of discourse overtime. This desire to build on stories from the past, he suggests, is something that Algeria needs to embrace.

Le Dormant observes that '[l]'époque présente ne veut rien retenir des précédentes : elle tâtonne dans la pénombre, bâtit avec des fragments obscurs une réalité fantomatique'.[576] This depicts the current generation as hapless and confused, 'fumbling' around aimlessly in the darkness and unsure of how to proceed – a portrayal echoed in *Nos richesses*. Now, then, is the time to take decisive action towards a more liberating and determined future. Bachi argues that there is an urgent need for contemporary writers to forge their own paths in a way that reflects current interests and concerns. Crucially, however, this need not entail a complete severance from the past but rather a *reformulation* of those same ideas and traditions. Indeed, this is what struck the author when he first read *Ulysses*: the discovery

[576] *Amours et aventures*, p. 33.

that 'l'on pouvait être absolument moderne […] tout en s'inspirant de vieilles histoires'.[577] He invites today's storytellers to continue the tales of the past but to bring them forward into a new context, adapting them so that they remain pertinent. Current authors have full licence to rewrite, retell, and revise stories but they must be sure not to unduly dismiss their heritage since this forms an important part of the nation's culture and (self-)perception.

Bachi is encouraging Algeria on the one hand not to define itself entirely upon a single past event at the expense of dealing with new and emerging concerns (as he believes the government is doing), but on the other, not to ignore or deny its history (as is the tendency of today's youth with their apparent disinterest in classic stories). Like Derrida, Daoud, and Adimi in this regard, Bachi insists on the importance of acknowledging rather than repressing the ghosts of the past, inviting them not only into the present but more importantly, reforming them to ensure they carry on in ways that will help productively shape the future. In the *Nights*, the Caliph commands that Sindbad's tales be written in letters of gold for the next generations to read and know, however, Bachi suggests that stories should precisely *not* be written in definitive, immutable form but left free to evolve, grow, change, and eventually 'échapp[er] au conteur' to redefine themselves.[578] This, he argues, is the only way for his allegorical Algeria to guarantee a future that is truly its own, reflective of a distinctly Algerian voice that is understood on its own terms rather than always defined in relation to either the metropole or to a period of colonial violence.

Above all, *Amours et aventures* exposes the duality of storytelling as a double-edged sword; a process that oscillates spectrally between the boundaries of self-expression and self-

[577] Bachi in Crowley, 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form', pp. 5-6. Bachi is referencing the last poem in Arthur Rimbaud's collection *Une Saison en enfer*: 'Il faut être absolument moderne' in 'Adieu', *Une Saison en enfer* (Brussels: Alliance typographique, 1873).
[578] *Amours et aventures*, p.141.

deception. The novel demonstrates how the act of telling stories is an essential process for human growth – both individually and collectively – but that it requires the *ongoing* collaboration of both storyteller and listener to be effective. Furthermore, it emphasises narrative fragility and the resulting potential for deception whilst also foregrounding stories' capacity to serve as sources of guidance and illumination across time. Cultural and political myths, whether we are aware of them or not, haunt, shape and influence a society's perception of itself and others. This can be restrictive – as in the case of projecting expectations, stereotypes, and judgements onto a population – but also liberating, since the stories can be endlessly amended and adapted as required, allowing for growth and evolution. Such malleability, coupled with their polyvalence and lasting yet invisible influence, is precisely what makes narratives spectral. Futhermore, Bachi argues that this constitutes the particular magic of stories that are told rather than written: they are not fixed entities but ever-changing revenants which the storyteller can at any point choose to resurrect, alter, diverge from, add to, or extrapolate. Therefore, there is hope for a stultifying national narrative for whilst it may be limiting in its current state, it can always be rewritten – or retold. This is the task Bachi appears to extend to the emerging generation, insisting that it is incumbent on every individual to continue these stories for themselves and revive this ghostly artform. *Amours et aventures* is in many ways a cautionary tale for post-Independent Algeria, through which Bachi seems to ask his contemporaries if they really want to end up in a barren state like Carthago, clinging to archaic beliefs and repressive conservatism like the Cathars of the Middle Ages.

By depicting a future that is at once haunted by an imperial past (both the French colonisation of Algeria and the Roman conquest of Carthage) as well as the recent memory of a violent civil war, Bachi also casts a looming spectre over the present, haunted *by* this possible future. He conjures ancient myths – religious, cultural, and historical – in addition

to the ghosts of characters and authors from other literary worlds and traditions, to construct the dystopia of Carthago. In this way, Bachi's ghosts perform a helpful function, warning the current generation of what awaits them should they unquestioningly accept a calcified state narrative rather than recognise that it represents only one possible version of events. It is only through the acceptance of this spectral capacity of storytelling, which works against authoritarian dogmatism through its recognition of and allowance for multiplicity, that Bachi suggests Algeria and indeed the Maghreb can avoid the impending 'avènement' heralded by le Dormant.

Similarly, Daoud's *Zabor ou les psaumes* critiques Algeria's current mode of storytelling – or rather, what the author views as the country's *halted* storytelling – by foregrounding the disastrous impacts of allowing a past narrative to dictate any and all future ones. The novel presents the act of constructing stories as an ongoing conversation with the future and also opens up the possibility of spiritual connection through storytelling. Conceived in such a way, stories have the potential to alter our putatively pre-ordained destinies and, as in the *Nights*, delay death. However, unlike in *Amours et aventures* and the *Nights*, Daoud's novel presents us with the figure of the writer rather than that of the oral storyteller (although he does engage with this oral tradition in other ways, as we will see). Through its protagonist, *Zabor* reflects on the process of writing and memorialising as a ghostly phenomenon, not only in terms of its outcome (resurrecting individuals, deterring death, altering time, and ensuring the longevity of a community) but also through its very form, which implies a hauntological structure due to the way in which it is revealed and ventriloquised by the storyteller.

Zabor ou les psaumes – Kamel Daoud

Kamel Daoud's latest novel follows a social outcast, Zabor, who discovers during his adolescence that his writing has the power to prolong life. A modern Scheherazade, Zabor is called upon to revive those in his village who are teetering on the brink of death by continuing their stories in written form. He imagines futures and alternative pasts for them, filling thousands of notebooks with these life-sustaining stories. The crux of the novel centres on the protagonist's internal dilemma, and the limits of his 'don', when faced with the challenge of saving his father who abandoned him as a child. I will focus on two predominant uses of literary spectrality in the text, arguing that together they promote a reconceptualisation of storytelling as a sacred duty, advocating a 'postsecular' worldview. By this, I mean that the act of imagining and perpetuating stories is imbued with spiritual significance but not necessarily linked to any institutionalised religion.[579] In fact, Daoud goes so far as to suggest that the cultural role of storytelling can become a sort of replacement for religion and serve as a vehicle through which both the teller and the subject can access divinity and salvation. Rather than adopting a mythic worldview then, as Bachi does, Daoud utilises a spiritual one in order to advocate an alternative mode of transcendence to that offered by Islam and other monotheistic faiths, which, in the author's estimation, can too easily become subsumed into all-encompassing political dogma. The first way this is achieved is through the portrayal of the protagonist as both phantom figure and prophet, and the second concerns the representation of storytelling as a God-given, supernatural power that not only keeps death at bay but can also '*remonte[r] le temps*' and even usher in new futures.[580] Zabor's stories disrupt and rearrange temporalities in a manner

[579] The term 'postsecular' was popularised by Jürgen Habermas in 'Notes on Post-Secular Society' (*New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25, 2008, pp.17-29 <10.1111/j.1540-5842.2008.01017.x>) and has been used by critics like Manav Ratti and Sura Qadiri in relation to postcolonial writing. It will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.
[580] *Zabor*, p. 114 (original emphasis).

Derrida argues is quintessentially spectral, but they also go further to create a cyclical cosmology that fuels ghostly resurrection at all stages. Moreover, by bringing the near-dead back to life, these stories are not only spectral by their very nature but also in their function, revivifying would-be ghosts. Paradoxically, however, Zabor himself is condemned to the existence of a living corpse since he is excluded from his community and also depicted as 'emptied out' in a sense, serving as merely a body or vessel for the transmission of stories that inhabit him. Like *Amours et aventures*, Daoud's novel offers a radical re-evaluation of the role of storytelling and literature in society, but rather than highlighting the deceptive potential of stories when misused, it considers why Algeria's current narrative seems to be stalled.

i. Spectrality and the Postsecular: Writer as Ghost, Writer as Prophet

'Frappé de mauvais œil', as his aunt Hadjer proclaims, Zabor appears to be cursed.[581] His mother died when he was an infant and his father, ashamed of his son's hunched back, shuffling gait, and nasal voice, sent young Zabor to live with his unmarried aunt in 'la maison du bas'. As such, Zabor lives in exile, 'comme décentré, à l'extérieur du village, dans son cœur noir.'[582] This familial banishing echoes the Qu'ranic story of Hadjer and Ibrahim, with paralleled onomastics too. Zabor's father, Hadj Brahim (short for Ibrahim) is a village patriarch, wealthy goat-trader, and butcher, whose name is the Arabic equivalent of Abraham. In the Qu'ran (and Bible), Ibrahim/Abraham casts out his servant Hadjer/Hagar (Zabor's aunt) and their son, Ismail/Ishmael. It is important to mention here that Zabor's real name is in fact Ismaël; 'Zabor' is the character's self-chosen name, reflecting the sound he supposedly made when pushed down a well at four years old by his half-brother (an

[581] Ibid., p. 166.
[582] Ibid., p. 65.

episode for which he was blamed and subsequently shunned). More significantly, however, 'Zabor' is the title of the Book of Psalms in the Qu'ran, whose author is – not coincidentally – Daoud (David). Not only is this reflective of what the protagonist believes is his true calling, but it is also one of the many autobiographical elements of the novel, from which the reader derives the sense that Daoud is trying to explain his trajectory and aims as an increasingly outspoken writer and controversial figure in both the Arab and francophone worlds.

Orphaned by his mother and disowned by his father, then, Zabor is relegated to the periphery of family and village life, forced to haunt the fictional Algerian village of Aboukir at night. Like Scheherazade, he plies his trade during the hours of magic, obscurity, and possibility, sleeping 'à contresens de l'ombre : tout le jour inerte sur [s]on lit, la nuit en guetteur des respirations d'autrui'.[583] This nocturnal lifestyle is a cause of concern for the villagers, many of whom accuse Zabor of practising 'dark magic' since 'le mal est nocturne depuis toujours'.[584] Adding to this suspicious image, the protagonist has a number of strange traits: his voice is described as a bleat; he is prone to convulsive fits and curious bouts of illness; he does not eat meat and faints at the sight of blood (despite – or perhaps because of – his father being a butcher); and, notably, he lost faith in religion at a young age. For these reasons, he is regarded with distrust and his art with scepticism, except of course when desperate villagers require his services to resuscitate their loved ones. In this way, Zabor is shrouded in ambiguity, at once revered and feared. The protagonist explains the uncertainty surrounding his role in the community as follows:

> Reclus chez ma tante, dormant le jour et visible la nuit dans les rues, j'obtins un *statut inédit* : *ni homme* (car je ne travaillais pas, je ne priais pas, je ne fréquentais pas les miens), *ni femme* (à l'évidence). *Mon corps était invisible* comme celui des

[583] Ibid., p. 63.
[584] Ibid., p. 35.

> femmes, […] je me sentais comme un troisième sexe, une *errance*, un *effleurement précautionneux* des choses.[585]

This invisibility and 'neither/ nor' status together embody the precise liminality and absent-presence of the phantom, at once there yet neither tangible nor fully real, manifesting merely as a 'wandering' and 'cautiously fleeting' thing. Zabor appears to be aware of his own transience and impermanence, as if at any moment his fragile existence could dissolve or evaporate. Furthermore, his two names create a dual identity – 'une doublure':[586] on the one hand, he is an outcast, ghosted by society, but on the other, he performs a powerful healing role in the community, for which he is respected if also feared. As we will see, these are the two conflicting archetypes of the writer that Daoud observes in operation in Algeria today, and it is undoubtedly due to this ambivalence, as well as his uncertain status and invisibility, that Zabor declares himself 'le fantôme du village'.[587]

In addition to this ghostly portrayal, the protagonist is also cast as a prophet. His 'don' is depicted as a divine gift – a 'prophétie'[588] – but there is a sense that it enables him to usurp the power of God as well. He explains: 'Dieu m'a donné un pouvoir immense. Ou peut-être est-ce moi qui lui ai dérobé le sien'.[589] He is aware that many view his power as heretic, fearing : 'Dans une ou deux générations, on allait surement saisir le sens de ma trahison et me pourchasser. Ou m'aduler.'[590] – a reflection of how writing has been viewed as a threat in Algeria. Nonetheless, Zabor's stories illuminate the path forward for those around him, rendering him 'un guide'[591] and a 'rameur'.[592] He even likens his writing to Noah's Ark – a

[585] Ibid., pp. 194-5 (my emphasis).
[586] Ibid., p. 261.
[587] Ibid., p. 53.
[588] Ibid., p. 86.
[589] Ibid., p. 23.
[590] Ibid., p. 24.
[591] Ibid., p. 23.
[592] 'Car j'étais le rameur et ils étaient les voyageurs, ô mon Seigneur !', Ibid., p.15.

refuge for all living things – implying that he, like Noah, is a prophet.[593] Throughout the novel, Zabor is also associated with other Qu'ranic prophets, such as Younes (Jonah), Yousuf (Joseph, son of Jacob in Christianity but considered a prophet in Islam), and of course Ismaël (also a prophet in Islam). His role is, however, not quite as clear-cut as that of a traditional prophet, for he is not only 'lié à l'œuvre de Dieu'[594] but also 'à la Faucheuse' since both their memories 'sont reliées comme deux vases : quand l'un se vide, l'autre se remplit'.[595] This casts Zabor as an ambiguous moral figure associated, antinomically, with both immortality and death. Just like Scheherazade, 'quand [Zabor] écri[t] la mort recule de quelques mètres.[596] However, the salvific power of Zabor's storytelling is more direct. While Scheherazade's tales work by eventually reforming Schahriar's perspective on female fidelity, which has the flow-on effect of saving the lives of the women in the kingdom, Zabor's stories *physically alter* the fates of their subjects, miraculously restoring those who are already in the clutches of death back to health.

Moreover, like a prophet, the need to transmit his message quite literally possesses Zabor. Echoing Sindbad's compulsive 'babil sans fin', Zabor 'noirci[t] les cahiers comme un possédé'.[597] As a child, before he fully understood his abilities, he would experience terrible fits, 'sua[nt] en tremblant, habité par un esprit saccageur',[598] and was frequently visited by visions akin to prophetic revelations before plunging into trances of writing as if hypnotised from above. In these episodes, Zabor would 'entend[re] des mots inconnus'[599] and even write in tongues ; he would 'perd[re] l'usage de ses sens et pr[endre] l'habitude d'être visité à l'aube par d'étranges crises qui le conduisaient à hurler face aux miroirs […] et à écrire

[593] Ibid., p. 160. Islam recognises Noah as a prophet.
[594] Ibid, p. 25.
[595] Ibid., p. 19.
[596] Ibid., p. 23.
[597] Ibid., p. 15.
[598] Ibid., p. 166.
[599] Ibid., p.169.

de manier fébrile des langues désordonnées'.[600] It is easy to see why his family believed him to be afflicted by the Devil or a *jinn,*[601] and sent him to the local imam to be exorcised.

However, it is not simply the *urge* to write that possesses Zabor but also the *stories* themselves, which are revealed to the protagonist through these visions. Just like in *Amours et aventures*, stories in *Zabor* are ghostly presences, personified as invisible entities with a will of their own and a desire to be heard. As the protagonist states, '[l]e *récit* me possédait';[602] he is merely a passive receptacle for its transmission. Not only is Zabor himself a phantom figure, then, but so too are the stories that consume his body, rendering the entire medium of storytelling ghostly. Mimicking the mise-en-abîme structure of the *Nights*, Daoud has created a spectral network of ghosts that are themselves haunted by ghosts. The stories that flow through Zabor are echoes of tales from the past as well as those that have yet to be told, representing both the previous lives lived by the villagers of Aboukir as well as their potential futures beyond the impasse of a looming death. In this way, the narratives are fragments from other lives and times returning through the prophetic vessel of the storyteller, who simply acts as a mouthpiece. If Barthes and Foucault argue that writing brings about the death of the author, here too the author seems to recede in order to allow the subject of the narrative to assume new life. Zabor suggests that writers are necessarily possessed by the stories they tell, essentially operating as ventriloquists who reanimate the tales of ghosts – those long gone and those yet to come: 'Ce qu'ils [les auteurs] racontent n'était pas à eux, mais passait par eux.'.[603] In this way, he characterises the process of writing as animated by the imagery of death and rebirth, declaring that 'entre la naissance et la mort manquait le récit d'une histoire'.[604]

[600] Ibid., p. 116.
[601] An evil spirit in Islamic faith.
[602] *Zabor*, p. 208 (my emphasis).
[603] Ibid., p. 313.
[604] Ibid., p. 303.

Stories, then, refigure the boundaries between life and death, create ghosts of their subjects, and literally inhabit the storyteller; however, Daoud takes this last idea further. Not only do stories guide the teller's thought, providing inspiration from above, but they can actually become one's flesh and blood. Zabor describes the stories that possess him as a lifeforce coursing through his veins, insisting that the very act of writing 'remplissait la fonction des veines sous la peau des apparences [et] servait surement à faire circuler un genre de sang'.[605] He frequently describes his body as a vessel; his blood as ink, his skin as a canvas, and his heart as 'une boule de papier',[606] depicting an embodiment that resonates with Abraham and Török's idea of ghostly 'incorporation'.[607] Throughout *Zabor*, Daoud plays on the relationship between 'mots' and 'mort', 'corpus' and 'corps' to highlight the visceral connection between our physical existence and the stories we tell, emphasising that this form of expression is as essential to humanity as our vital organs. This fusing of body and writing is also reflected in the structure of the novel, which is divided into three sections: 'Le corps', 'La langue', and 'L'extase'. It is clear that for Daoud, the intermediary concept – language – provides an essential link between the other two, acting as a bridge from the corporeal to the experience of sexual and emotional ecstasy, something which will be discussed later on. Zabor reinforces this connection in a direct address to the reader (or perhaps his fellow villagers): 'Vous devenez la sueur de l'encre, pas son inventeur. Le muet serviteur d'une conversation qui vous dépasse.'.[608] This 'muet' is particularly interesting when we consider that Zabor rarely speaks, ashamed of his 'voix de chevreau'.[609] In stark contrast to Sinbdad who 'parlait parlait parlait', Zabor is an almost silent character who expresses himself through obsessive writing instead. Initially, he guards his notebooks with

[605] Ibid., p. 15.
[606] Ibid., p. 48.
[607] As laid out in *L'Écorce et le noyau* (see Introduction for more detail).
[608] *Zabor*, p. 91.
[609] Ibid., p. 315.

extreme vigilance from prying villagers, choosing to write alone and secretively – just like the Qur'anic and Biblical Daoud/David, who wrote his Book of Psalms in exile. This possessiveness over his writing suggests that Zabor requires complete control over his stories, perhaps due to a fear that they might be misinterpreted or destructive in the wrong hands. Nonetheless, as we will see, he eventually relinquishes this monopoly on narrative once he realises that stories need to be shared in order to be effective.

Although storytelling is depicted as a prophetic process with the author merely a ghostly conduit for stories, this does not mean it is a passive undertaking. Zabor may not be the 'inventeur' of his stories, as he admits above, but his role is nevertheless that of *fabulateur*. He not only diligently and carefully transcribes the information he receives but also transforms the ideas into creative tales of past and future, working tirelessly – and against the clock – to manifest them in written form before his subjects expire. In this way, the stories he channels are both alive and dead, absent and present since they do not originate from the storyteller yet become animated in his mind and physical body; they consist of voices from someone else and some*where* else brought back to life (literally) through a metaphysical process of incarnation. Like in *Contre-enquête*, Daoud reminds us that no story can ever truly be original since each tale is necessarily the continuation or (unwitting) rewriting of another. Zabor's anxiety of influence is revealed in the following confession: 'J'ai en effet toujours l'impression secrète que je vole le texte de quelqu'un d'autre et cela me rassure, car la paternité et la prise de parole m'agonissent terriblement.' Nonetheless, the reanimation of these dead or *almost*-dead voices serves to connect Zabor to both past and future generations, engendering a sense of belonging to a larger story which he feels the need to carry forward. For him, '[u]n récit est une respiration commune'.[610] Like Bachi's

[610] Ibid., p. 85.

Sindbad, Zabor 'avai[t] l'impression de vivre à l'intérieur du récit d'un autre'[611] but rather than engendering a sense of entrapment when one's narrative is controlled by someone else, this serves as a reminder for Zabor of his connection to a more global story.

Now that we have established how stories and the process of 'transmitting' them are both ghostly in *Zabor*, I argue that this spectral nature allows storytelling to be considered a sacred act. Throughout the novel, Zabor seeks to 'démontrer qu'il y a une autre "écriture sacrée"';[612] that is, other than that of the Qur'an or any other monotheistic scripture, declaring that '[i]l faut écrire un grand roman à contre-courant du Livre sacré.'[613] Like Bachi, Daoud brings together the sacred and profane through his constant interweaving of Islamic culture and tales from the *Nights*. A clear dichotomy is established between religious writings on the one hand, and literary fiction and personal narratives on the other, but this is not to say that the latter form of expression is devoid of enchantment – quite the contrary. As Sura Qadiri explains, these two forms of writing (scriptural and literary) are not necessarily as mutually opposed as is commonly believed. On one end of the spectrum, North African and Middle Eastern writers often 'propose literature as an antidote to religious practices thought to be socially and politically problematic, and […] posit literature as a destabilizing force when it comes to established religious narrative'. On the other, however, 'there is an engagement with the idea of the divine that is not informed by the monotheistic qualifications of God'.[614] Daoud most certainly engages with both of these approaches, presenting literature as a challenge to institutionalised religion but also as something numinous in itself, constructing a protagonist who seeks a form of connection with the

[611] Ibid., p. 46.
[612] Ibid., p. 301.
[613] Ibid.,p. 245.
[614] Sura Qadiri, *Postcolonial Fiction and Sacred Scripture: Rewriting the Divine?* (Leeds: Legenda Main Series, 2014), p. 2.

divine *through* storytelling, which acts as 'un couvercle sur le vide'.[615] In this way, Daoud engages with a postsecular strand of postcolonial thought through his linking of storytelling with divinity and spectrality, bringing the familiar and prosaic into contact with the spiritual and unknowable.

It is important to understand, however, that 'the postsecular is neither a rejection of nor a substitute for the secular'.[616] As Manav Ratti explains:

> Crucially, the postsecular does not represent a return to religion, especially not in postcolonial nation-states where the combination of religion and nationalism continues to be explosive and often violent. […] Postsecularism advocates neither a religious, sectarian nation-state nor the espousal of religious belief at the personal level.[617]

Nonetheless, it still adheres to a sense of spirituality, just in another form – in this case, through storytelling. This art not only offers salvation for those being written *about*, but also provides a higher purpose for the teller, a feeling of unity with a cosmological power that manifests as a connection to both the subject of the narrative as well as the wider universe. The rise of postsecular forms of discourse, as Ratti suggests above, is likely a reflection of growing disenchantment with religion, especially in nations where extremist ideology has been associated with violence, conflict, and unstable government. But this does not eradicate the desire for a connection with the universe that transcends a mere individual and mortal awareness, hence alternative modes of achieving this are sought. As Zabor explains, writing stories 'promettait d'atténuer cette sensation d'impuissance qu['il] 'éprouvai[t] en permanence' and help him 'convoquer et maitriser l'invisible et les ombres'.[618] The act, then, fills him with a sense of empowerment and also helps him to deal with the unknowable in

[615] *Zabor*, p. 118.
[616] Manav Ratti, *The Postsecular Imagination: Postcolonialism, Religion, and Literature* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 'Introduction: Situating Postsecularism', pp. 1-32 [20-21]. ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1108514 [accessed April 29, 2021]
[617] Ibid., p. 21.
[618] *Zabor*, p. 27.

life, to 'master the invisible and the shadows' (in short, to learn to live with his ghosts). In this way, Zabor's stories enable him to forge his own identity and develop a deeper self-understanding; that is, to '[s]e révél[er] à [s]oi-même'[619] and 'non seulement prolonger les vies, mais aussi donner du sursis à la [s]ienne'.[620]

I contend that spectrality can serve as a manifestation of the postsecular since it offers a connection to the supernatural and some mastery over death but outside the realm of institutionalised religion. By representing stories in ghostly terms – either as shape-shifting revenants that blur temporalities or as the voices of the almost-dead who possess the teller and inhabit our bodies – both Bachi and Daoud (though the latter far more explicitly) posit an alternative mode of spirituality, that which calls for a revalorisation and renewed appreciation of this artform as sacred. Both authors assert that the act of telling or writing tales can provide a powerful means of not only understanding but also relating to the world around us – past, present, and future. It is clear that for Zabor, the spiritual fulfilment found in storytelling, as well as its role as a potential elixir of life, replaces the need for conventional religion, or at least politicised versions of religion such as Islamism, which is again associated with authoritarian repression of sexuality and individual liberty in the novel. Not only can penning stories offer an experience of transcendence outside of an ecclesiastical, monastic, or otherwise holy setting, but, according to Zabor, it is actually *more* effective than these traditional means at prolonging life. Indeed, the novel opens with an affirmation of this: 'Écrire est la seule ruse efficace contre la mort. Les gens ont essayé la prière, les médicaments, la magie, les versets en boucle ou l'immobilité, mais je pense être le seul à avoir trouvé la solution : écrire.'.[621]

[619] Ibid., p. 27.
[620] Ibid., p. 315.
[621] Ibid., p. 13 (repeated in italics p. 51). This statement opens the book, after a paragraph-long asides in italics and brackets.

This statement also reinforces Zabor's prophet-like status of being 'the chosen one', bequeathed with the gift of determining life and death through his stories – that which is traditionally the sole preserve of a god. However, such power and privilege is an immense responsibility and requires 'une forme de martyre'.[622] The fact that Zabor considers himself 'the only one' to have discovered this 'solution' suggests that writers are uniquely placed to represent and save their country. Like Sindbad's tales, which provide a counter to the end of days heralded by le Dormant and le Démiurge, Zabor's stories seek to 'repousser la fin du monde annoncé comme imminente par le Livre sacré', [623] and therefore not only prolong individuals' lives but also save the entire planet. Imbuing stories with this eschatological power further adds to their godly-without-being-godly dimension.

The idea that storytelling can supplant traditional religion – or at least serve as an alternate means of accessing the sublime – is consolidated almost comically by the image of Zabor wearing miniature books on a string around his neck, just like Christians might wear pendants of the cross. These 'livres-talismans'[624] act as idols of his faith in literature. Zabor draws a strong contrast between the solace his stories can provide and the redemption offered by Islam, stating that *his* 'prophétie ne laisse pas un livre sacré mais une explication – sacrée – de tous les livres possibles'.[625] In this sense, his literary 'religion' is more encompassing and accepting of personal interpretation. Like Sindbad, Zabor offers a model of storytelling that is dynamic rather than monolithic, and does not demand conformity like Islamic doctrine with its 'seule version'.[626] He accuses Aboukir – a fictional microcosm of Algeria – of being 'prétentieux dans sa façon d'expliquer le monde'[627] by relying on a single

[622] Ibid., p. 21.
[623] Ibid., p. 193.
[624] Daoud uses this phrase throughout the novel.
[625] Ibid., p. 86.
[626] Ibid., p. 213.
[627] Ibid., p. 60.

text, written thousands of years ago, that remains unchanged.[628] Also like Bachi's Sindbad, Zabor is wary of a single interpretation of events being proselytised as unchallengeable dogma. He resents the fact that the Qu'ran purports to have a monopoly on Truth, describing it as '[u]n Livre unique [qui] avait dévoré les autres livres'.[629] This holds particular significance when we consider that in Algeria, religious texts continue to dominate the literary sphere, for a long time being the only works readily available in bookshops.[630] Like Daoud himself and also Bachi, who recalls his childhood experience of being forced to memorise the Qu'ran as 'un cercle arabo-islamo-vicieux',[631] Zabor 'tenté la foi mais elle se révéla insuffisante'.[632] Expanding on his disillusionment, he explains: 'Chez nous, lire se confondait avec le sens de la domination, pas le déchiffrement du monde, cela désignait à la fois le savoir, la loi et la possession'.[633] Although he is clearly criticising Shariah Law here for its totalising imposition of religious ideology onto a system of government and way of life, he is crucially insisting that a separation of religion and politics need not limit the possibility for divine connection, and in fact that it can instead open the door to spiritual fulfilment of another kind. As the only one in his village who can read and write, Zabor presents a notable contrast to the Muslim prophet Mohamed, who is described in the Qu'ran as illiterate, and this further establishes the former's stories as an alternative source of salvation to that offered by Islam.

This juxtaposition between the life-giving powers of storytelling on the one hand and Islamic rule on the other is continued throughout the novel. Instead of commencing with the dawn prayer, Zabor's tales are written at night; in contrast to the Qu'ranic *recitateurs*, the

[628] Ibid., p. 213.
[629] Ibid., p. 198.
[630] Bentoumi, 'Rethinking the Algerian Publishing "Boom"', p. 366.
[631] Bachi, *Dieu, Allah, Moi et les autres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), p. 15.
[632] *Zabor*, p. 61.
[633] Ibid., p. 17.

protagonist writes his stories down; and rather than a single book that is 'récité sans cesse',[634] Zabor is constantly writing new stories, filling '5436 cahiers en tout'.[635] This last point constitutes the key difference between the latter's 'sacred' writings and those of traditional religion: his are *ongoing*. If we continue the quotation from the beginning of the book, cited a couple of pages earlier, we will see that the importance of continuity is stressed from the novel's outset: 'Écrire est la seule ruse efficace contre la mort. […] *Mais il fallait écrire toujours, sans cesse*, à peine le temps de manger ou d'aller faire [s]es besoins.'.[636] Zabor views storytelling as a way of life, insisting that one must keep writing and revising tales because they have a real, constitutive and determining effect on the world around us. 'Si la création était un livre', he affirms, 'je devrais le réécrire, tout le temps. Ou peut-être le relire', since reading too, in Zabor's estimation, is an active process of creation that involves bringing a story (back) to life.[637] Without this constant forward momentum, one risks ending up in 'un pays de rétrospective permanente'.[638] According to Daoud, Algeria is 'toujours dans une sorte de temps coincé, *un temps qui n'est pas mort mais qui n'est pas vivant*' because it relies on an unchanging propagandist narrative that bases the country's identity solely on a past war, engendering 'un temps immobile' for its citizens.[639]

ii. *Hikāya, Boustrophédon*, and Cosmological Animism

As I have mentioned, Zabor's writing not only resuscitates villagers on the verge of death but also allows the protagonist to 'maint[enir] verdâtres et coquets [les arbres], les cours

[634] Ibid, p. 60.
[635] Ibid., p. 207.
[636] Ibid., p. 13 (original emphasis).
[637] Ibid., p. 86.
[638] Daoud, interview with Augustin Trapenard, *TV5 Monde*, 12 February 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO9aktEbDEI&t=69s > [accessed 15 March 2022].
[639] Ibid.

d'eaux, les figues de Barbarie et les murs […], tout le village.'[640] Zabor, then, echoing the sentiments of both Hanna Meretoja and Marina Warner, acknowledges the capacity of storytelling to not only represent but also shape, rearrange and construct the external world and our experiences of it. *Zabor* draws on the etymology of '*texte*' (from the Latin *textere* – 'to weave') to encourage a more expansive and dynamic understanding of the nature of written work, reminding readers that we 'weave' our words just as we thread textiles; that is, in an active process of construction. It is this performative power of language that enables Zabor to 'réordonner le monde, […] échapper à [s]on village et à son sort de caillou, rencontrer l'invisible dans sa chair'.[641] Interestingly, the word for 'story' in Arabic – *hikāya* – is closely associated with 'mimicry' since the storyteller was traditionally a mimic or mime who would recite tales to an audience.[642] However, as we have seen with the *Nights*, this style of performance involved a high degree of ad-libbing, which suggests that there has always been an awareness in Arab cultures that imitation and improvisation are not mutually exclusive elements of oral storytelling – to the point that the two concepts have become blurred linguistically. Daoud adapts this notion to a written context too, challenging the (mostly Western) assumption that writing is a passive pursuit which merely *reflects* life, contending instead that it actively sustains and even constructs the physical world. This is not to say, of course, that stories do not draw on or reuse other stories, nor that they cannot be inspired by real life. As we have seen, Daoud believes that a high degree of intertextuality is inevitable in any form of narrative, and he fuses both meanings of *hikāya* in his novel

[640] *Zabor*, p. 76.
[641] Ibid., p. 314.
[642] *Hikāya* originally denoted 'mimicry' or 'imitation' exclusively but has evolved to mean 'story' or 'tale' and is now more commonly used to refer to the latter. Robert Irwin explains this in *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1995), p.106. The semantic history of Arabic terms for 'storytelling' is discussed further in the following article: Muhsin J. al-Musawi, "The 'Mansion' and the 'Rubbish Mounds': 'The Thousand and One Nights' in Popular Arabic Tradition", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 35. 3 (2004): 329–67 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4183523>.

through the extended metaphor of the writer as parrot – more specifically, as Poll from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.[643]

In Defoe's classic colonial tale, the eponymous protagonist, washed up on a desert island, eventually hears a parrot (whom he names Poll) repeating the former's own despairing monologue back to him. He is startled to recognise a voice that is both his own and yet foreign, the same but transformed. Zabor describes the avian character as 'un être que l'on a sommé […] de réinventer la langue entière avec cinq mots : "Pauvre Robinson, ou es-tu ?"'.[644] In this sense, Poll is an apt metaphor for the dual nature of storytelling, since he both imitates and creates. Like any good storyteller, he takes inspiration from the world around him, borrowing phrases here and there but rearranging them to generate new meanings. Zabor identifies with Poll, proclaiming: 'à certaines heures inspirées, je m'imaginais sous la forme du perroquet Poll, *auteur* d'un somptueux vacarme sous les tropiques, […] *civilisateur* dans une île inconnue.'[645] Other times, he refers to himself as a 'Robinson arabe d'une île sans langue, maître du perroquet et des mots'.[646] In both scenarios, he is a literary coloniser of sorts, populating his desert island with words (playing on 'page' and 'plage'[647]). Just as Haroun gathers 'les pierres des anciennes maisons des colons' in *Contre-enquête* to construct his '*bien vacant'*,[648] Zabor forges his own language through the mishmash of others, 'cobbling together meanings from the flotsam and jetsam of words washed up on his desert island'.[649] In this way, both characters channel the author's own espousal of a truly personalised form of writing, not unlike the sentiment behind Maryse

[643] Readers of Daoud will note that the author frequently alludes to this work in his writings.
[644] *Zabor*, p.154.
[645] Ibid., p.18 (my emphasis).
[646] Ibid., p. 45.
[647] Ibid., p.155.
[648] *Contre-enquête*, p. 12.
[649] Stefan Weidner, 'Kamel Daoud's novel *Zabor*: Algeria and a patriarch's dying throes', *Qantara*, 25 April 2019, trans. by Ruth Martin <https://en.qantara.de/content/kamel-daoud%E2%80%99s-novel-zabor-algeria-and-a-patriarchs-dying-throes?nopaging=1> [accessed 19 November 2021]

Condé's famous assertion: 'j'écris en Maryse Condé'.[650] This fusion of mimicry and (re)creation is in many ways the essence of ghostliness since the spectre is at once an echo or faded trace of what once was, yet also a new entity that constantly returns in different forms – whether through haunting, reincarnation, or by possessing a host and literally assuming a new body. Whatever the ultimate form, this regenerative aspect is what ensures revenants never die, instead travelling through time and space just like stories to adopt a new mode of existence. Just as there is finite physical matter in the universe which must undergo a continual cycle of transformation to sustain life, so too must stories and artistic creation be constantly recycled to perpetuate this process of renewal.

By interweaving different cultural and linguistic forms of expression, whether oral and written, sacred and profane, French and Arabic canons, Daoud manages to establish a postsecular and intercultural mode of writing that presents tradition as international and open-ended. 'The result', as Stefan Weidner observes, 'is something that only looks like conventional French from the outside. Inwardly, it is filled with a spirit that comes straight from the magical understanding of language seen in the Arabic of the Koran'.[651] In this way, *Zabor* performs what Chantal Zabus calls literary 'indigenization' and 'relexification', that is: 'conveying African concepts, thought patterns and linguistic concepts through the ex-colonizer's language [by using their] vocabulary but indigenous structures and rhythms'.[652] In a similar way to Bhabha'a notion of postcolonial mimicry and Aschcroft et al's analysis of language abrogation as a means of 'writing back' to the colonial canon (both explored briefly in Part I), this freedom to create his own form of expression, akin to Haroun's 'langue

[650] Maryse Condé, 'Liaison dangereuse' in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, pp. 205–16 (p. 215).
[651] Weidner, 'Kamel Daoud's novel *Zabor'*.
[652] Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), pp. 23, 101.

à [s]oi',[653] enables Zabor, who has never left his village, to become a 'Voyageur par l'imaginaire'.[654] Like Sindbad, he discovers that stories plunge him into a world of travel and discovery, likening them to magic carpets (which, incidentally, one 'weaves', like the original meaning of 'text'): 'À la fin cela donnerait un cahier, pas un tapis. C'est pourtant le même motif profond.'.[655] This association between movement and writing is crucial to Zabor who asserts, in a further reference to Poll, that '[é]crire [s]e donnait des ailes'.[656]

Nonetheless, in likening the writer to a parrot, Daoud also exhibits a wariness of the fact that writers can too often fall into the trap of viewing language *only* in relation to its mimetic role. This, he appears to condemn as a *laissez-faire* approach that does not fully realise literature's potential; one that relies on rehashing tradition rather than pioneering new ideas or envisioning different futures. He believes that for stories to be effective, one must guard against becoming *someone else's parrot* and instead tell one's own story rather than passively regurgitate that which has been promulgated by, for example, an out-of-date government. To be truly immortalising, stories must allow for a combination of imitation and invention, a balance of copying and creating as encapsulated in the understanding of *hikāya*. In short, the storyteller must emulate Poll who, as a template for intertextuality and travel, recalls to mind the ghostliness of storytelling, portraying stories as both remnants of the past as well as ever-returning influences on the future. Through this metaphor, Daoud champions cultural and linguistic porosity, all the while reminding readers of the inevitability of one's native language haunting the ways one expresses oneself in any form.

[653] *Contre-enquête*, p. 12.
[654] *Zabor*, p. 239.
[655] Ibid., p. 32.
[656] Ibid., p. 157. This is also a reference to Poll the parrot in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoé*, which features as another intertext throughout the novel, as we will see.

So far, we have investigated how Zabor's stories are ghostly through their 'revealed' status and the way they inhabit the protagonist, prolonging life and providing a spiritual connection to salvation. I have also demonstrated how Daoud highlights the plurality of narrative by offering a model of writing based on intertextuality, travel, and linguistic freedom to promote a spectral ethics of openness and renewal that blurs imitation and invention. In addition to this, there are two further ways in which storytelling is depicted as spectral in *Zabor*: firstly, through the insistence of its constantly evolving nature, this time afforded by the emulation of an oral style within writing; and secondly, through the creation of a cosmological and animistic paradigm that invokes ancestral spirits and memory as well as a connection to unborn generations. These conceptions of narrative together serve to undermine reductive and monolithic models of cultural identity by recognising and emphasising the multiple and mixed religious, linguistic, and ethnic makeup of nations like Algeria.

Zabor figures storytelling as a necessarily ongoing and unending process which, like genies, ghosts, or Bachi's Sindbad, is constantly assuming new forms. Words become animated, invisible forces that have the power to either trap a community in the past by haunting it with an overbearing narrative from which no deviance is permitted *or* revive those on the cusp of death by creating new chapters to extend their stories. As explained at the beginning of this section, those who are 'saved' by stories also become ghosts since they are returned from a would-be-death to exist in an indefinite present, only held alive by the promise of continuous tales. It follows, then, that if storytelling, understood in this spectral capacity, is what builds and maintains the world around us, keeping everything in it alive and progressing, it is when we cease to tell stories that things fall stagnant and begin to crumble.

According to Zabor, one dies because '*il n'a plus de pages à lire dans le cahier de sa vie*.[657] Therefore, he insists, it is imperative that we never stop writing, for a life-story is not something that can be sketched out once and then forgotten; it requires continual effort, and must be able to evolve over time in order to survive. Indeed, Zabor declares that there is a direct link between our use of language and the world around us: *'[i]l y a un lien entre la conjugaison et la métaphysique, j'en suis sûre'*.[658]

This connection is explained when Zabor asserts that '[s]i la mort retrouve votre trace, c'est parce que vous vous êtes assis au bord de votre route, que vous ne croyez plus à votre histoire ou que vous avez dispersé vos auditeurs morts et vivants'.[659] This is exactly what the author believes is happening to his country, afflicted with a form of 'writer's block' that is inhibiting forward momentum. In fact, the whole novel could be read as a metaphor for what Daoud views as Algeria's post-independent stagnancy (we must remember that at the time of writing, President Bouteflika had been in power for almost two decades and, despite the corruption and autocracy he represented, the Algerian public had not yet revolted).[660] The stultifying inertia to which he believes Algeria has fallen prey can be overcome, according to the author, simply 'en racontant';[661] that is, by envisioning and constructing the country's next chapter rather than simply accepting its fate and current trajectory. The insistence that one must never stop writing may sound daunting or exhausting but it is actually empowering, according to Daoud, since it affords a considerable amount of control over one's destiny. Negating the Islamic concept of *Mektoub,*[662] Zabor asserts that we are

[657] *Zabor*, p. 13 (original emphasis).
[658] Ibid., p. 150. Full quotation cited in the epigraph to Part II of this thesis.
[659] Ibid., p. 85.
[660] The *Hirak* (peaceful Friday demonstrations against Bouteflika's reign) did not begin until 2019.
[661] Daoud, interview with Rebecca Benhamou, 'Kamel Daoud: "En Algérie, sortir du passé est une douleur"', *Ernest!* Magazine, 22 April 2022 <https://www.ernestmag.fr/2022/04/22/kamel-daoud-en-algerie-sortir-du-passe-est-une-douleur/> [accessed 31 August 2022]. When asked 'Comment briser ce cycle de retour […]?', Daoud responds: 'en racontant'.
[662] *Mektoub* means 'written' or 'decreed' in Classical Arabic but in the sense of foreseen. The term carries connotations of fate in Islam.

not beholden to what has been 'written' in the sense of predestined, but can choose to *re*write it instead: '[l]e destin est un cahier comportant des *fautes* que l'on peut corriger.'[663] In this way, he challenges the religious association between 'writing' and '(pre)determination', imbuing the former with the meaning of 'creation' instead, and revolting against the Qu'ranic injunction to 'Lis' what has already been written. He muses:

> Le premier mot du Livre sacré est "Lis!" – mais personne ne s'interroge sur le dernier […] Je me demandais pourquoi l'injonction était faite au lecteur, et pas à l'écrivant. Pourquoi le premier mot de l'ange n'était-il pas "Écris!"? […] Que lire quand le livre n'est pas encore écrit ? [664]

If one adopts Zabor's ontology of action and creative revision, wherein '[l]'écriture est la première rébellion' against a supposedly pre-ordained future,[665] then the written word can be just as malleable as oral stories. Both Bachi and Daoud argue that one needs to stop thinking of literature as a static artform and understand it instead as dynamic. Indeed, Daoud has already convincingly demonstrated how classic stories, as well as our responses to them, can evolve and be given new perspectives with his own rewriting of *L'Étranger*. This blending of the two forms (written and spoken narrative) is reflected in the very title of the book: *Zabor ou les psaumes,* since psalms are songs or poems intended to be set to music and either performed as ballads or read aloud in public prayer. Yet the Book of Psalms ('Zabor') in the Qu'ran is immortalised in written form. Not only, then, is Daoud writing a new – postsecular – Book of Psalms for the current generation (one that, as we have seen, replaces religion with literature), but he is also mobilising the aural nature of psalms, expropriating them from their religious context to espouse an ideal form of writing that emulates the flexibility of spoken narrative. Like with *hikāya*, a ghostly blurring of the

[663] *Zabor*, p. 112.
[664] Ibid., p. 17.
[665] Ibid., p. 20.

boundaries between these forms is encouraged. Zabor, who is mostly mute, uses his writing to speak, and indeed Daoud's own writing is infused with a large degree of orality too, notable for its highly conversational style littered with parenthetical asides – some that last for whole pages, rhetorical exclamations ('Ah, oui', 'bon', 'Je m'égare'), colloquial phrases, and stream-of-consciousness, even when the diegetic narrative does not explicitly depict anyone speaking like it does in *Contre-enquête* with Haroun's monologue to 'l'universitaire'. For Daoud, oral and written discourse are not as distinct as one might presume. As his protagonist and alter ego affirms: 'Écrire, c'est écouter un son, le préserver et tourner autour, sans cesse, pour tenter d'en rendre la mélodie, s'en approcher le plus possible pour le conduire de l'oreille à la bouche.'[666] Conversely, he describes 'l'acte de raconter' as 'écrire avec sa bouche et pas encore sa main.'[667]

To illustrate the extent to which these forms of expression are bound up in each other, Zabor reminds us that 'la plus haute sagesse' of the *Nights* is that its stories, although recounted as oral narratives told by characters, actually 'n'étaient pas racontées, mais écrites!'. He declares that '[i]l s'agissait d'une écriture escamotée par la diversion orale',[668]which is exactly what Daoud seeks to achieve with his own writing. Through his storytelling protagonist, he illustrates his goal of using language that 'pouvait être lue de gauche à droite, de droite à gauche et du bas vers le haut, dans tous les sens, boustrophédon comme disent les anciens, forte et capable de saisir les essences'.[669] 'Boustrophedon' is an ancient style of writing in which a text reads from both right to left and left to right in alternate lines.[670] In *Zabor*, this multidirectional element has added significance since it suggests a mixture of European and Middle Eastern influences, allowing Daoud once again to combine French

[666] Ibid., p. 90.
[667] Ibid., p. 294.
[668] Ibid.
[669] Ibid.
[670] It can also involve mirror writing and other reversed script forms.

and Arabic narrative styles and literary canons, as well as both oral and written forms, in order to create a truly Mediterranean form of storytelling that aptly encapsulates the cultural and linguistic plurality of Algeria (and indeed the Arab world).[671] More than this, however, the metaphor of boustrophedon represents freedom. It does not matter whether a story is written or spoken, in one's native or adopted language, based on imitation or improvisation, historical, fictional, autobiographical, or a mix of all of these; writers should be able to express themselves in whatever mode they feel truly represents them and their work. Literature for Daoud is about pushing the boundaries, or even dissolving them entirely. He promotes a hauntological mode of narrative that eschews definitive form, hovering between purely French or Arabic, written or oral, copy or creation. Like Zabor's own stories, it provides an alternative to ossified dogma which mummifies its recipients rather than granting them new life. It is imperative for Daoud that writing remain a creative pursuit not confined by any rigid set of rules or artificial hierarchy. Harnessing instead the flexibility of narrative form, as both Zabor and Poll do, enables stories to forge an ongoing connection with the external world – past, present, and yet to come – since it allows them to grow, adapt, and be shared, almost as living entities themselves. When Zabor writes in his *cahiers*, he mostly uses French but blends this with Classical Arabic and his village's particular Arabic dialect, as well as including words he has picked up from his aunt's Hindi television programs (which he translates for her through French subtitles). In addition, he incorporates pictograms and hieroglyphics when words do not suffice, and, as I have already mentioned, he even sometimes writes in 'tongues'. Fittingly, Daoud's own most recent work defies simple genre classification, combining photography and commentary, film and exhibition

[671] It appears Daoud is building further here on Haroun's assertion in *Contre-enquête* that Meursault's classic narrative 'devrait donc être réécrite […] de droite à gauche' (p.16).

to create a veritable multimedia production that enables one to 'see' with words and 'read' through images.[672]

The use of French as a primary language for both Daoud and Zabor further facilitates this creative freedom, since it is associated with sensuality and (secular) self-expression, in stark contrast to the formality and Qur'anic associations of the state-imposed classical Arabic, or the 'insuffisante, pauvre' dialect of the latter's village.[673] For Zabor, French is 'une langue dont personne n'était gardien',[674] unlike that which is spoken 'à la place de Dieu et des héros de la guerre de Libération'.[675] He first comes across the language, as does his author, in old books he finds at home, some of which feature pictures of topless women on the covers. For the young Zabor, this naturally sparks 'la naissance de [s]on désir',[676] mirroring the sensuality Haroun discovers through the experience of reading in French with Mériem in *Contre-enquête*. Through French literature, Zabor unearths a world that represents sexual freedom, desire, eroticism, and a celebration of physical pleasure – all that is seemingly discouraged or off-limits in the world of the Qu'ran. Classical Arabic, on the other hand, appears rigid and is associated with death for Zabor, since his only memories of hearing the language spoken are at funerals or Mosque. For him, it not only 'manquait le rêve, le mystère du conte',[677] but is oddly retrospective : 'elle comptait beaucoup de mots pour les morts, le passé, les devoirs et les interdits, et peu de mots précis pour notre vie de tous les jours […] elle ne parlait que des disparus'.[678] French, however, is emphatically *not* a dead

[672] Daoud and Raymond Depardon, *Son oeil dans ma main: Algérie 1961-2019* (Alger: Barzakh/Images Plurielles, 2022). The exhibition also contains a short film in which the two collaborators discuss the work (*Kamel et Raymond*, directed by Claudine Nougaret).
[673] *Zabor*, p. 138.
[674] Ibid., p. 256.
[675] Ibid., p. 141.
[676] Ibid., p. 257.
[677] Ibid., p. 145. Zabor also deems dialectical Arabic inadequate due to its supposed simplicity, lacking the eloquent, poetic nature required for storytelling.
[678] Ibid., p. 141.

language (in the sense of being unchanging and outdated or not a spoken language) but rather a language *of* the dead. Zabor describes it as 'une langue de la mort pour ceux qui se souvenaient de la guerre, mais pas une langue morte.'[679] In this way, it could be considered a language of ghosts, reminiscent of a colonial past for some but nonetheless emblematic of the desire to move forward and weave stories begun by ancestors into an ongoing national tapestry due to its connotations of openness, sensuality, and freedom of expression. Tellingly, *Zabor* is dedicated to Daoud's father who, the author writes, 'me légua son alphabet/Mort si dignement,/Qu'il vainquit sa mort'.[680]

This idea of an ongoing story across generations acknowledges that whilst we are in control of our own narratives, we are still part of a wider community of interconnected stories: 'nous sommes les mots d'un grand récit, consigné quelque part, mais nous sommes en quelque sorte responsables de nos conjugaisons'.[681] If we incarnate stories in our flesh and blood, then it follows that the world we inhabit is an anthology of these. In a variation of 'All the world's a stage',[682] Zabor proclaims that 'le monde était un livre, n'importe quel livre, tous les livres possibles, écrits ou à écrire'.[683] These stories, he asserts, will remain long after we are gone, continuing to be 'reborn' in new forms for eternity: the 'livres qui restent à écrire […] sans cesse renaissent et se reproduisent même quand nous sommes des morts'.[684] By placing this statement about the future in the present tense, he conflates the two temporalities and emphasises the ongoing nature of these story-revenants, existing and re-existing in what appears to be an unending present.

[679] Ibid., p. 302.
[680] Ibid., dedication.
[681] Ibid., p. 112.
[682] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, (1623 First Folio) II.vii,139.
[683] *Zabor*., p. 61.
[684] Ibid., p. 215.

To further amplify this spectral intertwinement of literature, Zabor 'commence toujours par des points du suspension, comme pour signifier la reprise d'une vieille histoire interrompue par l'aube',[685] indicating that there is never a precise, discernible beginning to a story but rather that each one is necessarily a continuation of another. Indeed, this web of stories that feed into each other to produce new responses and creations across time offers a different conception of time itself – both from that of traditional Western temporality and also from Derrida's 'non-contemporanéité du temps'.[686] As the protagonist affirms, *'L'histoire remonte le temps au lieu de l'accomplir, en même temps que les pages s'altèrent, vieillissent, deviennent fines, fragiles. Vous les tournez et elles se modifient […] l'écriture elle-même remonte le temps'*.[687] Time is no longer linear and unidirectional but cyclical and nonsequential. Whilst Derrida's conception of spectral time is also non-linear, there are some striking differences between the two systems: Derrida's theory involves a chronological rupture or dislocation, whereas the temporal dimension that Zabor's stories invoke relies on precisely the opposite – an infinite continuity. Derrida views the intermingling of past and present as a 'break' in the chain of causal effect because he is conceiving time from a Western standpoint which presumes a 'forward' progression of events. Therefore, in his estimation, the spectral element arises from a *disturbance* in or *subversion* of this chronology (since ghosts bring with them haunted memories from the past, or looming threats from the future, into the present). However, as Zabor highlights, '[l]e temps n'était pas le même en arabe et en français, il était découpé différemment selon la façon d'appréhender l'avenir et de posséder le présent'.[688] Confirming this, critics such as Osita Okagbue note that: 'For African peoples, no point of existence is terminal, finished or permanent. The living die and become ancestors; the unborn are born to become the

[685] Ibid., p. 129.
[686] Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 52.
[687] *Zabor*, p. 114 (original emphasis).
[688] Ibid, p. 263.

living; while the ancestors can revert to being the unborn.'.[689] Similarly, Achille Mbembe describes African temporality as 'pas une série, mais un *emboîtement* de présents, de passés et de futurs qui tiennent toujours leurs propres profondeurs d'autres présents, passés et futurs, chaque époque portant, altérant et maintenant toutes les précédantes'.[690]

Therefore, the temporal plane projected and maintained by storytelling, according to Zabor, is perhaps more even spectral than Derrida's, for it involves a never-ending cyclicality that implies endless regeneration and reincarnation in an infinite present that is haunted by a prophetic awareness of things to come. In this sense, communities are always living in both the past and the future since each of these is embedded into the current moment, which is all there ever is. According to Zabor, 'le présent (et son univers) existe parce qu'un homme s'en souvient.'[691] Ghosts from the pasts return and those yet to come are imm*a*nent, not just imm*i*nent. Furthermore, in this understanding of time, death is not an endpoint but simply another stage of existence, and this is crucial to the functioning of Zabor's immortalising narratives. If death is just a transitory point rather than a statis, it can be avoided or even overcome by continuing this rebirthing process: rewriting stories, revising texts, updating tales, adding to and improving on previous works. This produces an illimitable present that dilates time in a spectral way and suspends the subject(s) in a perpetually liminal time zone somewhere between life and (the awareness of) an impending, albeit delayed, death – much like Scheherazade's indefinite postponement of her execution through stories. Zabor explains that '[l]es choses sont maintenues *suspendues dans l'espace*

[689] Osita Okagbue, *Culture and Identity in Africa and Caribbean Theatre* (London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd., 2009), p. 148.
[690] Achille Mbembe, *De la postcolonie : essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Karthala, 2000; repr. La Découverte, 2020), p. 72 (original emphasis).
[691] *Zabor*, p. 87.

et le temps parce qu'elles sont inventoriées dans un esprit et qu'une langue les *maintient dans l'immédiateté permanente*.'.[692]

This temporal paradigm not only resonates with an African conception of time but, more specifically, with Wole Soyinka's notion of cosmological animism. This worldview, too, assumes a cyclical structure but is, more importantly, based on an enmeshment of multiple worlds, weaving together the realms of the living and dead, gods and mortals, human and non-human in an 'animist interfusion of all matter and consciousness'.[693] As a system that spiritualises the inanimate and imbues the natural world with a certain divinity, it resonates with Zabor's postsecular model of connection whereby our individual life stories are all chapters in a single, overarching book that links previous generations from the beginning of time to those yet to be born, and can also sustain the physical environment. Similarly, this worldview transcends the individual ego, blurring the boundaries between multiple, coexisting worlds and temporalities in a spectral manner such that 'tout était lié, de l'écriture à la respiration'.[694] Storytelling, therefore, is not just a means of securing and perpetuating life but also a way of relating to the world beyond secular and anthropocentric paradigms. This interpenetration of past and present, corporeal and esoteric, human and non-human makes it virtually impossible to determine where the realm of the living ends and that of the dead begins. Literature, writing, and the physical world fuse in a spectral way such that one's 'village et les siens sont des cahiers, des talismans, des prescriptions contre le néant'.[695] Indeed, 'le néant' is what awaits when this spectral web of connection holding everything together is broken.

---

[692] Ibid. (my emphasis).
[693] Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.145. In this collection of essays based on lectures, Soyinka explores this animist cosmology in the specific context of the Yorùbá culture (one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria).
[694] *Zabor*, p. 315.
[695] Ibid., p. 323.

iii. Writing Algeria's Future: Author as Spokesperson, Scapegoat, or Saviour?

Such a rupture of this delicate thread is illustrated when Zabor is unable to save his dying father, Hadj Brahim. It is at this point that the protagonist discovers the limits of his 'don', realising, just like Sindbad does towards the end of *Amours et aventures*, that his stories are not always successful. Sustaining the village through stories involves intense concentration under constant pressure; indeed, Zabor often has 'le ventre noué' because of the ever-present fear that he might accidentally 'oublier un détail et donc […] participer à une disparition, ou […] l'accélérer'.[696] This not only reveals the daunting nature of the task but also calls into question authorial intention. As he struggles to perform his immortalising duty towards the father he despises, Zabor wonders: 'Et si j'étais en train d'écrire pour le tuer, et pas pour le sauver?'.[697] In order for stories to be effective, then, must authors believe in what they are writing? It seems that without a certain conviction behind them, narratives are just empty words, divested of their life-extending capacity, and this implies a second explanation for the perceived stagnancy regarding Algeria's national story, in Daoud's estimation. We have already seen how the author ruthlessly criticises the country's tendency to rely on what he views as an outdated story – one that, like the Qu'ran, has become a single, canonised version 'récité sans cesse'[698] – but this is not the only obstacle to the nation's forward momentum. It appears that this fossilised narrative is also losing its *credibility*, and those receiving it are unable to perpetuate a story in which they no longer have faith. As the protagonist posits earlier, one of the reasons stories fail is because 'vous ne croyez plus à votre histoire',[699] and it seems this is why Zabor's writing cannot delay his father's death. Nevertheless, by letting go of his father and all that he represents – the village's old authority,

[696] Ibid., p. 144.
[697] Ibid., p. 290.
[698] Ibid., p. 60.
[699] Ibid., p. 85.

an overbearing colonial memory, and Islamic tradition – Zabor is able to free Aboukir from social and religious obscurantism and provide the community with an opportunity for renewal. Perhaps, then, his story *was* successful after all, just at achieving a different goal (one that was perhaps the subconscious aim all along).

Throughout the novel, Hadj Brahim is likened to Schahriar, with his mindless slaughtering of goats reflecting the sultan's successive execution of his brides. Like Schahriar, he is a potentate from whom the community must be protected through stories; yet his own story does not resonate with the people, based on an endless rehashing of the struggle for Independence – an experience he projects onto the entire population. Brahim is:

> bavard, disert, volubile jusqu'au vertige, intarissable sur son histoire d'avant les moutons et l'Indépendance. Il se mit à parler pour deux, lui-même et son père, puis pour nous tous. Il s'inventait une légende censée couper la parole au monde. Roi esseulé de ses propres Mille et Une Nuits. Mais que son histoire était longue et ennuyeuse![700]

There are also notable parallels between Zabor's father and the former Algerian president, a similarly corrupt and ailing patriarch whose resignation was being called for at the time Daoud was writing.[701] As Stefan Weidner suggests, Daoud's novel can be read as an allegory for the state of Algerian politics, with Hadj Brahim's death representing the fall of the *ancien régime* that has ruled Algeria since independence.[702] According to Daoud, the insistence on victim narratives of colonisation has been detrimental to the Algerian psyche, serving to 'trap' the country and its citizens in the past. In a recent interview, he explains that he is 'frappé par le fait que l'imaginaire algérienne ne conçoit pas le futur, il conçoit une sorte de « remake » encore plus parfait du passé', which renders the population

[700] Ibid., p. 81.
[701] After eventually announcing he would not seek a fifth term on 11th March 2021, Bouteflika died on 17th September 2021 from cardiac arrest, following a long period of ill health which rendered him mostly absent from the public sphere for the final years of his presidency.
[702] Weidner, 'Kamel Daoud'.

'immobilisé[e]'.[703] He believes that this obsession with the past is symptomatic of a large-scale anxiety about the country's future (which makes dwelling on the past an appealing national coping strategy). Writing and recounting, however, constitute the antidotes to this immobility, since they provide 'une enquête sur le "ici et maintenant", une injonction au present.' [704] By linking generations of stories together, one can sustain an ongoing relationship with communal memory but, importantly, a relationship that continues into the future rather than 'tombe[r] davantage dans une position […] d'anachronisme permanente'.[705]

It is interesting that Bachi, Daoud, and Adimi all stage the current postcolonial struggle to a large extent as an intergenerational conflict, with the post-1962 generation revolting against the older Algerian generation and leaders (what Daoud calls 'la gérontocratie'[706]) as much as – or even more than – the colonisers themselves. Indeed, once Zabor's father dies, the protagonist feels 'delivré d'une immense responsabilité'[707] and finally decides to 'rendre [s]es écrits publics'.[708] He tears out the thousands of pages of his notebooks (previously hidden in secret locations) and scatters them around the village in order to 'repeupler l'ile avec [s]es pages, d'en faire la révélation finale et de transformer la chair même d'Aboukir en manuscript.'[709] At last Zabor seems to act in accordance with his own realisation that writing is a communal process in which each individual contributes their own chapter to the world-book. This suggests that guardianship of Aboukir's heritage is now a shared responsibility, with the community no longer reliant on a single 'prophet' or patriarch to tell

[703] Daoud, interview with *TV5 Monde*.
[704] Daoud, interview with Benhamou, *Ernest!* Magazine.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Daoud in Farid Alilat, 'Kamel Daoud : « Le fond du problème en Algérie va au-delà du politique »', 12 september 2017, *Jeune Afrique* [online], <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/471200/societe/kamel-daoud-le-fond-du-probleme-en-algerie-va-au-dela-du-politique/> [accessed 2 February 2021].
[707] *Zabor,* p. 325.
[708] Ibid., p. 323.
[709] Ibid.

its story. Much like Bachi's Sinbad, Zabor comes to realise that 'le vaste projet de lutte contre la fin de notre monde'[710] cannot be achieved by a single individual, and that this 'lourde mission'[711] has been causing him to 'suffoqu[er] sous le poids de [s]on destin'.[712] He therefore urges his compatriots to pick up the pen, as it were, and continue their story together because '[l]'histoire est essentielle pour relever un mourant mais, pour sauver le village de la futilité, il lui faut un récit herculéen.'[713] Free to determine its own future, then, Aboukir – a fictional metonym for Algeria – can finally 'turn a new page' and overcome the 'writer's block' that has beleaguered it for so long.

This idea is consolidated on the last page of the book when it is revealed that the story Zabor has been recounting all along is in fact a (one-sided) dialogue with Death himself. In this way, the whole novel could be read as Daoud's own *cahier* aimed at resuscitating Algeria. If Daoud is Zabor, author of the Book of Psalms (who also shares his name), and Aboukir is Algeria, then it only fits that the author, like his narrator, is attempting to save his country from its metaphorical death through the art of (re-)writing its memory and redirecting its future, toppling the previous generation's outdated narrative which has been enshrined in political sanctity as historical Truth. Indeed, at the end of the novel, Zabor asserts : 'j'ai reconstitué l'histoire de notre tribu, […] répar[é] les creux, les blanc, les absences dans notre récit'.[714] By 'filling in the blanks' of communal memory, then, the writer is able to 'reconstitute history', but importantly, *continue writing it*. There must be an awareness, Zabor emphasises, that this 'histoire' is a shared story – '*notre* récit' – rather than one which a single individual can or should dictate.

[710] Ibid., p. 203.
[711] Ibid., p. 144.
[712] Ibid., p. 206.
[713] Ibid., p. 143.
[714] Ibid., p. 327.

This casts Daoud as a self-appointed Scheherazade for his country and raises some provocative questions about the social and political role of the writer, depicted at once as a saviour but also as a victim of societal prejudice, shunned by the community and threatened by those in power. Although Zabor eventually realises that a collective and ongoing effort is required to sustain a community, he nonetheless attributes a heightened, almost religious importance to the writer and the act of writing. As we have seen, storytelling is represented throughout the novel as a spiritual key to communal salvation – indeed 'la *seule* ruse efficace contre la mort'[715] – but it is also demonstrated to be undervalued and often dismissed in contemporary society. Joining Bachi and Adimi, Daoud suggests that literature is in danger, actively demonised by conservative governments as a dangerous force that can threaten political and religious authority as well as corrupt popular opinion. In a recent interview with *France Culture*, the author declares that 'un écrivain est vu comme quelqu'un qui remet en question la certitude par les gouvernements qui prétendent posséder la vérité absolue – c'est pour ça qu'ils sont considérés comme dangereux'.[716] Similarly, Zabor explains that '[d]ans le Livre, les poètes sont en effet moqués, soupçonnés de rivalité et d'errance', and Zabor himself is declared 'le pire ennemi de cette religion du Livre et du verbe' [717] – a designation which mirrors almost exactly what Daoud was accused of in 2014.[718] This unsubtle reference to the '*fatwah*' issued against him forms part of Daoud's attempt to defend the role of the author in *Zabor*, drawing attention to how writers are often censored or used as society's scapegoats.

---

[715] Ibid., p. 13 (my emphasis).
[716] Daoud, interview with Raphaëlle Rérolle, 'Kamel Daoud, l'insoumis', ep. 4, *France Culture*, Radio France, 29 November -3 December 2021 <franceculture.fr/emissions/serie/kamel-daoud-l-insoumis>.
[717] *Zabor*, p. 210.
[718] As discussed in Part I, Abdelfattah Hamadache Zeraoui issued an unofficial 'fatwah', calling Daoud an 'ennemi de l'islam et de la langue arabe' on his Facebook page. See 'Une « fatwa » contre Kamel Daoud', *Paris Match*, 17 December 2014 <https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Livres/Une-Fatwa-contre-Kamel-Daoud-672278> [accessed 10 January 2020] ; Meziane Abane, 'L'écrivain Kamel Daoud gagne son procès contre un imam salafiste', *Le Monde Afrique,* 8 March 2016 <https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/03/08/l-ecrivain-kamel-daoud-gagne-son-proces-contre-un-imam-salafiste_4878558_3212.html> [accessed 10 January 2020].

Throughout the novel, Zabor is described as a 'battering ram' ('*un bélier sacrifié*'[719]), a metaphor reinforced by his bleating voice and association with the Qu'ranic Ismail who was to be sacrificed by his father Brahim but substituted at the last minute by a goat.[720] Referring to himself, Zabor narrates: 'le vieux bélier sauvait ainsi tous les habitants du village, un par un. Peut-être l'humanité tout entière.'[721] This is clearly an intensely eulogising portrayal of writing as a saviour of 'humanity in its entirety'. Whilst it is undeniable that literature can perform an emancipatory role, issuing a call to action, fostering a sense of unity, or exposing cultural and political myths (through providing counter-histories to fossilised dogma), I question whether Daoud's representation of storytelling in *Zabor* risks, at times, presenting an overly idealistic vision of writing that, by elevating the author and storyteller to a prophet-like status, plays into the same claims to Truth that the author criticises religion for making. If writing is 'la seule ruse' that can save humanity, it becomes an absolutist solution that does not accept any other path to salvation, renewal, or peace. There is some inherent contradiction in the suggestion that storytelling is at once a dynamic and constantly evolving process (and therefore does not require unwavering adherence to rigid or outdated dogma like religious forms of salvation do) but also one that is led by an elite group of enlightened, prophetic vessels who alone can know, receive, and transmit these stories. Even if Zabor ultimately concedes that this responsibility is too onerous for a select few and instead requires communal participation, it is clear that writers and storytellers are the ones leading this movement or are at least in a privileged position to do so. As the protagonist ponders early on in the novel, 'qui doit sauver ce monde de l'effacement ? [...] J'en étais le seul

[719] *Zabor,* p. 87 (original emphasis).
[720] Surah As-Saffat 101-111. In the Christian Bible, Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac not Ishmael.
[721] *Zabor*, p. 83.

capable,' by which we understand he is using himself as a synecdoche for writers more generally, being the only literate member of his village.[722]

Whilst this is indeed an empowering model of the salvific capacity of literature, we must remain wary that such a depiction of a francophone literary elite does risk validating and perpetuating problematic cultural binaries regarding Algeria: namely, that of a 'backwards' Muslim and Arabic-speaking population duped by a repressive Islamist regime versus a progressive, (post)secular community of francophone intellectuals. Joseph Ford criticises Daoud extensively for this,[723] and it is worth acknowledging this tension in the author's work, but I am also conscious of not wanting to oversimply Daoud's fiction since there is a high degree of nuance in his dissenting narratives that indicate a clear self-awareness regarding the replication of these stereotypes. Of course, publishing constraints that hinge on success in a French market encourage the adoption of cultural and political tropes that will appeal to a French readership, and this inevitably has an influence on literary works. However, it is clear that the issue Daoud raises with Islamist discourse and the Algerian government is precisely their imposition of rigidity and reductive binary identities that homogenise a population. The notions of *hikkāya*, boustrophedon, and cosmological animism, as I have hopefully demonstrated, signify a desire to move beyond polarising cultural narratives and definitive modes of storytelling, instead embracing plurality, ambivalence, and evolution – the essence of spectrality as encapsulated by Derrida's *hauntologie*. Furthermore, Daoud has explicitly sought to clarify that he is not claiming to be a spokesperson for the whole population, insisting: 'Je n'ai pas la prétention de dire que j'écris pour éclairer les autres. J'écris pour m'éclairer moi-même. […] Je n'ai pas envie de me donner le rôle d'éclaireur.' [724] Like Bachi, who also reproduces tropes of 'Arabo-

[722] Ibid., p. 69.
[723] Ford, *Writing the Black Decade*, Ch. 4, pp. 99-120.
[724] Daoud in Farid Alilat, 'Kamel Daoud'.

Islamist versus liberated francophone', Daoud ultimately manages to open up these categories through the emphatic inclusion of multiple other cultural elements and storytelling traditions to encourage a more complex and holistic understanding of identity as a heterogeneic fusion rather than limited to being either purely Muslim and Arabic (as the government has sought to impose since Independence) or French and secular (as many critics read Daoud's work). Indeed, the author's promotion of a *post*secular way of being is a clear means of eschewing this dichotomy, both transcending and continuing a religious and spiritual connection, just one that the author believes is more inclusive and liberating than monotheistic institutions and their 'dogma'. In the same way that he critiques the absurdity of the conflict over ownership of Camus, Daoud also demonstrates that adhering to archaic notions of an immutable destiny or propagandist views of history and identity can be equally as stultifying.

Indeed, just like in *Amours et aventures*, there is a conflict between storytelling as 'une obligation éthique'[725] (and therefore a moral duty for everyone to perform) and a dangerous and deceptive weapon in *Zabor*. I contend that this is reflective of the current, still-contested status of literature in Algeria, and the next part of this thesis will explore this duality in more detail. The artform and its reception has undergone radical transformation in recent years and is still evolving – from realistic, testimonial accounts of conflict, to more allegorical and mythological representations of events and history, to experimental and multifaceted portrayals of the country's intertwined literary and artistic heritage, crystallising around an increasing exploration of its possible future(s).[726] The role of writers remains uncertain: are they heretic villains, disrupters of the status quo, provocateurs, corrupting influences on the

[725] Zabor, p. 20.
[726] We are even now seeing a move towards more hybrid and multimedia works that are contesting the very essence of literary form itself, such as Mustapha Benfodil's ongoing 'lectures sauvages' (a series of unauthorised public readings) and literary-art-installations such as his *Antilivre* (2012), Samira Négrouche's spoken word poetry set to music, and Daoud's recent photographic collaborations.

youth…Or leaders, saviours, and spokespeople? As we have discussed, writing itself has been heavily censored, with authors imprisoned, exiled, and even assassinated during the *décennie noire,* but also lauded and promoted – evident, for example, in the recent establishment of new literary awards for (often young) Algerian writers,[727] coinciding with the notable increase in independent publishing houses discussed in the Introduction. Contemporary authors are self-consciously reflecting on literature's evolving and disputed relationship to history, religion, conflict, politics, culture, and current affairs, reconsidering and reforging its purpose. This uncertainty is refracted, perhaps even unwittingly, in the ambivalent portrayal of the role of writing, reading, and storytelling in *Zabor.*

By aligning himself with the victimised writer-saviour figure through his protagonist, Daoud indeed solidifies his image as an 'embattled public intellectual'[728] speaking out against an oppressive system – a characterisation readily bolstered by the French media. However, implicit in this portrayal is the understanding that whilst writers may indeed ensure or contribute to society's longevity, they cannot be the only spokespeople for it. Daoud mocks the view that writing is inherently heretic but *does* agree that it can be dangerous – not just for writers themselves, who may risk imprisonment and backlash, but for authority figures too. This, however, is the point of literature, Daoud seems to argue. The source of its power, he asserts, derives from its dangerous potential to challenge orthodoxy and politico-religious dogma, even destabilise regimes. Books, stories, and cultural narratives, in his estimation, possess a real ability to disrupt norms, challenge

[727] Examples include the *Prix littéraire Mohammed Dib* for works written in French, Arabic, or Tamazigh, created in 2001; *Prix escales littéraires* (francophone, 2013); *Prix de la nouvelle fantastique* (francophone, 2013); *Prix Assia Djebar du roman* (Arabic, French or Tamazigh, 2015); *Prix Montluc Résistance et Liberté* (francophone, 2018); *Prix cadets de la culture* (literary and artistic prize for works by *jeunes* under 16 years in either Arabic or French, created in 2023).
[728] Ford, *Writing the Black Decade*, pp. 101, 105-107.

entrenched ways of thinking, and foster intercultural dialogue and debate; they can change minds and lay the seeds of revolution.

A powerful portrait of literature and its lifegiving potential, then, *Zabor* advocates continuous, communal storytelling as the cure for a moribund society. Like *Amours et aventures*, it foregrounds concerns about fossilised, political narratives that lock citizens into a restrictive conception of their own identity and purpose through the projection and imposition of a monolithic religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical model for the whole country. However, rather than adopting a mythological approach, as Bachi does to expose the Algerian 'myth' and champion a continually revised and *re-venant* way forward, Daoud reconfigures the sacred in order to propose a viable alternative to religious dogma and sanctified histories. In the latter's novel, it is not only the manner in which stories occur that is ghostly (revealed supernaturally through a prophetic medium whom they literally possess and inhabit) but also their effect that is spectral, bringing the dying back to life and imbuing the teller with a divine purpose and ghostly power. Nonetheless, *Zabor* demonstrates, this is too burdensome a task to fall to a select few and instead requires a sustained, collective effort to be successful.

According to Zabor, life is a book that we need to keep (re)writing lest we fall stagnant. By representing storytelling as a spectral and spiritual artform that can replace the role of institutionalised religion by guaranteeing our salvation and survival, Daoud offers an empowering ontological model whereby we are the authors of our own futures – literally. He argues that embracing this conception of narrative will enable the Algerian people to take direct control of how their stories progress without the intermediary of an imam, a caliph, the Qu'ran, or any other religious or political authority. With this freedom, however, comes responsibility, for the onus is on each individual – not a god, not the government, not

a mosque or institution – to invent their next chapter. Algeria, Daoud seems to say, has hit an impasse and needs a push to get writing again rather than dwelling on the gripping narrative *pistes* of its past.

Conclusion

Both *Amours et aventures* and *Zabor* present highly self-reflexive analyses of the nature and purpose of storytelling, focussing in particular on its effects on the construction and self-determination of a nation. They aptly demonstrate how stories connect, empower, and sustain us, but they also expose the dangers and limitations of narratives that do not allow for revision or an awareness of difference/*différance*. The two novels ultimately conclude that storytelling – whether oral or written – is a life-sustaining force *but only* when it is understood as a spectral process; that is, recognised for its ever-recurring but always unfinished nature as a malleable and ongoing artform that defies any singular, fixed meaning or temporality. This ghostly conception of narrative works against authoritarian dogma and state borders by instead allowing for a more porous and plural understanding of national identity. It also negates the idea of a predetermined future and provides an antidote to political and cultural stagnancy through its constantly evolving nature. Both Sindbad and Zabor manage to survive obscurity, purposelessness, and a sense of mortality through their storytelling, which not only imbues their lives with meaning (and in Zabor's case, divinity) but also provides a way of relating to those around them – including to generations past and yet to come, as well as to the wider universe.

Through a persistent interplay between orality and literacy, mythology and history, the sacred and profane, Arabic and French influences, dreams and reality, the supernatural and prosaic, and life and death, both Bachi and Daoud blur boundaries in a spectral manner to

demonstrate how storytelling can be utilised as a productive and liberating force to transcend geographical, cultural, linguistic, and even temporal barriers. This fusion of styles and traditions involves an inevitable balance between imitation and invention; that is, an appreciation of *hikkāya* as not only a spectral model of storytelling but also of life, wherein individuals, communities, generations, and epochs are inextricably connected and mutually indebted. Like Poll, storytellers' power lies in their ability to create something new out of the old, understanding that narratives are essentially revenants that need to be continually resurrected and revised to remain relevant and effective in a ghostly cycle of unending renewal. This affords the writer or teller a large degree of freedom in the way they express themselves – something both Daoud and Bachi believe is under threat in Algeria – and also contributes positively to the 'rebirth' of a culture that is reconsidering its independent identity and future trajectory in the wake of constant conflict and internecine politics.

Each work problematises the role of the writer/storyteller in Algeria but also that of readers and listeners. They present storytelling as a collective responsibilit*y*, a *devoir* not unlike the Sartrean notion of 'littérature engagée', but also as an artform that is in danger, with writers often demonised and devalued. Passionately advocating for it to be revalorised, Bachi and Daoud suggest that the current generation must approach stories with childlike curiosity and openness, as the *Nights* encourages, rather than with preconceived ideas or blind sequacity. The next part of this thesis will examine the drastic consequences that can arise when narratives are not received in this way, instead leaving a population ripe for exploitation.

PART III

Speculative Spectres: Necropolitics and Orwellian Dystopia in Algeria

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past. [1]

So far, this thesis has explored various aspects of textual haunting in contemporary Algerian literature – from the past through to the future, and from both French and Arabic literary heritages. The spectral elements in each work so far, though often hailing from a previous era, have brought an increasing awareness to the future. While the protagonists in *Contre-enquête* and *Nos richesses* are both clearly haunted by figures from the past, the former focuses on *rewriting* this past for the current generation and the latter is concerned with 'saving' the *future* of the Arts in Algeria and indeed encouraging future generations to take up the mantle. Taking this idea further, Bachi's work combines a mythological past with an imagined future through constant time travel in an attempt to avoid an impending apocalypse. *Zabor*, in a similar temporal conflation, engenders an all-encompassing cosmological time that extends life through the creation of a dilated present, constantly renewing one's story so as to ensure it continues on, not only for the individual in question but also for the village as a whole. In this way, the focus has developed from ghosts of the past to more messianic spectres – entities in the present heralding or averting a potential future that has yet to be realised. This temporal progression culminates now in the final section of this thesis with a text that not only further develops the idea of narrative spectrality but moreover foregrounds a definitively future haunting.

Boualem Sansal's *2084: La fin du monde* (2015) is an appropriation of George Orwell's dystopian classic *1984,* continuing the intertextual thread developed throughout the rest of the thesis. In Orwell's renowned work, a totalitarian regime led by 'Big Brother' rules the superstate Oceania (a then-future British and American empire), maintaining control

through mass surveillance, thought policing, and rewriting of the past through the literal erasure of archives. Sansal's version depicts a similarly oppressive, post-truth world except rather than presenting a critique of Western, twentieth-century fascism, it transposes the context to a North African and Middle Eastern setting in order to foreground concerns about twenty-first century religious extremism. Set in a land called Abistan, named after the leader and prophet Abi and clearly modelled on an exaggeration of contemporary Algeria, the novel depicts a neo-Islamic superpower in which control is maintained through the perpetuation of myths, falsified histories, and fabricated threats intended to unite a population against an ill-defined enemy. As we will see, these spectral forms of power build on concerns developed in the previous chapters about state-sanctioned narratives and a country's relationship to both its history and identity. The story takes place in the distant future – well beyond the year 2084, which is the date from which all recorded history begins in this universe: the year of 'La Grande Guerre sainte' that resulted in the existing world order. All trace of life before this date has been eradicated by the government and therefore remains a mystery to citizens.[729]

Unlike *Contre-enquête*, which self-consciously 'writes back' to Camus, *2084* is less a critical commentary on Orwell's text and its reception than a creative reinterpretation of its world and values. Everything from *1984*'s 'Hate Week' to its telescreens has a counterpart in Sansal's novel, paralleled by 'la Joré' ('journée de la récompense') and 'les écrans muraux' or 'nadirs' (Arabic for 'warn'). In some ways, *2084* is also a continuation of Orwell's story since it is explained that Abistan emerged from the collapse of a previous civilisation called 'l'Angsoc' (the French version of 'Ingsoc' – Orwell's future England in *1984*). Nonetheless, the plot does not follow any of the original characters or events, and Orwell's work itself is

[729] In a similar way to Saad Khiari's 'rewriting' of *Contre-enquête*, Algerian author Waciny Laredj published an Arabic adaptation of Sansal's *2084* entitled *2084, Hikayat al-arabi al-akhir* ['*2084, l'histoire du dernier arabe*'] (Amman, Jordan: al-Ahlia Publishing, 2016).

not acknowledged as a real-world book within the diegetic narrative (although it is mentioned in paratextual remarks, which I will discuss later). It is mainly the setting and premise that are paralleled in *2084*. Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, is an ordinary office worker in the Ministry of Truth, tasked with falsifying historical records to fit the ever-changing government narrative. He secretly despises the Party and begins to record his heretic thoughts and suspicions in an illegally purchased diary as an attempt to hold on to some sort of sanity and sense of reality. Similarly, *2084*'s Ati is an unwitting civil servant who gradually comes to realise the totalitarian nature of the world in which he lives. However, each protagonist rebels in different ways. Winston embarks on a forbidden love affair with a colleague and fellow dissident Julia, eventually joining what they believe to be a shadowy resistance group called the Brotherhood. Unfortunately, their contact turns out to be a Party spy and the couple are arrested and ultimately tortured into submission. Ati, on the other hand, seeks to undermine the Abistani regime by uncovering its historical deceptions and challenging its teachings and dogma through his own travel and exploration. Notably, the romantic aspect of Orwell's story is absent in *2084*, but given that the sexual impulse was something the Party sought to abolish in *1984*, it might be an intentional omission in the latter work, suggesting that successions of conservative government and religion have finally managed to eradicate physical desire and sexual enjoyment.

Therefore, *2084* differs from most of the other works examined so far in that its intertextuality is not so much the thematic focus of the novel but rather a vehicle used to expose the ghostly mechanisms of power that operate in corrupt, autocratic societies. It does not retell or redress the story of Winston and Julia, like Haroun's reprisal of the plight of 'l'Arabe' in *Contre-enquête*, but instead it mobilises the contextual awareness and associated politics of Orwell's masterpiece to establish a parallel between the authors' motivations and messages. In *2084*, just like in Orwell's novel, truth, facts, and historical

reality are elusive and malleable concepts that can be amended by the government at any moment to reflect a more desired or useful agenda. This delicate network of carefully maintained fictions serves to construct a fragile world of illusion, producing a simulacrum that places citizens in a tenuous relationship with reality – whether they are aware of it or not. The inability to verify any external truths leaves the population of Abistan untethered to an outside world and forced to rely entirely on the ever-changing fictions promulgated by the government. Independent thought is not simply discouraged but considered a sin and punishable by death; one either has the option to be taken to a death camp (a clear reference to Nazism) or die in glory as a suicide bomber for the regime instead (suggestive of fundamentalist terrorism). As we will see, just like the population of Carthago in *Amours et aventures*, this renders citizens agentless bodies in a pervasive economy of death; vacant followers 'possessed' or brainwashed by the regime's insidious yet all-reaching indoctrination.

Published in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo shootings of 2015,[730] *2084* sparked much controversy, despite jointly winning the Academie Française's Grand Prix du Roman (2016) and featuring on the longlist of every major French literary prize that year. Although the work was a favourite amongst critics, it was withdrawn from the shortlist for the Prix Goncourt due to claims of Islamophobia. Sansal's works had already been banned in Algeria since the publication of his open letter in 2006 to fellow Algerians, in which he trenchantly criticises the *pouvoir* and calls for public scrutiny of state myths.[731] Born in 1949, Sansal is the only author featured in this thesis to have actually experienced a colonised Algeria

[730] On 7 January 2015, two brothers who claimed to be part of Al Qaeda stormed the Paris headquarters of satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and open-fired on employees, killing twelve people. The shooting is thought to have been in response to a series of irreverent cartoons the magazine published of the prophet Muhammed and therefore the incident has been viewed by many as an attack on free speech.
[731] Boualem Sansal, *Poste Restante: Alger. Lettre de colère et d'espoir à mes compatriotes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006).

personally, however he did not start writing until well after independence, publishing his first book in 1999 at the age of fifty. An engineer with a doctorate in Economics from L'École Nationale Polytechnique in Algiers, Sansal worked as a senior official[732] in Algeria's Ministère de l'Industrie for many years before being forced to leave in 2003, due in part to the publication of his third novel *Dis-moi le paradis.*[733] Being of Amazigh heritage, Arabic is not Sansal's first language and he was a vocal opponent of the government's Arabisation policies. Motivated by the changing political, linguistic, and religious landscape around him – in particular, the dramatic resurgence of militant Islamism in the 1980s and the violence of the *décennie noire* – Sansal began writing as a way of making sense of the paradigm shifts for himself.[734] I therefore consider him a writer of the current generation since his works deal explicitly with post-1990s sociopolitical concerns, especially the perceived threat of Islamism, which Sansal equates with totalitarian regimes. Exiled within his own country, the author is viewed as a traitor by the government as well as many Islamic groups, forced to publish his work overseas (mostly in France and Germany). Yet he chooses to remain in Algeria with his family despite the constant threats he receives, describing his house as a fortress with metal bars on the windows, an electronic alarm, and surrounded by barbed wire.[735] Clearly addressing his *concitoyens* through his works, Sansal affirms that 'c'est en Algérie qu'il faut écrire, c'est en Algérie qu'il faut mener le combat.'[736]

[732] He was actually named the director-general in 1995.
[733] *Dis-moi le Paradis* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003). The novel presents a particularly scathing portrait of post-independent Algeria.
[734] See for example his interview with Mark Reynolds: 'Boualem Sansal: Resistance Writer', *Bookanista* <https://bookanista.com/boualem-sansal/> [accessed March 18 2023].
[735] Boualem Sansal in Ruth Schneider, 'Rejecting Fear, Resisting Islam', *Exberliner*, 1 September 2016 <http://www.exberliner.com/features/people/rejecting-fear-resisting-islam/> [accessed 5 February 2023]
[736] Sansal, interview with Ali Ghanem, 'L'actualité ça se vend, l'Algérie aussi', *Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 Septembre 2000, available at *Algeria Watch*, <https://algeria-watch.org/?p=60963> [accessed 24 January 2024]

In *2084*, Sansal depicts a world devoid of free speech, where those who dare to deviate from the party line – even in private – are severely punished, outcast, or mysteriously disappear. He emphasises the interpenetration of language, thought, and propaganda in oppressive, religiously ruled states, illustrating the extent to which the boundaries between subconscious belief and conscious action, life and non-life (a state of existing without really living) become blurred. Continuing concerns examined so far regarding Algerian state narratives, government authoritarianism, and freedom (of thought, writing, movement, travel), this final part of the thesis focuses specifically on the ghostliness of political narratives and government fictions. Maintaining my interest in the spectrality of literature and storytelling, I am now exploring the other side of this spectrum. On one end, we have seen how hauntology undermines the notion of an absolute truth and utilises the capacity of stories to be constantly reformed and reinterpreted due to their non-fixed nature and ever-deferred meaning. On the other, however, necropolitical narratives exploit this same ambivalence precisely to impose their own absolute, dogmatic truths for a political agenda. Rather than *defying* death, then, these types of narratives seek to entrap citizens in 'death-worlds'. The aim is to deceive and repress instead of encouraging plurality and individuality. Nonetheless, it is by embracing a hauntological understanding of narrative that Sansal's protagonist is able to eventually regain his autonomy and escape such an environment.

In *2084*, an undeniable relationship emerges between religion, politics, and death, which also engenders a spectral connection to time and space. The underlying 'necropower' used to link these elements is a form of possession and indoctrination that literally 's'insinu[er] dans les crânes' to alter and control the ways people think and act.[737] It is based on Achille

[737] This is how Mustapha Harzoune describes the situation in 'Boualem Sansal, *2084. La fin du monde'*, *Hommes & migrations,* 1312 (2015), published online 2 June 2016, p. 159 <https://doi.org/10.4000/hommesmigrations.3543> [accessed 23 September 2020]

Mbembe's theory of 'necropolitics', which posits a uniquely modern form of (postcolonial) government that relies on spectral narratives as a form of control, imbricating death and ghostliness into all aspects of politics. Transposing this to a theocratic state, Sansal takes the disillusionment with politicised religion – 'le remède qui tue'[738] – further than the other novels analysed so far to suggest that perhaps reforming a country's national narrative does not begin with rewriting its history but rather with imagining alternative futures. In the following section, I will briefly explore the concept of necropolitics and how it might be a useful lens through which to consider Sansal's work before delving into a detailed analysis of the novel itself.

Necropolitics and Necropower

In *Politiques de l'inimitié* (2016), Achille Mbembe theorises and accounts for the primary tenets of our age, which he contends revolve around an increasingly emergent 'politics of enmity' that is characterised by a particular interrelationship between death and power.[739] This work is an elaboration of a phenomenon he addresses in his seminal work *De la postcolonie* (2000) as well as in a 2003 essay entitled 'Necropolitics'.[740] At its simplest, 'les politiques de l'inimité', or 'le pouvoir nécropolitique' as Mbembe also terms it, is a spectral form of government based on control over the freedom and mortality of a population. Drawing on Foucault's notion of 'le bio-pouvoir',[741] Mbembe argues that these types of

[738] *2084*, p. 299.
[739] Achille Mbembe, *Politiques de l'inimitié* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016). This was translated into English by Steve Corcoran as *Necropolitics*: *Theory in Forms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
[740] Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public culture,* 15 (2003), pp. 11-40.
[741] Closely linked to 'biopolitique', this is a type of political power exercised over the body and conditions of human life, which extends to the right to kill under certain conditions and is used to control populations. Foucault describes it as 'la souveraineté sur la mort et celui de la régularisation de la vie' in his lectures at the Collège de France, 'Cours du 17 mars 1976' in *Il faut défendre la société,* ed. by François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 1997), p.221. He also, like Mbembe, uses the term to describe the Nazi regime (Ibid., pp. 230-32). He uses the term in print in 'La volonté de savoir', *L'Histoire de la sexualité* Vol.1, Ch. 5: 'Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie' (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 175-211.

societies function by dividing individuals into those who can live and those who must die. Death is not only understood here as an end to physical existence (although this is a very real threat in necropolitical societies where whole swathes of the population are considered dispensable) but also in terms of a social death, similar to the kind Avery Gordon discusses in *Ghostly Matters,* which Mbembe calls '*death-worlds* – new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*.'[742] He reminds us that these structures have their origins in an imperial enterprise, harking back to the ultimate example of political 'death-in-life'– slavery[743] (whereby one is reduced to a mere 'l'être-esclave, l'être-animal, l'être-indigène et l'être-chose').[744] Like Sansal, Mbembe draws a distinct parallel between this sort of politics and fascism, citing Nazi Germany as a prime example of a necropolitical society since it was based on rendering individuals – or rather, *certain* individuals – expendable political entities in a state-driven narrative of control.

Sansal also addresses Nazism specifically in his 2008 novel *Le village de l'Allemand*, as well as terrorism and religious oppression. His whole oeuvre, in fact, is concerned with the effects of despotic power dynamics: *Le train d'Erlingen ou la metamorphose de Dieu* (2018), for example, extends the threat of religious enslavement developed in *2084* to a fictional German village where citizens are desperately awaiting a promised train to evacuate them from a corrupt regime but it never arrives. More recently still, in 2020, Sansal rewrote the Book of Genesis for the modern age, joining Bachi and Djebar in creating a fictionalised account of the prophet Mohammed's life.[745]

---

[742] Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', p. 40 (original emphasis).
[743] 'Necropolitics', p. 21
[744] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Karthala 2000 ; repr. La Découverte, 2020), p. 328.
[745] Bachi, *Le Silence De Mahomet* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008); Djebar, *Loin De Médine: Filles D'Ismaël* (Paris: A. Michel, 1991); Sansal, *Abraham ou la cinquième Alliance* (Paris: Gallimard, 2020). It is worth mentioning that *Genesis* does not correspond to a single book (or collection of surahs) in the Qu'ran but

Although it is nothing novel for political systems to seek to legitimise control over the mortality of their subjects, the means by which this is being enacted is assuming new forms, Mbembe contends. He analyses a particular mode of government that has been developing since the end of last century and which he believes is exhibited most clearly in postcolonial states. According to Mbembe, the contemporary world is witnessing 'la sortie de la démocratie'[746] and a resurgence of racist, fascist, and nationalistic forces in favour of increasing militarisation, technological dominion, and the use of terror as a weapon and justification for state control. Rather than relying on a colonial ideology, however, this new system is based on a postmodern, capitalist mentality that dehumanises populations by treating them and their labour as commodities, resulting in 'the generalized instrumentalization of human existence'.[747] This apathy towards human life in the pursuit of profit serves to place citizens in a constant relationship with death, whereby it is no longer an end point to avoid but a type of detached and devalued state in life. As Mbembe explains: 'Le pouvoir nécropolitique opère par une sorte de réversion entre la vie et la mort, comme si la vie n'était que le medium de la mort. Toujours il cherche à abolir la distinction entre les moyens et les fins.'[748] This is aided by the digitalisation of many aspects of life, which treats humans like machines, further blurring the boundary between a conscious life wherein one is able to exercise agency, and an automated existence where one feels as if one is merely fulfilling an external telos and has no intrinsic value. This is a central tenet of the regime portrayed in Sansal's novel, which mechanises power and societal relations to such an extent that it is known as 'l'Appareil' (a not-so-veiled parallel to the Algerian 'pouvoir'). Fittingly, Mbembe describes this sort of political machine as 'chiffon, moignon, squelette,

roughly the same creation story as that of the Bible is related in scattered fragments throughout the Islamic holy text.

[746] *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p. 17.

[747] 'Necropolitics', p. 14.

[748] *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p. 55.

statue, monument, stèle, voire spectre'[749] – in short, an ossified, ghostly entity. We will see how all these necropolitcal forms of power are ultimately enabled and perpetuated by the deceptive use of narrative; that is, they are not based on, or enacted through, actual physical or military enforcement but instead rely on constantly changing stories and fabricated histories that mislead, destabilise, and disempower the population. Moreover, these indoctrinating political narratives are not only spectral in their illusory nature but because their entire purpose is to engender a ghostly existence that blurs reality and fiction, is ruled by uncertainty, and creates 'death-worlds' as a means of controlling subjects.

In Mbembe's view, the current era is one of perpetual war, characterised by 'l'état d'exception' – a concept similar to martial law that grants the government the right to transcend the rule of law in the name of public good.[750] This state of exception is founded on the construction of a mythical enemy that serves to legitimise all sorts of government violence and repression, including offensive action such as pre-emptive strikes and 'preventative' detention of suspected terrorists. It is not difficult to see how this kind of regime can slide into a dictatorship if not checked, and this is precisely the case in Sansal's novel. According to Mbembe, our age has responded to this state of constant war and manufactured threats by erecting barriers – physical and metaphorical – and this becomes a central motif of *2084*. This 'fantasme de séparation, voire d'extermination'[751] not only causes formerly democratic states to morph into 'les sociétés de l'inimitié' but moreover, results in 'un *monde hors relation*'[752] in which citizens become divorced from themselves in a sort of Kristevan abjection, bound up with the realisation that alterity can exist within.

[749] Ibid., p. 55.
[750] The state of exception ('*ausnahmezustand*') was first introduced in the 1920s by German philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt. See Schmitt, *La dictature*, trans. Mira Köller and Dominique Séglard (Paris: Seuil, 2000), pp.210–28, 235–36, 250–51, 255–56.
[751] *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p. 56.
[752] Ibid., p. 58 (original emphasis).

As Mbembe explains: 'Faute de l'extermination, l'Autre n'est plus extérieur à nous. Il est en nous, sous la double figure de l'autre Moi et du Moi autre, chacun mortellement exposé à l'autre et à soi-même'.[753]

The dangers of such a fractured world, ruled by borders, segregation, and fear of the outsider, have become heightened in the twenty-first century, according to Mbembe, with the advent of military and technological advances such as weapons of mass destruction. The logic behind the use of such weapons is utilised as a driving force by the Abistani government in Sansal's novel, having arisen in the wake of a nuclear age. One notes that nuclear and biochemical warfare, despite dominating political discourse and international relations since World War Two, are actually rarely deployed because of their catastrophic consequences. Nonetheless, rumour and speculation surrounding such devices are often intentionally nourished so that the weapons become a haunting possibility, even if they are never seen and their existence never confirmed. This is because their power does not lie in their deployment; it is the *threat* of the violence rather than the violence itself that serves to keep a population under control by placing a people in constant proximity with *potential* death. Similarly, Abistan governs through spectral threats, such as that of an always-immanent invasion and the ever-present risk of 'disappearing' due to the discovery of some unorthodox thought or action one has unknowingly committed. Public executions, too, are a central part of Abistani life, further reminding citizens of the centrality of death within governance. In this way, 'l'ordre politique […] se reconstitue en tant que *forme d'organisation pour la mort*', seeking to 'brouill[er] les rapports entre la violence, le meurtre et la loi, la foi, le commandement et l'obéissance, […] ou encore la liberté, la traque et la sécurité'.[754]

[753] Ibid., p. 67.
[754] Ibid., p.14 (my emphasis).

With war a modus operandi, then, oppressive measures such as hypersurveillance seem justified in the pursuit of protecting the population. Eventually, however, this 'counter-terrorism' becomes indistinguishable from that which it is purportedly preventing, constituting a spectral doubling that yet again 'consiste en le pouvoir de manufacturer toute une foule de gens dont le propre est de vivre *au bord de la vie*'.[755] The ever-present shadow of death, coupled with the experience of living as dispensable entities or 'machines' divorced from the self, creates a population of

> gens pour lesquels vivre, c'est *s'expliquer en permanence avec la mort*, dans des conditions où la mort elle-même tend de plus en plus à devenir quelque chose de *spectral* tant par la façon dont elle est vécue que par la manière dont elle est donnée.[756]

As stated above, in order to maintain this necropolitical power, the fear of an external danger must be kept alive to unite the population, resulting in a society that is 'institutionnalisée et dirigée contre un « grand ennemi » – n'importe lequel'.[757] In *2084*, this enemy is actually referred to as 'le Grand Ennemi', never named specifically but used to designate an ever-changing spectrum of execrables. Importantly, however, it is nothing more than a fictional construct. As Mbembe explains : 'en vérité cet objet n'a jamais existé, n'existe pas, et n'existera jamais, alors [le gouvernment] ne cesse de l'inventer'.[758] This renders the enemy itself phantomatic – at once everywhere and nowhere, omnipresent yet invisible, external but also within, real and unreal, sometimes from both the past and the future – but it is this precise indefinability that renders it so powerful. Indeed, Mbembe elucidates how its unknowability is what incites fear, since that which we cannot apprehend in any concrete form threatens our sense of stability and security: 'Figure déroutante de l'ubiquité, il est

[755] Ibid., p.55 (my emphasis).
[756] Ibid.
[757] Ibid., p.57.
[758] Ibid., p.62.

désormais d'autant plus dangereux qu'il est partout: sans visage, sans nom et sans lieu. Ou si visage il a, ça ne saurait être qu'un *visage de voile, un simulacre de visage.*'[759]

Necropolitics is therefore a spectral mode of government that not only places citizens in a ubiquitous yet liminal relationship with death but which, moreover, represents a form of power that is fundamentally based on the perpetuation of illusion and myths, projecting an unstable 'simulacrum' through a series of masks and signs that defer meaning in a Derridean sense.[760] Yet again, spectral modes of storytelling are what ultimately determine the nation's ability to move forward or remain stagnant, but here we are exploring how they are deployed by autocratic regimes rather than promoted as a liberating strategy by and for the people. This further serves to illuminate the complex duality of this artform, which contemporary authors are increasingly interrogating. I will now examine how Sansal's novel both reflects and resists the necropolitical in order to present a warning – as well as a potential way out – for Algerians.

2084: La fin du monde – Boualem Sansal

As is clear from Part II of this thesis, Sansal is not the first francophone author to envision a future Algeria; in fact, interest in what lies next for the country is only increasing, as the recent collection *J'ai rêvé l'Algérie: témoignages, fictions et récits* testifies – a commissioned work in which various writers, psychologists, journalists, and students respond to the question 'de quelle Algérie revez-vous?'.[761] Sansal is also not the first Algerian writer to imagine a new religion based on Islam; Amin Zaoui's 2001 novel *Haras de femme,* for example*,* depicts a religion based on the discovery of the real life Black Stone

[759] Ibid., p.70.
[760] Ibid., p.76.
[761] *J'ai rêvé l'Algérie: témoignages, fictions et récits* (Alger: Barzakh & Friedrich-Ebert, 2020) [ebook].

of Mecca,[762] with Cain as its prophet.[763] However, with its distinct anchoring in a specific future time period (unlike the constantly shifting temporalities of *Amours et aventures*), *2084* does present a definitive and sustained haunting *from* the future, rather than one that simply evokes or calls awareness to what might await.

Like both Daoud and Bachi, Sansal takes issue with many elements of Islam but mainly the way it is used politically in Algeria, ruthlessly satirising it by representing it as a fascist dictatorship. Indeed in his latest work, he proclaims that 'l'islam politique est la chose la plus dangereuse du monde'.[764] Sansal's clear equation of (fundamentalist) religion with totalitarianism goes a step further than Daoud's and Bachi's portrayals, and is why the author continues to receive immense criticism on both sides of the Mediterranean. Whilst I agree that his depiction of Islam – and religion more broadly – veers, at times, towards islamophobia/religiophobia, there is an important distinction to be made between what he is trying to highlight in his work and what, for example, authors like Michel Houellebecq are doing, whose *Soumission* (which incidentally came out the same year as *2084*) also depicts an Islamic dystopia but in modern-day France. There is a clear difference between expressing concern for the increasing weaponisation of religious dogma in politics on the one hand, and projecting an unfounded fear that one's country will be overrun by (non-French) Muslims on the other. The former represents a legitimate, if exaggerated, concern for the politicisation of religion that the author has personally experienced, whereas the latter is subtended by a fear of immigrants and *bien-pensant* politics, drawing on Renaud

[762] This holy Islamic relic constitutes the eastern cornerstone of the Kaaba (shrine within the Great Mosque in Mecca) and is believed to date back to Adam's fall from grace. It was supposedly stolen for some twenty years by the Karmites in the tenth century.
[763] This new Arabo-Islamic faith blends the sacred with the profane by worshipping the vagina (which historically has a holy status in Islam) as a sanctified source of life and pleasure, but also depicts a world of constant sexual gratification in which women are viewed as inherently sinful and corrupt. Amin Zaoui, *Haras de femme* (Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 2001).
[764] Sansal, *Lettre d'amitié, de respect et de mise en garde aux peuples et aux nations de la terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2021), p.83.

Camus's overtly racist 'grand remplacement' theory.[765] Therefore, one should be wary of lumping them in the same category, as some critics have, with one even calling Sansal's work 'tyranny of a kind'.[766] Indeed, Sansal vehemently rejects the association, responding to Houellebecq's praise of *2084* on a French talk show by saying: 'Le fait que Houellebecq, souvent classé islamophobe, me considère comme plus radical, c'est assez terrible.'[767]

I agree with Corbin Treacy's distinction that 'while *Soumission* levels its most scathing critique at the French left, beholden to what Houellebecq sees as a corrosive cult of political correctness, Sansal is more concerned with the specific machinations of theocracy'.[768] But whilst Treacy argues that *2084* is primarily a 'nostalgic appeal to a past free from the encroaching tide of Islamist ideology',[769] I contend that it is more concerned with building a productive future that both eschews the errors of the past – including all forms of colonialism – and overcomes present religio-political challenges. By contesting both the idea that the novel promotes intolerance and that it is retrospective in essence, I hope to offer an alternative reading of Sansal's work that demonstrates how the author mobilises necropolitical concerns to 'créer le déclic' for 'la remise en cause de l'ordre établi' in an attempt to free not only Algeria but the world from the perils of Islamism and theocratic totalitarianism.[770] In his 2021 *Lettre d'Amitié*, *de respect et de mise en garde au peuple et*

[765] A far right, white-nationalist conspiracy theory based on the fear that Muslim (Arab) immigrants have been plotting to undermine the French way of life and will soon outnumber white/European Christians in France, effectively 'taking over' the nation. It continues to be very influential in the political sphere, frequently cited by Marine Le Pen and Éric Zemmour during the 2022 federal elections. Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement* (Paris: Reinharc, 2011).
[766] Iman Humaydan, 'Tyranny of sorts', *Qantara.de*, 6 June 2016, <https://en.qantara.de/content/boualem-sansals-novel-2084-the-end-of-the-world-tyranny-of-sorts> [accessed 9 February 2023]
[767] Sansal, 'Il ne faut jamais montrer qu'on a peur', *Les Inrockuptibles*, 6 September 2015 [accessed 9 November 2023]. For a detailed analysis of how Sansal's work, like Daoud's, has been co-opted by the French media to support an Islamophobic narrative and increasingly right-wing politics, see Harchi, 'Boualem Sansal: Un accommodement à la domination littéraire ?' in *Je n'ai qu'une langue*, pp. 225-277.
[768] Corbin Treacy, '2084: La fin du monde', *Journal of North African Studies,* 21.3 (2016), pp. 512-14 (p.512).
[769] Ibid., 513.
[770] Sansal in Brigitte Tsobgny, 'Entretiens avec Boualem Sansal et Yasmina Khadra', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 25.1 (2021), 42-51 (p.46) <10.1080/17409292.2021.1865054>.

aux nations de la terre, addressed to the Secretary General of the UN, Sansal explicitly outlines the kind of society he envisions instead, even drafting a rather idealistic 'Constitution universelle' which he hopes might serve as a basis for a new 'République des Hommes libres', privileging a secular pluralism and celebrating diversity, mobility, and freedom above all else.

More than a critique of religion itself, however, *2084* is a critique of *government*; that is, a (necro)political structure that has allowed a single belief system and holy scripture to dictate the history, identity, and daily life of its people. As Isaac Joslin explains: although *2084* clearly denounces fanatical religious discourse, it also 'incite implicitement à une critique de *tout discours dominant* […] en s'appuyant sur le modèle orwellien critiquant la mondialisation, la monoculture et le monolinguisme'.[771] It is not so much the Muslim faith to which Sansal objects but its political iteration, as he clarifies in an interview with Aya Bach, distinguishing between Islam as a private belief system and Islam*ism* as an imposed political structure governing through violence, fear, and what he believes to be false narratives.[772] It is true, however, that he sees 'global Islamisation' as a threat encroaching on European societies,[773] and this is reflected in the pan-Eurafrican setting of *2084*. Although the novel takes place in a desert country with Mosque-like structures and many other suggestions of North Africa and the Middle East, it is also implied, through references to the Louvre and old street signs, that the capital of the Abistani superstate was formerly Paris. However, Abistan's Islamic-like power rose through terrorism, in the aftermath of nuclear holocausts, and is therefore clearly representing an extremist, politicised version

[771] Isaac Joslin, 'Futurité en francosphère: Enjeux du fantastique et de la Science-fiction', *Oeuvres et critiques,* XLIV (2019), p. 116 (my emphasis) [accessed 6 December 2022]
[772] Sansal goes so far as to say that Muslims 'must fight Islamism because it is destroying their religion' [his responses are given in translation in the article]. Aya Bach, 'Take Islam back form the Islamists!', *Quantara.de*, 6 November 2013 < https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-the-algerian-writer-boualem-sansal-take-islam-back-from-the-islamists> [accessed 5 February 2023]
[773] Sansal in Schneider, 'Rejecting Fear, Resisting Islam' (quotations given in English in the article).

of the religion. Just like Orwell calls attention to the insidious aspects of a hypersurveilled, corrupt society run by fear and lies, Sansal brings awareness to how stories, propaganda, and religion are utilised in the twenty-first century to equally oppress citizens.

Returning to the novel, I will now investigate how *2084* performs a future haunting – both diegetically for the characters in the story and also for its readers in the present – not only to foreground the nefarious modes of necropower which the author feels are increasingly threatening modern society (both in the Middle East and Europe), but also to expound some potential means of resistance to these. I will begin by addressing the ghostly portrayal of *'Abigouv'*, represented as an opaque apparatus run by 'zombified' rulers and which relies on the promulgation and unquestioning acceptance of necropolitical narratives to suspend citizens in a limbo between life and death. Then I will analyse the spectralisation of space and time in Abistan, focusing on the ritualised nature of daily life; the mythical 'frontière' that the protagonist sets out in search of; and the secret museum that is revealed towards the end of the novel, which seeks to reconstruct the past that the government insists does not and has never existed. We will see that the key to resisting and overcoming Abistan's stagnant 'death-world' involves adopting a hauntological approach to both history and narrative 'truth', just like in the other works explored in this thesis.

i. Ghostly Government

Abistan is a world in which politics and religion are indistinguishable, where every aspect of life revolves around the fictional religion of *Gkabul*, meaning 'submission' or 'acceptance' in Arabic (and which shares the name of its holy book). Sansal makes it abundantly clear that this state religion is a continuation of Islam through numerous transpositions: the declaration of faith in Abistan, 'Yölah est grand et Abi est son fidèle

Délégué', echoes the Muslim one, 'Il n'y a de dieu qu'Allah et Mohammed est son prophète'; Abistan's nine daily prayers parallel the five prescribed by Islam; and the ninety-nine names for Allah correspond to the ninety-nine verses of the prophet Abi. In addition, places of worship are called *mockbas* (an amalgam of the French word for mosque and the Arabic for dome - 'mosquée' and 'qoubba'); women wear *burniquabs* (a fusion of 'burqua' and 'niqab'); and there is a 'semaine sacrée de l'Abstinence absolue'[774] known as *Siam,* which is the Arabic word for Ramadan.[775] Furthermore, this 'Islam génétiquement modifié', as Ismail Slimani describes it,[776] culminates in a sacred pilgrimage reminiscent of Islam's *hajj*, and it is here that the novel begins.

We are introduced to the protagonist Ati (ironically meaning 'to obey' in Arabic) during his stay at a sanatorium in the mountains where he is recovering from tuberculosis. It is not coincidental that Orwell wrote *1984* while being treated for the very same illness in a sanatorium in Gloucester.[777] As Sansal confirms in an interview, Orwell's end provided the beginning for Ati's journey, enabling the character to 'find new life and actually pursue Orwell's quest'.[778] After a year of hospitalisation, however, Ati winds up joining a group of pilgrims on their journey across the country (pilgrimage is the only form of travel permitted in Abistan) as he makes his way home to his government job in the capital, Qodsabad. Rather than cementing his faith in Yölah and Abistan, however, Ati's 'pilgrimage', as well as his sojourn at the sanatorium, serve to plant the seeds of doubt in his mind, causing him to question the regime and the foundational myths upon which it is built. In this way, Sansal

[774] Sansal, *2084: La fin du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), p. 27.
[775] Ismail Slimani summarises these parallels in a useful list in '2084 – la fin du monde – de Boualem Sansal: un roman-palimpseste ou du Sacré en seconde main', *Synergies Algérie* 29 (2021), pp. 129-132 (pp. 121-133).
[776] Ibid., pp. 123, 128.
[777] Despite being gravely ill, Orwell completed the book while at Cranham Sanatorium, Gloucester in 1949 but was then moved to University College Hospital in London after suffering a reaction to an experimental drug, and died a few months later on 21st January, 1950. Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorised Biography* (London: Minerva, 1992).
[778] Sansal is translated here in Ruth Schneider, 'Rejecting fear, resisting Islam'.

also desacrilises what is generally considered to be the pinnacle of a devout Muslim's life. Ati comes into contact with travellers who speak of distant legends and other lifestyles that directly contradict Abistan's teachings; he meets elderly patients at the sanitorium who seem to remember languages other than *abilang* – the official language of Abistan – and even overhears fragments of conversation that mention a mysterious 'frontière', which of course cannot exist because 'il n'y a que l'Abistan sur terre'.[779] Most importantly, however, Ati catches murmurs of a ghostly concept he cannot quite comprehend: 'quelque chose, quelqu'un…une ombre…un fantôme…une volonté…une organisation secrete […] cette chose […] Démoc…Dimouc ?'[780]

This 'awakening' is further cemented when Ati meets Nas, a travelling archaeologist working for *Le ministère des Archives, des Livres sacrés et des Mémoires saintes* who appears to have made a perturbing discovery. He explains to Ati that his team has recently unearthed the remnants of an ancient village containing evidence of a civilisation that predates Abistan's foundational holy war, but this cannot be right because everyone knows that there is no time before Abistan; all notions of history preceding *la Guerre sainte* of 2084 and the birth of the prophet have been erased. Upon Ati's reintegration into society, however, these concerns gradually fade into a vague unease until he meets a like-minded colleague, Koa, who rekindles his doubts. The two eventually embark on a perilous journey to find Nas in the impenetrably guarded inner sanctum of Abistan, hoping to discover the truth about the state and whether there is a way out. Like both Orwell's Winston Smith and Sansal himself, then, Ati is a 'bureaucrat turned rebel', to borrow Robert Mortimer's description.[781]

[779] *2084*, p. 310.
[780] Ibid., p. 206.
[781] Mortimer is referring to Sansal here. 'Boualem Sansal: novelist, polemicist, eulogist', *Journal of North African Studies* 13. 1 (2008), pp. 119-25 (p.125).

Now, it is not just the past that has become a phantomatic concept, all but faded into the heretic imagination as an unknowable period that is alternately contested, claimed, rewritten, sanitised, and sanctified, but the entire system of government in Abistan ('Abigouv' in the state language) that is spectral – only maintained through a series of carefully constructed fictions. Abi, the prophet and hypostasised leader, is a ghostly figurehead, never actually seen yet paradoxically omnipresent since his 'portrait géant' is plastered everywhere as a constant reminder of state surveillance – a 'sorte de visage en négatif, avec au centre un œil magique pointu'.[782] In case the parallel with Orwell's totalitarian dictator is unclear, Abi (which can mean either 'older brother' or 'father' in Arabic)[783] is colloquially referred to as 'Bigaye' – the French transcription of 'Big Eye' – but no-one really knows from where this peculiar term originates. In this way, the autocratic demi-god becomes a sort of idol, what Mbembe would call 'un objet de representation',[784] existing only through posters, statues, and reported quotations. Similarly, the cabalistic *Surveillants V* – a class of government spies – are '[d]es êtres mystérieux, jadis appelés djinns, qui maitrisent la télépathie, l'invisibilité et l'ubiquité'.[785] It is no coincidence that Sansal extends these ghostly qualities to what he calls 'les Destructeurs' in his 2021 *Lettre d'Amitié*. He describes these harmful global forces (both contemporary dictators – 'dignes successeurs de Big Brother'[786] – and particular ideologies like capitalism and religion) as 'des êtres doubles, réels d'un côté, imaginaires de l'autre'.[787]

[782] *2084*, p. 33.
[783] In Classical Arabic, 'Abi' means 'father' but is also, more significantly here, the shortened version of 'agabey' in dialectical versions, which means 'big brother'.
[784] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, p. 199.
[785] *2084*, p. 79.
[786] Sansal, *Lettre d'Amitié*, p. 28.
[787] Ibid., p. 58.

Indeed, the entire 'Appareil' in *2084* is described in non-human terms, either as a body of robotic 'automates'[788] devoid of emotion and humanity (reflecting Mbembe's concerns about 'le couplage humano-machinique')[789]or as zombies, ghosts, and effigies. Government bodyguards are lobotomised[790] while citizens are 'hébétés' and 'vampirisés',[791] merely 'de vagues relents de vie'.[792] As Brigitte Tsobgny observes, Abistan is 'un monde-fantôme hyper-pollué où ne vivent plus que des zombies',[793] and this strikes a chord with 'la zombification mutuelle' that Mbembe purports is a central feature of necropolitical states.[794] Like Bachi's sequacious and downtrodden population of Carthago, which is 'pret à gober une baliverne de plus',[795] and Daoud's '36 millions de Meursault',[796] Sansal's Abistan is also suspended in a brainwashed state of inertia since 'le *Gkabul* avait diffusé son hypnose dans le corps et l'âme profonde du peuple'.[797] This 'undead' metaphor of zombification, harbouring the same dialectical connotations as the spectre, encapsulates the state of Algerian politics at the time *2084* was written, held hostage for almost two decades by a largely absent but unremitting leader. As Joseph Ford affirms, Bouteflika 'came to symbolise the static and "zombified" state of political discourse in Algeria, both because of the amnesty legislation he introduced and the ill health that came to dominate the final years of his rule'.[798] Indeed, in his latest essay, Sansal himself laments that this political environment has turned him into a 'zombie taciturne', just like the inhabitants of Abistan, although the reader may find this a rather ironic description for such an outspoken author.[799]

---

[788] *2084*, eg. p.172.
[789] Mbembe, *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p. 78.
[790] *2084*, p. 34.
[791] Ibid., p. 61.
[792] Ibid., p. 201.
[793] Tsobgny, 'Entretiens'.
[794] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie,* p. 187.
[795] Bachi, *Amours et aventures*, 241.
[796] Daoud, 'Les 36 millions de Meursault'.
[797] *2084*, p. 300.
[798] Ford, *Writing the Black Decade,* p. 140.
[799] Sansal, *Lettre d'amitié*, p. 28.

Ati likens Abistan to a ghost-world in which nothing is real or matters – 'un monde virtuel' where 'la vie perd le sens […] et se réfugie dans le superficiel et le faux-semblant'.[800] As I have mentioned, this heteronomous world of illusion is sustained through a series of necropolitical mechanisms, such as thought-policing, falsified narratives, and the manipulation of language. Everything is built on a paradox, including the foundational Abistani mottos: 'La guerre c'est la paix', 'La liberté c'est l'esclavage', 'L'ignorance c'est la force'. These three are borrowed from Orwell's Ingsoc, but, tellingly, three more are added: 'La mort c'est la vie', 'Le mensonge c'est la vérité', and 'la logique c'est l'absurde'.[801] Even 'le bien et le mal ne s'opposent pas' in Abistan: 'ils se confondent puisqu'il n'y a pas de vie pour les reconnaître, les nommer et construire la dualité, ils sont une seule et même réalité, celle de la *non-vie*, ou de la *morte-vie*.'[802] Furthermore, with history constantly rewritten, reality is perpetually in flux, and this is destabilising for citizens since independent thought and critical reflection are impossible when one cannot rely on one's own deductions, logic, and empirical observations. Coupled with a reliance on myths and fabricated concepts like 'la Grande Guerre sainte' and 'le Grand Ennemi', it is clear that l'Appareil operates through 'la manipulation mentale de masse'.[803] The foundational 'holy war', for example, perhaps evocative of *jihad* (Islamic 'righteous' war against non-Muslims) is an obvious mockery of the sacred status often attributed to the Algerian War of Independence, frequently used as a reference point from which all history seems to be counted. Similarly, Abistan's mysterious enemy 'était partout'[804] and can assume various names depending on the political needs of the moment. Sometimes it is not even clear whether '[l]'ennemi intérieur avait remplacé l'ennemi extérieur, ou l'inverse',[805]

[800] *2084*, p. 69.
[801] Ibid., p. 315.
[802] Ibid., pp. 60-61 (my emphasis).
[803] Ibid., p. 116.
[804] Ibid., p. 18.
[805] Ibid., p. 19.

and this confusion is echoed in a recent statement from Daoud, in which he remarks that those in power in Algeria 'pensent qu'ils sont les gardiens de ce pays. Mais contre qui ? Auparavant, c'était contre le colonisateur; aujourd'hui, c'est contre le peuple'.[806]

What *is* clear is that all these illusory concepts – whether a constantly shifting enemy; a sanctified war in which Abistan has supposedly destroyed all other civilisations and emerged the sole occupier of the globe; or a past that is 'desormais caduque, effacée comme n'ayant jamais existé'[807] – are simply *stories*; political narratives constructed to uphold 'une réalité évanescente'.[808] This begs the question: should we fear stories themselves? Is the actual 'enemy' these sorts of propagandist narratives that involve the constant denial and reconstruction of reality? Like Bachi and Daoud, Sansal suggests that the most insidious form of (necro)political power involves myths (especially the religious kind) that are cemented as apodictic truth, since these can exert control over a population much more effectively than more obvious forms of tyranny like violence. By myths, I do not mean the cultural and literary kind that Bachi reforms, but, rather, certain state-sanctioned stories that become *mythologised* and sanctified as fact. Abigouv does not need weapons of mass destruction to subdue its population, nor does its 'Ennemi' have to actually exist, for reality is no longer relevant. Mbembe calls this mode of necropolitical government 'les régimes du croire', explaining that '[c]es histoires n'ont pas besoin d'être fondées en vérité'; it only matters that they are 'cru[es]'.[809]

Sansal uses a different term for the incarnation of this that he believes is currently being utilised by the Algerian government: 'les Constantes nationales'. In his infamous *Poste restante* (2006), the author dissects a series of myths he believes have become sanctified

[806] Farid Alilat, 'Kamel Daoud'.
[807] *2084,* p. 24.
[808] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, p. 326.
[809] Mbembe, *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p. 46.

principles – 'des vérités naturelles' – in official Algerian discourse. Echoing those discussed in the Introduction, these include the belief that Algerian people are all Arab and Muslim, that everyone speaks (only) Classical Arabic, and that the War of Independence is *the* defining event in the country's history. The author vehemently objects to the suppression of diversity that results from this rigid imposition of a single national religion and language alongside a single version of history in a single-party system. Foreshadowing the creation of *2084* perhaps, he affirms that 'le regard hypnotisant des surveillants ont leur part d'explication dans notre aphonie'.[810] Nonetheless, whether based on 'Constantes nationales' or 'régimes du croire', the resulting simulacrum depicted in *2084* suspends citizens in a confusing, self-contradictory state where opposites are not necessarily opposed and where truth is both malleable and absolute, with each new version cemented as (unironically) gospel truth.

Sansal himself further confounds the distinctions between fact and fiction in the novel through the inclusion of a paratextual 'Avertissement', which casts doubt on the allegorical status of his work. It informs the reader that *2084* is 'une oeuvre de pure invention, […] tout comme le monde de Big Brother imaginé par maître Orwell'.[811] By highlighting the novel's fictional nature, however, Sansal, rather than reassuring us that the world portrayed is not reminiscent of real life, merely heightens our awareness of the fact that on the contrary, we cannot always trust the political or historical narratives we are fed. As Mbembe asserts, it is not uncommon for tyrannical regimes to 'faire passer pour vrai ce qui n'est qu'illusion et de ne jamais énoncer la vérité que sur le mode fictif et illusoire'.[812] Sansal's warning, then, is somewhat ironic, serving to undermine the pact between reader and writer since one

[810] Sansal, *Poste restante,* p. 14.
[811] *2084*, 'Avertissement'.
[812] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, p. 324.

would already presume a novel to be a work of fiction and therefore the 'Avertissement' seems redundant. Instead, it calls into question the constructedness of history and mocks the idea that literature need be accompanied by warnings and disclaimers for fear of censorship, which has indeed been an issue for Sansal. The notice ends with a patronising injunction to '[d]ormez tranquilles, bonnes gens, tout est parfaitement faux et le reste est sous contrôle'. Sansal seems to be criticising an apathetic, 'zombified' people here, urging them not to fall back into what Mbembe calls 'le long sommeil dogmatique'[813] (something Bachi also evokes through the imagery of le Dormant in *Amours et aventures*). At the same time, however, the paratextual insertion reveals that Sansal might indeed harbour some hope that the future portrayed can be averted, since he declares that 'le monde de Bigaye que je décris […] n'a aucune raison d'exister à l'avenir'.[814]

For this to occur, however, Abistanis needs to realise that a key contributing factor to the indoctrinating power of the state's necropolitical narratives is the language in which they are communicated. In *abilang* – 'la langue sacrée enseignée par Yölah à Abi'[815] – Sansal combines the Orwellian notion that languages can be artificially created and manipulated to control thought with the Islamic belief that classical Arabic is a divinely inspired, untranslatable language. *Abilang,* however, is a more totalising version of *1984*'s 'Newspeak'. In Orwell's novel, the political language – a simplified version of English intended to eradicate all nuance, emotion, and critical thinking – is still under development and mostly reserved for official discourse; but in Abistan, citizens are forbidden to communicate in anything other than *abilang*. As one character explains to Ati:

> Sa conception s'inspire de la novlang de l'Angsoc. Lorsque nous occupâmes ce pays, nos dirigeants de l'époque ont découvert que son extraordinaire système politique reposait non pas seulement sur les armes mais sur la puissance phénoménale de sa

[813] Ibid., p. 44.
[814] *2084*, 'Avertissement'.
[815] Ibid., p. 75.

> langue […] inventée en laboratoire qui avait le pouvoir d'annihiler chez le locuteur la volonté et la curiosité.[816]

Rather than a variant of a formerly or concurrently existing language, *abilang* is a completely new linguistic system in which every word has a religious connotation (often involving the prefix 'abi'). It effects a form of hypnosis that renders citizens docile servants, willing to sacrifice themselves unconditionally for a cause they do not understand because 'les paroles chargées de la magie des prières et des scansions répétées à l'infini s'étaient incrustées dans les chromosomes et avaient modifié leur programme'.[817] Words are mostly mono- or bi-syllabic and exist for basic communication only; there is no means of expressing abstract concepts, nor is metaphoric usage accommodated. A purely instrumental language, it was created to eliminate independent or heretical thought, creativity, and individuality. As Petr Vurm affirms in his article on *2084*, '[q]ui contrôle la langue, contrôle également la communication et la pensée,'[818] and Ati realises this when, reflecting on *abilang*, he sees that it is not actually true faith that is being demanded of him but blind, unquestioning acceptance (as the religion's name suggests): '« Ne cherchez pas à croire, […] interdisez-vous seulement de douter »'.[819]

In fact, since real belief requires one to analyse and evaluate concepts to form a conclusion, it is actively discouraged in Abistan. Indeed, a linguistic system based on contradictions and nonsensical collocations intentionally hinders understanding. As with the Abistani mottos, *abilang* often demands a suspension of logic (for example, when terms for 'good' and 'bad' are interchangeable and place names mean their opposites) and therefore entails a high

[816] Ibid., p. 315. 'Novlang' is the French translation of Orwell's 'Newspeak'.
[817] *2084*, p. 113.
[818] Petr Vurm, '1984-2084. Faux-semblants révélés, émotions refoulées : L'Amour, la haine et l'indifférence à l'âge totalitaire chez George Orwell et Boualem Sansal', *Philologica,* 3 (2013), pp. 193-204 (p.196) <https://doi.org/10.14712/24646830.2018.47>.
[819] *2084,* p. 53.

degree of self-deception, yet at the same time, one must have a *lack* of self-awareness, as this would counteract the denial required. This complex process of 'doublethink', as it is called in *1984*, is inherently spectral since it involves a constant deferral of meaning due to the fusion of diametrically opposed concepts. This results in an infinite series of oscillations between poles of 'truth', rendering epistemological stability impossible. As Mbembe explains, 'les dispositifs rhétoriques officiels en postcolonie' often rely on a system 'de production du mensonge et du double langage'.[820] In Abistan, this 'travail de torsion du langage' is clearly enacted through *abilang*, wherein 'la raison [est] poussée aux extrêmes limites du possible' and language 'se retrouve précipité sur les rebords du non-sens'.[821] This perpetual state of uncertainty also blurs the lines between thought and action, since, according to Abigouv, merely thinking about or considering an act of heresy is equal to committing that crime. This includes doubting or questioning anything in le *Gkabul*, even subconsciously (a phenomenon known as 'thoughtcrime' in *1984*). However, this is difficult to avoid when the use of certain words requires the implicit recognition of their opposites. Abistan's linguistic domination, therefore, places citizens in a perpetual double-bind; an impossible spectral condition in which nothing is and everything is not. This results in 'un temps de demi-mort ou […] de demi-vie'[822] in which reality is irrelevant, meaning and truth unknowable, and subjects are completely stripped of any agency. As Regis-Pierre Fieu notes, Abistan is 'un monde où la langue même est réduite à l'esclavage',[823] but this 'esclavage' extends well beyond linguistic and cognitive manipulation into the realm of physical space and time as well.

[820] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, p. 211.
[821] Ibid., p. 266.
[822] Ibid., p. 306 (original emphasis).
[823] Regis-Pierre Fieu, 'De 1984 à 2084 : Mutations de la peur totalitaire dans la dystopie européenne', *Carnets: Revue électronique d'études françaises,* II (November 2017), 91-10 <10.4000/carnets.2344 > [accessed 10 February 2023]

In this section, we have seen how Sansal adapts Orwell's dystopic universe to produce a coruscating critique of contemporary Algerian politics and religious extremism. By depicting a theocratic and necropolitical state, he, like Bachi and Daoud, calls into question the importance and dangers of the stories we are told on both a political and personal level. Abistan operates under the *guise* of democracy but is in fact a simulacrum based on myths, falsified histories, and imaginary constructs, governed by an absent but deified leader whose very existence is uncertain. Order is maintained through constant surveillance, fabricated threats, the capitalisation of death as a currency, and invisible yet omnipresent and telepathic government agents. Furthermore, everything is built on a destabilising paradox that thwarts the possibility for rational thought and abstract reasoning. Finally, through the indoctrinating power of an artificially constructed, religiously infused language, individuality is all but eradicated. These aspects in combination create a 'death-world' in which both leaders and subjects are reduced to zombified entities and where death itself forms a central part of government administration, one in which civilians are moreover expected to participate in a literal sense through constant public executions, a willingness to sacrifice themselves in an ever-present war, or by denouncing dissenters to be exterminated.

In the following section, I will explore how Abistan's necropolitical narratives project spectral geographies and temporalities in order to distort one's relationship to the exterior world, and why this might be particularly relevant to the post-2000 (and even post-1962) Algerian context. I argue that Sansal offers an escape-route, so to speak, for the country, by suggesting that a more liberating and productive relationship with both the past and future can be cultivated by reforming one's understanding of the connection between temporal and spatial borders and the way that time is 'archived'.

ii. Spectralisation of Time and Space: *'la frontière' et 'l'anti-musée'*

As I have mentioned, time has literally come to a standstill in Abistan with the year 2084 made eternal. No-one knows what date or year it really is, simply that time has (been) stopped since 2084, with all history prior to this date (which supposedly marks the beginning of the Grand Guerre sainte and the Prophet's birth) erased. Ati explains that 'la notion de date, comme celle d'âge, était inaccessible aux Abistani, pour eux le temps est un, indivisible, immobile et invisible, le début est la fin et la fin est le début et aujourd'hui est toujours aujourd'hui'.[824] Therefore, citizens exist in a perpetual present with no foreseeable future. Unsurprisingly, this has led to a pervasive stagnancy – something both Daoud and Bachi, as well as Adimi to a lesser degree, criticise as characterising contemporary Algerian society. In Abistan, '[d]ans tout le pays, […] il ne se passait jamais rien […] la vie s'arrête',[825] and Sansal forces us to ponder 'comment bouger dans un monde figé ?'.[826] Echoing Haroun's assertion in *Contre-enquête* that Algerians feel as if they are 'tourn[ant] en rond',[827] perpetually waiting for something promised that has not yet arrived, Ati declares:

> Croire que l'avenir nous appartient […] est une erreur courante. Dans un monde parfait, il n'y a pas d'avenir, […] pas d'évolution, aucune science ; il y a la Vérité, une et éternelle, et toujours, à côté, est la Toute-Puissance qui veille sur elle.[828]

The alleged perfection of Abistan removes any reason to envision alternative futures yet at the same time, it obliterates all notions of the past. Mbembe describes this paradox as '*l'expérience du vivant à l'envers'* since one is bound to the present yet can never fully experience '*l'ici et maintenant*' because they are living 'dans l'attente de quelque chose qui

[824] *2084*, p. 137.
[825] Ibid., p. 47.
[826] Ibid., p. 44.
[827] Daoud, *Contre-enquête,* 41.
[828] *2084*, p. 46.

ne s'est pas encore réalisé, […] qui est constamment inachevé et fuyant'.[829] Further enforcing this stasis is the fact that the world depicted in *2084* appears to be post-apocalyptic, reinforced by the subtitle 'La fin du monde'. Rather than the impending 'avènement' of *Amours et aventures*, however, this Armageddon has already arrived, following a series of nuclear holocausts.

In Abistan, history is literally erased. In an allusion to the Algerian government's tight control over historical archives (see Introduction), all artefacts, documents, books, and evidence of other times have been destroyed, and this further restricts (somewhat paradoxically) conceptions of the future. As Derrida explains in *Mal d'archive*, the purpose of the archive is to preserve the past *for* the future and therefore it is 'la question de l'avenir même, […] d'une promesse et d'une responsabilité pour demain'.[830] When an archive is absent (a phenomenon Brozgal explores in her book *Absent the Archive* with relation to the 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris),[831] there can be no posterity and no conception of progress, as the connection between past and present is severed. Derrida reminds us that historical archives satisfy society's collective urge to ground itself in a particular diachronic moment, but that their significance only becomes clear in the future when historians and citizens alike look back to make sense of their trajectory as a civilisation. Although documenting history is *about* the past, then, it matters *for* the future, as this is the archive's intended audience. The irony in Sansal's work is that *Le ministère des Archives, des Livres sacrés et des Mémoires saintes*, like Orwell's 'Ministry of Truth', is concerned precisely *not* with preserving archives but destroying them, removing all trace of the true past and

[829] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, pp. 312-13 (original emphasis).
[830] Derrida, *Mal d'archive* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995), p. 60. Derrida builds on Foucault's conception of the archive as an instrument of political power in *l'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), Ch. III 'L'énoncé et l'archive', especially pp. 166-173.
[831] Lia Brozgal, *Absent the Archive: Cultural Traces of a Massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

cementing in its place 'sacred memories' surrounding the date 2084. One does not need history books, testimonial accounts, or archives – with their varied sources and perspectives to piece together – when there is a single, definitive 'Livre sacré' that can tell one what to think.[832]

This power to determine what is worthy for inclusion in official archives and what can be forgotten is a clear form of control over collective memory, one that we have seen in full force in France since the Algerian War, regarding not only the omission and denial of the use of torture, but also a strict censorship – and even rewriting of the record – of the entire colonial period. Sansal satirises such historical revisionism with Abistan's simultaneous annihilation and sanctification of the past. In this way, he is critiquing not only Algeria's reluctance to address *la décennie noire* officially, preferring to pedal a narrative about successful independence and glorify the War of Liberation, but also France's decades of official colonial 'amnesia'. He seems to share Daoud's view that '[q]uand le passé est un récit de propagande, un instrument de totalitarisme et d'exclusion de la vérité, [il faut s]'en débarrasser'.[833]

The past, then, becomes spectral in Abistan, not only because historical events have now faded from living memory but because the very concept of the past itself is elusive and unknowable. On one hand, it must exist, since Abistan teaches of the Great War in which it gained global hegemony, destroying civilisations like Ingsoc ('le seul pays qui avait résité aux forces de l'Abistan, parce que gouverné par un dictateur fou nommé Big Brother […]

[832] Interestingly, Ati discovers later that the famous 'report Nas', which threatens to destabilise the entire Abigouv regime, does not actually exist, despite the fact it has resulted in deaths, imprisonment, and is being used to start a war (pp. 305-306). Like Abistan's 'records' and 'la mémoire sainte', it is a fabricated document, but rather than deriving its power from any sanctified status as absolute truth, its influence lies in the challenge to established doctrine that its mere existence (or presumed existence) provokes.

[833] Daoud, interview with Ali Baddou and Patrick Boucheron, 'Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre', *France 3*, 5 May 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u6evIBuV5I>.

mais au final il était tombé);[834] but at the same time, it cannot exist because there is only the present and all current wars are simply extensions of the original *Guerre sainte*. Whilst this contradiction might be possible for citizens to overlook, a more insidious problem remains: Abistanis have no cognisance of the fact that there was even a past *before* this point. Knowledge of and about cultures, politics, and events that predate (or indeed continue to exist outside of) the Abistani empire is not only inaccessible to citizens but in many ways no longer exists. Unlike the reader's past, which is verifiable in books, shared records, and lived accounts, history in Abistan does not exist in any material, concrete form, nor can collective memory be relied upon. The absence of literature, documentation, and testimonial records means a population has no choice but to rely on necropolitical narratives, and Sansal foreground the dangers of a society wherein the only texts or information available are state-sanctioned propaganda. Like in Algeria, this '[t]aking possession of time and space'[835]strips a population of any connection to their own history since the notion of a 'past' cannot be apprehended in any meaningful way – it is at once overbearing but has also become an unrelatable myth. In a world where history is hypothetical and the future unimaginable, all that remains is an everlasting limbo, a spectral suspension of time in which 'le present est éternel, aujourd'hui est toujours là'.[836]

This sense of timelessness is aided by the fact that in lieu of clocks, calendars, and alarms, days are measured by constant prayer and rites, punctuated with ceremonies like la Joré (paralleling *1984*'s Two Minutes Hate and Hate Week) and public executions. In Abistan, 'la vie du parfait croyant est une suite ininterrompue de gestes et de paroles à répéter',[837] and this prohibits any broader conception of time beyond the immediate, all-consuming

[834] *2084*, p. 290.
[835] Branche, 'The martyr's torch', p. 434.
[836] Ibid., p. 25.
[837] Ibid., p. 53.

rituals. Each day rolls onto the next in an endless repetition of the same routines, which further engenders an unending present with no distinction between any twenty-four-hour period. Rather than feeling trapped in a constant rehashing of the past, like in *Zabor* and *Contre-enquête* (whose protagonists seek to 'rewrite' these pasts in an attempt to finally break the cycle), Ati lives in a world where time is non-existent. In all three works, however, 'moving on' and building a future is impossible until the protagonists discover a way to alter the state-enforced conception of time – whether by 'remont[ant] le temps' in Zabor's case,[838] 'réécri[vant] […] de droite à gauche' in Haroun's,[839] or, for Ati, through travel. Unlike Bachi's Sindbad, however, who travels through time, Ati's journey is very much about travelling through space. Interestingly, although Adimi also takes the reader back in time to reimagine Charlot's inner thoughts and struggles, *Nos richesses* is not so much about escaping a government-enforced temporal order; instead, the protagonist is part of a generational problem whereby history is not reformed for a productive future but ignored completely. Contrastingly for Ati, it is physical travel that allows him to reconfigure his view of time, not only enabling a more holistic understanding of both past and present but, importantly, opening up the possibility of a future beyond the confines of Abistan.

For this to occur, however, Ati needs the space to think for himself, which is impossible in a state where violence, conformity, and (self)censorship have become so ingrained as social mores that they cannot be challenged from within. It is only from an outside perspective that the façade of democracy Abistan projects can be recognised as obvious tyrannical abuses of power and mass population control. This is why the stay at the sanatorium inadvertently sparks Ati's anagnarisis. The period spent in 'cet hôpital hors du temps'[840] is the first time the protagonist is free from the highly regimented existence of Abistani life,

[838] *Zabor*, p. 114.
[839] *Contre-enquête*, p. 16.
[840] *2084,* p. 44.

where '[t]out était bien réglé et finement filtré, il ne pouvait rien advenir hors la volonté expresse de l'Appareil'.[841] When temporality is so controlled on the micro level, not only does one feel disconnected from any larger, long-term notion of time – months, years, decades all become meaningless – but there is no spare moment for reflection. As Ati laments, '[i]l n'y a pas de révolte possible dans un monde clos'.[842] Outside this strictly managed environment, however, with the time, freedom, and solitude to wonder and observe, Ati begins to see through the artifice of Abigouv and question some of its core principles, and his doubts only become more solidified during his year-long journey back from the sanatorium with the pilgrims.

But this is not the only physical journey Ati undertakes. Two further episodes of travel occur in the book: firstly, there is the quest to find the archaeologist Nas that Ati embarks on with his colleague Koa (who is captured and killed along the way)[843] and then at the very end of the novel, Ati, a wanted outlaw by this stage, decides to set off on an impossible search for the rumoured 'frontière'. Just as all notions of time are made inaccessible to citizens, so too is Abistan's geography. Since the superstate purports to be '*la totalité du monde*',[844] it is not possible to explore beyond it. Additionally, there is no map of Abistan,[845] and therefore it is not only time that has ceased but also space that has become nullified. The mere possibility that a border might exist is 'bouleversante'[846] because it would completely shatter the foundational myths of Abigouv, providing a hitherto unforeseen freedom – both of physical mobility and thought. Furthermore, this quest for a border is inherently spectral, not only because in this case the border in question is a shadowy myth whose existence is

[841] Ibid., p. 17.
[842] Ibid., p. 96.
[843] The two become separated as they flee government spies and Ati is later told that Koa fell into a ditch and impaled himself on a stake while trying to escape, but he is not convinced.
[844] *2084,* p. 40 (original emphasis).
[845] Ibid., p. 125.
[846] Ibid., p. 45.

uncertain, but also because borders themselves defy, whilst simultaneously invoking, boundaries, categorisation, and limits. On one hand, frontiers and perimeters are barriers that cut places and people (and worldviews) off from each other; but on the other, they are literal points of crossing – thresholds. Like the spectre, understood in a hauntological sense, they represent openness to, and the possibility of, alterity, courting and eschewing both difference and *différance*. It is at these hybrid spaces that connections and contact with otherness can occur, for they not only separate but also bring together. As such, borders are liminal, transitional areas of mingling *at the same time* as they enforce boundaries, closure, and imprisonment, and this contradictory nature is quintessentially spectral, reflecting the exact absent-present dialectic Derrida emphasises in his theory of *hauntologie*. This also resonates with conceptions of the Mediterranean itself as a deconstructive border space, as theorised by scholars like Edwige Talbayev and Mireille Rosello.[847]

The key, then, to unravelling the truth about Abistan and dismantling its necropolitical system lies in uncovering the mystery of its potential border. Probing the limits of the physical world becomes synonymous with de-bordering the mind, questioning the boundaries imposed on thought and imagination while also seeking to transcend the frontiers of Abistan. This is a hauntological pursuit that enables and encourages critical re-evaluation of the supposed truths and stories Abistanis have been fed, and therefore presents a counter to necropolitical control. If there is a border, then maybe a future is possible; maybe things do not have to remain as they are. A border entails hope, movement, and possibility. As Hüseyin Ulus states in his article on *2084*, 'the search for a border is a search for other perspectives'.[848] Drawing on Foucault's notion of heterotopia,[849] Ulus contends

[847] Talbayev, *Transcontinental Maghreb*; Rosello, *Encontres méditerranéennes*. See this thesis, p. 132.
[848] Hüseyin Ekrem Ulus, 'Secular Criticism in Dystopia: Time, Space, and Mobility in Boualem's 2084: La fin du monde', *Neohelicon,* 49 (2022), pp. 403-18 (p. 410).
[849] Foucault, 'Des espaces autres' (1967), repr. in *Dit et écrits II*, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), pp. 1571-1581. This text was given as a lecture to the Cercle d'études

that Abistan's mythical border, as a potential place of conjoining, signifies a gateway to diverse worlds – or rather, a new interpretation of worlds already known. 'Les hétérotopies', according to Foucault, are hidden spaces which contain multiple layers of meaning often running counter to their salient one. They are worlds within worlds which, like a mirror, can both reflect and distort, containing 'le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles.'[850] Just like Abistan's border, heterotopia 'supposent toujours un système d'ouverture et de fermeture qui, à la fois, les isole et les rend pénétrables'.[851] Rather than a utopia in which everything is impossibly perfect, or a dystopia in which suffering reigns, a heterotopian space is one in which 'le Bon' and 'le Mal' intermingle and overlap in a spectral blurring.

Although a perceived end point, borders – real or imagined – can also provide a new beginning. Like a mirrored image, it does not matter whether *la frontière* actually exists as a physical space or not. The *virtual* space it occupies as a concept in Ati's mind – merely the revolutionary act of considering its existence – enables him to see himself and his own world in another light, just like the unreal place reflected in a mirror can reveal the truth of one's own self and immediate surroundings by offering another (in this case, literal) perspective. By seeking out and defying borders, then – temporal, geographical, or mental – one is able to constantly re-forge one's own story, or at least begin to realise that this is possible. Just like Bachi's Sindbad, Ati embraces travel, movement, and interactions with other histories, traditions, and cultures as a means of escaping Abistan's suffocating death-world and potentially altering his own destiny.

architecturales in Paris, 14 March 1967 but not published until October 1984 in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité,* 5, 46-49.
[850] Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', p. 1577.
[851] Ibid., p. 1579.

While it is left unclear whether Ati ever finds the border (a point to which I will return at the end of this section), his travels nonetheless enable him to glimpse other worlds, other heterotopic possibilities. Even before this lone expedition in search of *la frontière*, when he and Koa set out to find Nas, they pass through 'les ghettos de la mort',[852] wherein they observe the remnants of other ways of life that existed before – or perhaps even still exist alongside – Abistan. The duo is struck by the apparent freedoms in 'ces enclaves lointaines ou survivaient des populations antiques, restées accrochées envers et contre tout à de vieilles hérésies disparues même des archives'.[853] These regions seem to run on their own time and space, inhabited by dissident 'Renégats' known as 'les Regs' (the equivalent of Orwell's 'proles' in *1984*). As one critic points out, these 'ghettos' contain the stereotypical hallmarks of French *banlieues*, including the use of *verlan* slang, evident in graffitied slogans like 'Abi = Bia'.[854] In this way, Sansal further blurs the geotemporal setting of the novel, creating a future supercontinent that encapsulates both Middle Eastern and French-European cultural imaginaries. Tellingly, however, those who are rumoured to live in these enclaves, beyond the reach of Abistan's stricter control, are referred to as 'les Hors', not only denoting exteriority in French but also stemming from the Arabic word 'houra', meaning free.[855] This equates life outside (or on the outskirts of) Abistan with liberty, suggesting that the route to freedom, in all senses, is attainable through travel, border-crossing, and contact with alterity. To fully escape the stagnancy of Abistan, however, both physical travel *and* temporal reconfiguration must be sought, since each in isolation is not enough to ensure future mobility. For Sansal, the inextricable connection between these two – that is, movement

[852] *2084*, p. 119.
[853] Ibid., pp. 119-120.
[854] Joslin, 'Futurité en francosphère'.
[855] The novel also explains the word's association with the Egyptian deity Horus, which, as a bird, represents freedom and flight (p. 122).

between both space and time – is epitomised in the heterotopia of the museum, which becomes clear towards the end of the novel.

Along their travels, Ati and Koa meet a powerful but enigmatic resistance figure called Toz, who appears to have a lot of influence in the inner sanctum of Abigouv and promises to help the pair uncover what happened to Nas (who, they are told, 'a disparu'[856]). His name is an Arabic expression akin to 'Who cares?' or 'To hell with it!', which reflects the character's unconventional attitude and lifestyle. Towards the end of the novel, Toz grants Ati access to his most treasured secret – his 'musée de la Nostalgie'[857] – which Ati later discovers is built on the remnants of 'un antique, préstigieux et gigantesque musée appelé Louvre ou Loufre', reinforcing the all-encompassing French-African setting of Abistan.[858] Over many years, by way of stealth and illicit backchannels, Toz has collected a vast array of objects from a bygone era deemed never to have existed (but which the reader recognises as the twentieth century) and meticulously curates them into reconstructions of domestic scenes. This is the first time that Ati is able to visualise another possibility, another way of life outside the paralysed world of Abistan. For Toz, the displays represent 'ce monde dont [il a] la nostalgie bien qu['il] ne l'ai[t] pas connu'.[859] This feeling of mourning something one never personally experienced – or indeed, which never officially occurred – is in many ways the reverse of the collective experience in Algeria, where post-Independent generations are left with a legacy of colonialism and national heroism to which they feel they *should* have a connection but which, despite constant state reminders and memorialisation, eludes them since it represents a history that both is and is not their own.

---

[856] *2084*, p. 190
[857] Ibid., p. 290.
[858] Ibid. Further blending the Arab and European worlds, Sansal seems to suggest that although the musée is situated in a future Paris, the centre of Abigouv is also a future Mecca, boasting as its holy monument la Grande Mockba and la Kiïba, 'une majestueuse pyramide' reminiscent of Islam's Kaaba (p. 159).
[859] Ibid., p.298.

For Toz, however, the museum is not simply a monument to the past but also an ethical position of openness to the future. It signifies a nostalgia for the way things *could* have been and therefore recognises the possibility of an alternative world that might *still exist* elsewhere. It provokes the realisation that Abistan is not the only way of life, that things can in fact be different. By recreating a history that was denied to citizens, Toz has not only resurrected the past but constructed a parallel present that actively challenges Abistan's monopoly on time. He explains that 'le musée est en quelque sorte le refus de cette folie', by which he means it is the rejection of 'l'idée absurde que tout ce qui existait avant l'avènement du *Gkabul* était faux, pernicieux'. He proclaims: 'c'est ma révolte contre elle.'[860]

Nonetheless, Toz also acknowledges that 'un musée est un paradoxe, une supercherie, une illusion aussi pernicieuse' that can 'conduire à idéaliser, à sacraliser ce passé'.[861] In this way, the museum represents the two extreme views of history to which Algeria clings, according to Sansal: denial of state violence and corruption on the one hand, and sanctification of anticolonial revolt on the other. Fittingly, though, museums are paradoxical institutions by their very nature. They cannot be anchored in any single time-period since they are precisely the accumulation of *other* times and histories (and often cultures), and therefore exist outside of time itself. Like the archive, museums are not *of* the present but *for* the present; their whole purpose is to preserve multiple pasts for future generations. As Ulus notes,[862] whilst a clear heterotopia of time, the museum is more specifically a prime example of 'hétérochronie' – a conception of temporality as a social and political construct

[860] Ibid., p. 291. Toz's nephew, Ram, takes a more literal approach and plans a political revolution, which Ati believes is naïve and 'irréalisabl[e]' (p. 308).
[861] Ibid., p. 291.
[862] Ulus, p. 415.

rather than as an abstract metaphysical process.[863] I contend that by illustrating the intersection between language, power, and time in the construction of (historical) narratives, such spaces not only question chronologies of the past but also invent possible futures. Toz's museum is like a photo negative of the real world; a not-quite-fully-developed mirror version of what might have been – and therefore what might be possible again. It is haunted by a lack, an absence, a knowing that this reconstructed past is a false past in many ways since it was never able to be fully realised in Abistan, pre-emptively stolen from citizens instead. It is perhaps for this reason that Ati describes Toz as 'vivant comme un fantôme parmi d'antiques fantômes […] quelque part entre hier et aujourd'hui'.[864] Is this the plight, then, of Algerians, hovering between yesterday and today, unable to conceive of a future that diverges from the present?

Time is yet again out of joint, but rather than a Derridean rupture of linear chronology, Abistan seems to operate outside of time and space altogether, suspending citizens in what feels like an alternate paradigm – a spectral reflection of reality. By apposing rather than opposing past, present, and future, Toz's museum collapses temporal boundaries and forces a comparative perspective on the reader who is acutely aware of not only what is lost in this fictional future but also what might still be possible. This resonates with Mbembe's conception of time, wherein 'le présent […] est précisément ce moment ou s'enchevêtrent différentes formes d'absence : absence de ces présences qui n'en sont plus et dont on se souvient (la mémoire), et absence de ces autres qui ne sont pas encore là et que l'on anticipe (l'utopie)'.[865] Such an accumulation of absences made present, however – the very essence

[863] Foucault explains this concept briefly in 'Des espaces autres', *Dits et écrits II*, p. 1578. Another notable (spectral) example given is the cemetery.
[864] *2084*, p. 301.
[865] Mbembe, *De la postcolonie*, p. 73.

of spectrality – takes a specific form in postcolonial nations, serving to enclose subjects in an inescapable limbo like the one which dominates Abistan. Mbembe observes:

> ce qui distingue l'expérience africaine contemporaine des autres, c'est le fait que ce temps à l'état naissant est en train de surgir dans un contexte où l'horizon d'avenir est, aujourd'hui, apparemment fermé, alors même que l'horizon de passé s'est, apparemment, éloigné.[866]

How then, can one escape this unending present? In Abistan, '[l]e *Gkabul* ayant colonisé le présent pour tous les siècles à venir, c'est dans le passé, avant son avènement, qu'on pouvait lui échapper.'[867] This would suggest that the solution lies in a return to the past, however we must remember that the past 'avant [l']avenement [du] *Gkabul*' is actually the reader's present – and possibly even future since it simply refers to a time before the arrival of 2084. Instead, Sansal implies that Algeria is at a critical juncture and that now is the time to act in order to alter its trajectory. This is evident when Ati wonders: 'Que faire lorsque, regardant le passé, on voit le danger foncer sur ceux qui nous ont précédés dans l'Histoire ? Comment les avertir ?'.[868] While some critics like Corbin Treacy read the novel as a nostalgic yearning for pre-colonial socialism,[869] I think it is more precisely a careful warning about the direction Sansal believes the country is heading *currently* (that is, in 2015), encouraging Algeria to actively construct an alternative future rather than regress to (a repetition of) the past. Indeed, rather didactic statements like the following exhibit a keen awareness of the dangers of idealising the past, which, coupled with Sansal's non-fiction work, indicates that the author is wary of falling into this 'nostalgia trap'. Toz explains to Ati that:

> reconstituer un monde disparu est toujours à la fois une façon de l'idéaliser et une façon de le détruire une deuxième fois puisque nous le sortons de son contexte pour le planter dans un autre et ainsi nous le *figeons* dans *l'immobilité* et le *silence* ou

[866] Ibid.
[867] *2084*, p. 300.
[868] Ibid., p. 303.
[869] Treacy, '2084: La fin du monde'.

> nous lui faisons dire et faire ce qu'il n'a peut-être ni dit ni fait. Le visiter dans ces conditions c'est comme regarder le *cadavre* d'un homme.[870]

Like Sindbad, who feels frozen in time and locked into an unending role when his story is not allowed to evolve, Toz reminds us that idealising a certain way of life can serve to fix it in an equally restrictive and anachronistic way. Sansal seems to concur with Daoud and Bachi that the only way to combat stagnancy is with movement, and this is indeed reflected in the particular manner in which Toz's museum combines time and space to enable a simultaneous progression through both. Rather than displaying objects statically for distanced and passive observation, as museums traditionally do, Toz's *musée* actively involves the viewer/participant in a dynamic quest through each stage of life displayed by arranging the exhibitions in a series of locked rooms, starting with birth ('la salle d'accouchement'[871]) through to adolescence, hobbies, war, and finally twentieth-century funeral rites. In order to progress through time (and space), Ati must find the key to the next door, which Toz has hidden amongst the previous exhibits. His intention, '[e]n créant cette difficulté', is to 'mettre le visiteur […] dans l'état naturel de l'homme qui ignore son futur et qui toujours le cherche dans l'urgence'.[872] In this way, both the form and content of the museum demonstrate that 'la vie est mouvement'.[873] It is this experience which ultimately spurs Ati to actively seek an alternative future for himself, setting off in search of a new life across the border.

According to Mbembe, one of the main problems with museums as institutions is that their purpose is to take what was once 'alive' out of its context and 'neutralise' or 'domesticate' it,[874] resulting in 'la production de statues, de momies et de fétiches – justement objets

[870] *2084*, pp. 291-292 (my emphasis).
[871] Ibid.
[872] Ibid.
[873] Ibid.
[874] 'le musée est un espace de neutralisation et de domestication de forces qui, avant leur muséification, étaient vivantes'. *Politiques de l'inimitié*, p.157.

privés de leur souffle et rendus à l'inertie de la matière'.[875] In addition to this ghostly function, they also often constitute 'un puissant dispositif de ségrégation',[876] othering and exoticising other cultures, periods, or ways of life for contemporary audiences to marvel at (and of course this is bound up with a history of slavery, colonialism, and stolen artefacts). But Toz's museum, rather than objectifying the world it reconstructs, actually reverses colonial and orientalist power dynamics to defamiliarise Toz and Ati's *own* culture and time, seeking instead to reclaim a way of life of which they were deprived. Instead of enforcing distance, it was built as a means for Toz to reconnect with this past (and would-be present, and possible future). As such, I suggest that Toz's museum actually constitutes what Mbembe calls an 'antimusée'; that is, a place of 'l'hospitalité radicale' – a 'refuge […] pour tous les rebuts de l'humanité et les « damnés de la terre »'.[877] This 'radical hospitality' comprises a welcoming of alterity and potential that lies at the core of spectrality, echoing Derrida's injunction to '*penser la possibilité du spectre [et] le spectre comme possibilité*'.[878] Indeed, Ulus describes Toz's (anti)museum as 'a political choice towards pluralism'.[879] Furthermore, this monument to an alternate way of life – far from seeking to anachronise or fossilise another time – was created precisely to reanimate and reinstate a past that was artificially eradicated, bringing it *back to life* and integrating visitors into the different timescapes so that they can experience being part of these eras rather than looking on from the outside. As Ulus perceptively observes:

> spatiality and borders are depicted through the metaphor of separate rooms. These airtight and independent rooms (our language, nationality, religion […]) are somehow under lock (immobile, uncommunicative); yet, in this clutter, there are also hidden keys (tools that enable us to move to other rooms/worlds […]).[880]

[875] Ibid., p.157.
[876] Ibid., p.156.
[877] Ibid., p.158 (the quotation references Fanon's work of the same title).
[878] *Spectres de Marx*, p. 34.
[879] Ulus, 'Secular Criticism in Dystopia', p.411.
[880] Ibid.

Both the border and the museum, then, are forms of spectral heterotopia that enable one to cross thresholds – to experience being simultaneously inside and out, absent and present, self and other. This hauntological mindset, which welcomes possibility, plurality, and 'radical hospitality' of otherness, is precisely what prompts Ati to finally seek the limits of Abistan – both the extent of the regime's power and that of the physical country.

The novel ends with an epilogue containing clippings from several, conflicting Abistani news sources, all of which discuss sightings of 'un transfuge recherché depuis plusieurs semaines' near the desert mountains – sometimes alone, sometimes with a 'complice'.[881] However, when authorities arrive to question the mysterious traveller, it is reported that this dissident, rumoured to be 'un certain Ati', has disappeared.[882] His story becomes a sort of legend with one report resembling 'un conte de montagnes'.[883] Nonetheless, these fictional news bulletins are accompanied by a warning to 'les prendre avec la plus grande circonspection, les médias abistani étant avant tout des instruments de manipulation mentale'.[884] In a nod perhaps to the structure of *1984*, which ends with an 'Appendix on the Principles of Newspeak' (containing excerpts from supposed history books on the development of the language), Sansal yet again blurs fiction and fact, reminding the reader of the many layers of possible textual deception, and encouraging a critical and discriminating reading of (especially political) narratives. In this way, the author not only challenges the fiction of boundaries but also questions the boundaries of fiction.

The ending of *2084*, however, is far more ambiguous than that of Orwell's, which sees the protagonist learn to love Big Brother after months of psychological manipulation and torture, crushed by the Party and reduced to the shell of a man. Sansal's novel is more optimistic,

[881] *2084*, p. 324.
[882] Ibid., p. 324.
[883] Ibid., p. 329.
[884] Ibid., p. 317.

too, than Bachi's text, which ends with Sindbad apparently relenting to le Dormant. Ati, contrastingly, becomes a symbol of hope in many ways. The fact that it is not stated directly whether he ever finds the border leaves the future open to readers (and perhaps also the Algerian population) to determine. This unresolved, inconclusive ending avoids prescribing a reductive or clearcut solution to fundamentalist politics whilst also eschewing the bleak and determined outlook of *1984*, suggesting instead that the future is still malleable. The emphasis remains on Algeria's (and North Africa's) current political situation, deemed by both Sansal and Mbembe to be at a critical crossroads. According to the latter, 'l'Afrique avance sur plusieurs directions [et] est au présent tout en y échappant'; which is to say, Africa is 'à l'exact point de divorce entre le visible et le saisissable, le perçu et le préhensible'.[885] Now, therefore, is the time for action. Sansal, echoing this idea of a current stasis with multiple, undetermined paths forward, implies that it is up to the contemporary generation to transcend – or not – imposed borders, to push the boundaries of political thought and literary creativity in order to imagine and indeed construct a way forward out of the quagmire of a perpetual present. Like Bachi and Daoud, he emphasises the importance of mobility, plurality, and freedom of thought, encouraging circumspection and interrogation of historical and political doxa that seek to restrict this.

Conclusion

2084 is most obviously a scathing critique of extremist religious ideology, but it is equally a work of resistance to conformity, exposing the perils of necropolitical government (in this case, a regime based on Islamist-like doctrine) that seeks to enforce homogeneity. Extrapolating and transposing Orwell's totalitarian world of thought-policing to one of

[885] *De la postcolonie*, p. 330.

theocratic oppression in the twenty-first century, Sansal brings together many of the primary issues foregrounded by the previous works examined in this thesis – namely, the dangers of fossilised political and propagandist narratives, 'ownership' of history, the insidious nature of religious dogma (sometimes conflated with religion itself), and linguistic freedom. Yet again, there is an intense preoccupation with the use and power of stories – those we tell ourselves and those we are told – and in particular, how national narratives need to be rewritten. While most of the other works examined in this thesis have focused on re-evaluating literary fictions, 2084 is more specifically about interrogating cultural and political fictions, although the author foregrounds this by 'rewriting' a canonical piece of literature. Abistan is an example of what Sansal calls 'l'industrie de la mort',[886] built on necropolitical narratives that keep citizens in heightened awareness of their own mortality and relegate them to the status of living dead by stripping them of all agency, purpose, and individuality. *Abigouv*, led by invisible yet omnipresent phantom figures, is based on a system of internalised contradiction that projects a carefully constructed web of deception and uncertainty onto its subjects. The resulting simulacrum is maintained by falsified histories, constructed myths and threats, and spectral forms of mind control that 'zombify' the population. Reality and fiction, 'good' and 'bad' are not mutually exclusive in Abistan, and this destabilises poles of meaning, which, coupled with linguistic brainwashing, precludes any possibility of and critical thought and questioning – that which is so essential to Derridean hauntology. Time and space, too, have been spectrally rearranged, suspending citizens in an eternal *huis clos* where there exists no concept of movement or progression – spatial, temporal, or mental. This engenders complete reliance on the government and the resulting sensation of hovering meaninglessly in a stagnant 'death-world'.

[886] Sansal, *Poste restante*, pp. 73, 78.

Ati may not be a storyteller himself per se, like Haroun, Charlot, Sindbad, and Zabor, but his whole journey is about navigating and untangling the complex and paradoxical series of narratives that have been instilled in him since birth in order to forge a different trajectory for himself. Rather than rewriting the past, like each of the other texts in this thesis seeks to do in one way or another, *2084* focuses on *un*writing the past, and in this way differs from other works of 'necrofiction'. As Oana Panaïté asserts in her 2022 book *Necrofiction*, '[t]he "literary tomb"'(by which she means an often nostalgic work, dealing with either the dead or lost ideals) 'designates a creative space in which writers can either honour the past or cast off its burden; dismantle or reassemble affective, political, and aesthetic communities; or both.'[887] Yet *2084* challenges the entire concept of either dismantling or reassembling the past; it asks what happens when the past does not exist, when history becomes an imaginary concept that can be constantly changed and redefined at will by the government. How can a population and country relate to themselves – and others – when their heritage is erased, when there is an 'absence d'histoire', as Malika Rahal puts it?[888]

Toz aims to faithfully piece together remnants of a stolen past with the awareness that it will never be wholly knowable – not to 'reassemble' it in the sense of repeating it in the present but rather to honestly examine it and learn from it – while Ati resolves to seek an alternative future. Importantly, neither attempts to conceal, alter, deny, or ignore what has already been, simply to know and understand it. Sansal seems to advocate an honest relationship with the past, one that seeks neither to create an overbearing legacy from it nor to dismiss it completely. This prevents the inevitable disappointment and futility of idealisation, which risks sacralising the past as an impossible and burdensome goal (like the Algerian *pouvoir*'s glorification of the War of Independence), whilst also avoiding the harmful approach of

[887] Oana Panaïté, *Necrofiction and the Politics of Literary Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022), p. 8.
[888] Rahal, 'Le temps arrêté', pp. 29, 35 (discussed in the Introduction to this thesis).

denying it altogether (as the French government sought to do with regard to the same war). By using the past as a springboard to reconstruct an alternative path forward, Sansal offers what Glissant would call 'une vision prophétique du passé',[889] transforming nostalgia and mourning into an invitation to build a collective future that overcomes both past and present impasses. Expanding on work from *Le Discours antillais* and *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, Glissant explains in a 2009 interview that:

> il nous faut avoir une vision prophétique du passé. Il ne faut pas mettre en cage le passé pour décider de l'avenir, mais prendre en compte *l'incertain* du passé pour penser l'avenir. […] Il ne faut pas avoir du passé une vision qui détermine le présent, mais une vision qui ouvre *à tous les présents possibles*.[890]

I contend that Sansal offers a similar temporal vision through his advocation of openness towards the inconclusiveness of the past and an awareness of possible alternatives that, rather than predetermining the next stage of human history, can help guide the present and future in a variety of potential and productive directions.

Just like the museum and the border, both the past and future are inaccessible in Abistan – forbidden, secret, hidden. But Sansal seems to suggest that it is precisely these supposed certainties, these limits, that should be sought out and challenged, interrogated, and rewritten by adopting a hauntological rather than necropolitical mindset. As Mustapha Harzoune declares, *'2084* est aussi une invitation à dépasser la frontière'[891] and not just geographically but linguistically, culturally, and politically too. It is above all an invitation to transcend the frontier of one's own mind and beliefs, to reassess accepted 'Truths', and to question inherited doxa of all kinds. And there is no more spectral injunction than that.

---

[889] Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 86.
[890] Glissant in Georgia Makhlouf, 'Edouard Glissant et Patrick Chamoiseau: de la nécessité du poétique en temps de crise', *L'Orient Littéraire*, 164 (2009) (my emphasis).
[891] Mustapha Harzoune, '« Boualem Sansal, *2084. La fin du monde* »', *Hommes & migrations* [online], 1312 (2015), p. 180 <https://doi.org/10.4000/ hommesmigrations.3543> [accessed 23 September 2020]

Conclusion

Phantomatic Futures – Possibility, Plurality, *Partage*

L'avenir ne peut être qu'aux fantômes [892]

This thesis has sought to problematise contemporary Algeria's responses to both its history and its current postcolonial status through literature, discerning a considerable anxiety about the country's future. By adopting spectrality as a lens through which to analyse and conceive of an increasing engagement with a range of literary canons and storytelling traditions, I have explored how narratives – historical, (necro)political, cultural, mythical, and literary – are being resurrected, reformed, and projected forward so as to 'rewrite' oppressive and restrictive models of national identity that are limiting the population. A model of hauntological storytelling has emerged not only as a means of coming to terms with a complicated and traumatic history – one that continues to 'haunt' Algeria's collective memory – but also as a critical model for countering fossilised state myths and religious dogma by constantly reassessing supposed truths and enabling the construction of – or at least the realisation that there can be – more plural, liberating, and representative futures. However, literature is not only mobilised as a space *of* questioning (that is; used to work through and challenge accepted ideology and doxa) but also as a space *to be* questioned, holding up its own form for scrutiny. What is the usefulness and purpose of writing and storytelling in Algeria today? It no longer serves a purely anticolonial role, nor a testimonial one now that the atrocities of the *décennie noire* are widely known. Likewise, it is not just the ghosts of a colonial past that linger over the country but also encroaching spectres of dystopic futures that loom.

[892] Derrida, *Spectres de Marx,* p. 69.

While ghostly figures are traditionally considered to be omens from the past, I have attempted to show in this thesis how they can both indicate future trauma and also hail from a time yet-to-come. Moreover, while spectrality in postcolonial works has tended to symbolise loss, mourning, and colonial trauma, I discern an increasing preoccupation with casting writers, literary texts, and the narrative act itself as ghostly. Setting out to assess new and emerging forms of postcolonial haunting in Algeria, the aim of this thesis has been to examine the potential and shortcomings of literature and storytelling as vehicles for not only memorialising histories and people but also for anticipating and shaping possible futures. In the Introduction, by tracing theories of spectrality to their contemporary postcolonial application, and then contextualising my corpus in terms of Algeria's colonial past and more recent civil conflict, I was able to distil a distinct shift regarding Algerian political concerns and their refraction through literature. Algeria appears to be at a crossroads, having secured its independence from France yet still struggling to (re)define itself as an independent nation in the aftermath of a decade-long domestic war, contending with internal issues like the rise of Islamism, controversial language politics, and prolonged autocratic and corrupt leadership. Having just celebrated sixty years of independence, and in light of the recent *Hirak*, it seems that now is an apt moment to re-evaluate Algeria's relationship not just with France but also with itself.

Part I of this thesis focusses on the ghostly representation of the French literary legacy in Algeria, calling into question issues of 'ownership' over a culture's (hi)story. Through an examination of two recent works that revisit a colonial literary heritage by reanimating canonical French-Algerian figures (and their works) as phantomatic entities, I assess the current generations' memorialisation of Algeria's colonial *and* postcolonial history as it moves beyond reductive, polarising tropes of victims and perpetrators in favour of more ambivalent and nuanced interpretations of the country's multifaceted history. As a symbol

for Algeria's complex and transitional status, Camus emerges in Daoud's *Contre-enquête* as a spectral incarnation of political, literary, and cultural ambivalence that must be constantly resurrected and reassessed – just like a nation's identity, which cannot simply be decided once categorically (especially by a third party) but, like any evolving and dynamic concept, must be regularly updated to ensure it remains relevant and useful. Both Daoud and Adimi convincingly demonstrate the importance of such reconsideration by transforming an expected anxiety of influence into a productive model of hauntological mobility and renewal, promoting constant 'rereading' and reinterpreting of the past in order not just to 'write back' to a colonial canon but also to 'write forward' with their own one.

While *Nos richesses* extols the virtues of engaged writing, *Contre-enquête* brings to light ethical questions raised by literary works, critiquing their potential to reproduce colonial political agendas but also mocking complacent readings that conflate fictional 'crimes' with real life actions. Generational issues are also brought to the fore in these texts, with particular concern expressed for what the authors perceive to be a characteristic indifference towards literature and culture on the part of today's youth, and a commercialisation of literature by the government. Both Daoud and Adimi encourage subsequent generations to embrace rather than exorcise literary spectres, highlighting the importance of readers' roles in determining whether they haunt or help. In this way, both works project, to varying degrees, a vision of inclusive Mediterranean literature, joining a growing corpus of transnational Maghrebi writing that revolts against the absurdity of binary models that insist on an 'either/or' view of history, identity, and literary patrimony.

Moving from a preoccupation with the French to the Arabic canon, Part II expounds a pair of novels that rewrite the *Thousand and One Nights* in various ways, engaging self-consciously with the collection's richly dialogic and intercultural heritage of oral

storytelling. These works not only feature literary ghosts, like those in Part I, but moreover, exhibit an awareness of – and consequently mobilise – the spectrality of narrative itself, casting stories as amorphous, ever-recurring *revenants* and their tellers/writers as ghostly receptacles for their transmission, literally possessed by the need to divulge their tales. Bachi's *Amours et aventures* elucidates the inextricable link between stories and survival by demonstrating the former's ability to transcend geographical, cultural, linguistic, and even temporal boundaries through its globe-trotting and time-travelling, tale-telling protagonist. Taking this idea further still, *Zabor* represents storytelling as a literal life-prolonging artform, reviving would-be ghosts from the clutches of death. Writing and recounting emerge as ethical imperatives and an almost sacred duty, providing an alternative means of transcendence, purpose, and salvation to that offered by institutionalised religion, with its single, canonised version of absolute Truth. Just like in Part I, the role of the writer and the status of literature in Algeria are both called into question. Bachi's Sindbad struggles to make his stories heard by a generation that is more interested in technology than books, and Daoud's Zabor embodies the contradictory plight of contemporary writers who are often held in contempt and treated as dangerous threats to society but who, in the author's view, are the ones guaranteeing its survival on a cultural level.

Through its ever-evolving and non-fixed nature, a hauntological model of spectrality becomes an apt template for a regenerative narrative process that allows for plurality and mobility while also granting a degree of agency over one's future. Nonetheless, this type of storytelling is destined to fail, according to the authors, if one refuses to acknowledge the communal involvement required. We have seen how Bachi's Sindbad is eventually unable to deter le Dormant from his destructive plans, and how Zabor's stories cannot save his father, becoming a suffocating burden on the protagonist instead. Through Sindbad's roving errantry and Zabor's *livre-monde*, both works promote an understanding and appreciation

of the cosmological connectedness that necessarily informs, and is engendered by, narrative. This spirit of collaborative and intercultural enterprise can be seen in the authors' refusal to adopt definitively 'Arabic' or 'French' narrative styles, embracing instead a blend of literary traditions, influences, allusions, and canonical references. These include both Qu'ranic stories and cultural myths, the emulation of orality within writing; using French but infusing it with Arabic references and rhythm; rejecting the determinism of religious narratives yet sacralising the secular; and unashamedly combining imitation with invention in a true appreciation of the original essence of storytelling – *hikkāya*. In an overwhelming refusal to cede to the notion of a pre-determined future, writers and readers alike are encouraged to find their 'bien vacant' and become the Poll of their own islands.

Building on this idea of individuality and narrative agency, Part III explores the necropolitical dimension of narrative and its disastrous effects on individual freedom and growth. Set definitively in the distant future, Sansal's *2084* is yet another 'rewriting' but this time of the English canon, adapting Orwell's post-1945 political concerns to reflect twenty-first century fears surrounding religious extremism and terrorism in both the Middle East and Europe. Through his depiction of a totalitarian, Islamist-like 'death-world', Sansal constructs a dystopic future for Algeria and North Africa, combining allusions to both this region and France in his fictional superstate. Furthering concerns laid bare by the previous works analysed in the thesis, *2084* illustrates the insidious capacity of religious dogma and government fictions to stifle creativity and freedom of expression through, most notably, their manipulation of language, purported monopoly on Truth, and control over the corporeal agency and mobility of their subjects – including their relationship to time and space. In this way, necropolitical narratives are shown to be the antithesis to hauntological ones. Tyrannical government figures are portrayed as hypostasised entities, merely ghostly figureheads at once absent yet omnipresent through their constant hypersurveillance.

Importantly, they only become real through the stories that sustain their web of deception, propping up the precarious simulacrum of Abistan. Illusory concepts such as fabricated enemies and a *Grande Guerre sainte* are conjured to maintain control, and this engenders a spectral, virtual world – an evanescent reality in which nothing is certain and citizens are forced to rely on single-sided narratives promulgated by the government and intended to enforce conformity.

While all works examined in this thesis challenge Western temporal perspectives in some way, none more so than *2084*, wherein the very concept of the past is erased and historical documents are destroyed or falsified. This *absence* of a communal narrative means that the inhabitants of Abistan have a ghostly relationship with the past, unable to know their own history and suspended in an indefinite present with no concept of a (different) future. This timeless existence, coupled with the highly ritualised and mechanised world of Abistan, strips society of its potential to evolve and also to self-determine, resulting in an overwhelming stagnancy. Furthering this, *abilang*, the antipode of the linguistic flexibility championed in Part II, is designed to eradicate critical and creative thinking, rendering citizens 'zombified' entities – docile, brainwashed, and sequacious. In this way, Sansal exposes the dangers of linguistic conformity and demonstrates how narratives based on indoctrination and propaganda can lead to the stultification of society, especially when associated with rigid, religious dogma.

Moreover, it is not only freedom of expression and thought that are denied in Abistan but also the simple freedom of movement and travel. Nonetheless, it is not physical barriers or restraints that keep Abistanis imprisoned; rather it is the myths they are told. If Abistan is the extent of the globe and all other cultures are eradicated, then the is no point in travelling. In this way, Sansal reveals how cognitive limits (as well as the limits of imagination) can

become one's physical limits, since it is ultimately the fictional narratives propagated that keep the population captive. He therefore advocates the adoption of a more open mindset that critically questions boundaries and limits, suggesting that this can transform one's relationship to the external world and overcome much of the societal stagnancy depicted. Like in the works in Part II, this hauntological worldview firstly entails an awareness of the multiplicity – but also the duplicity – of narrative, which enables one to break free from the hold of hypnotising fictions by reinterrogating accepted truths and conventional interpretations. Secondly, it alters one's perception of time and space such that a future seems possible (that is, one that does not resemble the Sisyphean cycle of the present) and therefore worth working towards. Finally, it encourages an encounter with alterity but also the recognition of otherness within. Like Mbembe and his *antimusée*, Sansal espouses a 'radical hospitality' that involves a spectral othering of the self in order to view own's one context from an external perspective. He encourages fellow Algerians to actively seek out *la frontière* in the hope that they can cross the threshold into the next stage of their history rather than become static objects frozen in time in a museum for others to gaze at.

We have thus undertaken a voyage through past, present, and future hauntings as well as through the French, Arabic, and English canons, in order to examine and account for a growing spectral and intertextual focus in contemporary Algerian francophone writing. It has hopefully revealed that this ghostly engagement with a range of literary traditions and types of narratives not only serves as a useful template for reassessing Algeria's complicated relationship to its colonial past as it moves into a post-postcolonial era, but that it also provides a means of countering fossilised political narratives and religious dogma in the present, offering a potential way of overcoming cultural stagnancy. This in turn opens the door to plurality, ambivalence, and malleable ways of thinking, which have been used to envision more open, productive, and collaborative futures. By harnessing the indeterminate

nature of the spectre, which actively defies binary categorisation and welcomes alterity, mobility, and constant renewal, the works explored in the preceding pages develop and encourage a hauntological mode of narrative that opposes monolithic models of cultural identity (particularly in terms of ethnicity, belief, and language) as well as singular, restrictive views of history. Instead, by dwelling in duality and resisting closure, this model can help current generations to regain a sense of agency over their history and determine a way forward that neither denies nor negates a traumatic past, but which nonetheless refuses to be held back by it.

Whilst *2084* deals overtly with necropolitics, all the texts addressed in this thesis could be said to deal with necro*poetics* in that they centralise either the mortifying or revivifying capacity of narrative, ultimately advocating for literature as a means of coming to terms with, or even delaying, death – including the metaphorical death of a nation. Moreover, each work consciously blurs the boundaries between being and absence; fiction and reality; stories and histories; and past, present, and future in a distinctively spectral manner. It is important to remember, however, that this meta-discussion of storytelling reflects a certain awareness on the part of the authors of the unrepresentative strand of Algerian francophone writing they form. All works exhibit a profound curiosity about, as well as a challenge to, their own uncertain status, questioning the very purpose and usage of stories within their culture and beyond, and contrasting the necropolitical with the hauntological. They highlight the intractable relationship between literature, politics, history, culture, and identity, ultimately questioning whether the country's own national narrative will serve to immortalise or limit its future legacy. Kamel Daoud, Kaouther Adimi, Salim Bachi, and Boualem Sansal offer spectrality as a literary device but also as a way of thinking and being, an ontology that welcomes the possibilities afforded by the liminal, paradoxical, and interstitial spaces of thought, memory, and storytelling. As both textual form and literary

expression continue to evolve with *con*textual concerns, Algerian literature, according to the authors examined, will continue to (re)discover a voice – or voices – of its own. Rather than accepting a potentially limiting or destructive destiny, Algerians are encouraged to endlessly recreate their own culture, for whilst the future may be 'written' in the religious sense, the novels in this thesis argue that it can, and should be, constantly rewritten. Whether this is for better or worse, however, is now up to the emerging generations to determine.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adimi, Kaouther, *Nos richesses* (Paris: Seuil, 2017)

Bachi, Salim, *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le marin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010)

Camus, Albert, *L'Étranger* (1942), repr. in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, 1931-1944, ed. by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi (Paris: Gallimard Pléiade, 2006), 139-213

Daoud, Kamel, *Meursault, contre-enquête* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2014)

—— *Zabor ou les psaumes* (Alger: Éditions Barzakh, 2017)

Sansal, Boualem, *2084: La fin du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015)

Secondary Sources

Abane, Meziane, 'L'écrivain Kamel Daoud gagne son procès contre un imam salafiste', *Le Monde Afrique,* 8 March 2016 <https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/03/08/l-ecrivain-kamel-daoud-gagne-son-proces-contre-un-imam-salafiste_4878558_3212.html> [accessed 10 January 2020]

Abraham, Nicolas and Mária Török, *L'Écorce et le noyau,* 2nd edn. (Paris: Flammarion, 1978; repr. 1987)

Abu-Haidar, Farida, 'Arabisation in Algeria', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 3 (2000), 151–163

Aissaoui, Rabah and Claire Eldridge (eds), *Algeria Revisited: History, Culture and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2017)

Aïtel, Fazia, 'Meursault, contre-enquête', *Journal of North African Studies*, 20.5 (2015), 884-886 <10.1080/13629387.2015.1070464> [accessed 8 September 2020]

Alaoui, Myriam Hachimi, *Les Chemins de l'exil: les Algériens exilés en France et au Canada depuis les années 90* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007)

Constitution of Algeria, 10 September 1963, trans. by Brian Baggins, available from *Marxist History Archives*, 2001, <https://www.marxists.org/history/algeria/1963/09/constitution.htm> [accessed 7 January 2024]

Alilat, Farid, ‘Kamel Daoud : « Le fond du problème en Algérie va au-delà du politique»’, 12 september 2017, *Jeune Afrique*, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/471200/societe/kamel-daoud-le-fond-du-probleme-en-algerie-va-au-dela-du-politique/> [accessed 2 February 2021]

Alkyam, Sami, ‘Lost in Reading: The Predicament of Postcolonial Writing in Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 55 (2019), 459-471

Al-Musawi, Mushin, ‘“The ‘Mansion” and the “Rubbish Mounds’”: “The Thousand and One Nights” in Popular Arabic Tradition’, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 35. 3 (2004), 329–367 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4183523>

Amara, Noureddine et al, ‘Nuit de Cologne : « Kamel Daoud recycle les clichés orientalistes les plus éculés »’, *Le Monde*, 10 February 2016 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/11/les-fantasmes-de-kamel-daoud_4863096_3232.html> [accessed 28 July 2020]

Arabian Nights’ Entertainment, ed. by Robert Mack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Aresu, Bernard, ‘Arcanes algeriens entés d’ajours helléniques: *Le Chien d’Ulysse*, de Salim Bachi’, in *Echanges et mutations des modèles littéraires entre Europe et Algérie*, vol. 2 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004)

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,* 2nd edn. (London, New York: Routledge, 1989, repr. 2002)

Austin, Guy, and Gemma McKinnie, ‘Affective imaginaries of conflict: from the black decade to the Hirak – an Algerian case study’, *Contemporary French Civilization* 48.2 (2023), 133-151

Bach, Aya, interview with Boualem Sansal, ‘Take Islam back form the Islamists!’, *Quantara.de*, 6 November 2013 < https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-the-algerian-writer-boualem-sansal-take-islam-back-from-the-islamists> [accessed 5 February 2023]

Bachi, Salim, ‘À la recherche d’Ulysse’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 15.4 (2011), 381-387

—— *Autoportrait avec Grenade* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2005)

—— *Dieu, Allah, Moi et les autres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017)

—— *Le Chien d'Ulysse* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001)

—— *Le Dernier été d'un jeune homme* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013)

—— *Le Silence de Mahomet* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008)

Baddou, Ali, interview with Kamel Daoud and Patrick Boucheron, 'Drôle d'endroit pour une rencontre', *France 3*, 5 May 2017, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u6evIBuV5I> [accessed 22 May 2022]

Béji, Hélé, *Le Désenchantement national* (Paris: Maspéro, 1982)

Bharat, Saleem, and Joseph Ford, '"Je suis incroyant, mais un incroyant de culture musulmane": a roundtable discussion with Salim Bachi', *Contremporary French Civilization*, 47.2 <https://doi.org/10.3828/cfc.2022.13>

Bahi, Yamina, 'Héros marginal, récit fragmenté, écriture transgressive : Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud', *Synergies Algérie,* 24 (2017), 69-80

Barclay, Fiona, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature, and the Maghreb* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011)

Barnard, Debbie, 'Old Stories, New Histories: The Past in the Francophone Tunisian Novel', *Contemporary French and* Francophone Studies, 20.1 (2016), 94-101 <10.1080/17409292.2016.1120556>

Barthes, Roland, 'La mort de l'auteur', *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 61-67

—— *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1953)

Baylee Toumi, Alek, *Albert Camus: Entre la mère and l'injustice* (Montréal: éditions du Marais, 2012)

Bechelaghem, Samira and Slimani, Ismail, 'Hybridité textuelle et altérité identitaire dans *Zabor ou les psaumes* de Kamel Daoud', *Multilinguales*, 15 December 2022, <https://doi.org/10.4000/multilinguales.9241> [accessed 17 February 2023]

Belhabib, Assia, 'Le mal de mère: Le sanctuaire de la restitution dans *Meursault contre-enquête* de Kamel Daoud', *Babel*, 36 (2017) < https://doi.org/10.4000/babel.4985>

Belkhodja, Abdelaziz*, Le Retour de l'éléphant* (Tunis: Éditions Apollonia, 2003)

Bellour, Leila, ‘Postcolonialism and Religious Identity in Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*’, *Algerian Scientific Journal Platform*, 3 (2018), 379-392

Benhamou, Rebecca, ‘Kamel Daoud: “En Algérie, sortir du passé est une douleur”’, *Ernest!* Magazine, 22 April 2022 <https://www.ernestmag.fr/2022/04/22/kamel-daoud-en-algerie-sortir-du-passe-est-une-douleur/ > [accessed 31 August 2022]

Benrabah, Mohamed, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013)

Bentoumi, Karima, ‘Rethinking the Algerian publishing “boom:” perspectives of authors, booksellers, and publishers on transnational networks and local infrastructure’, *Journal of the African Literature Association,* 14.3, 12 November 2020, 354-372 <10.1080/21674736.2020.1812204>

Mohamed Berkani : ‘Je suis islamistophobe, pas islamophobe’, 22 September 2015 <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/algerie/boualem-sansal-je-suis-islamistophobe-pas-islamophobe_3065347.html> [accessed 9 november 2023]

Bertrand, Louis, *Le Sang des races* (Paris: Éditions Ollendorff, 1899)

Bey, Maïssa, *L’Ombre d’un homme qui marche au soleil: Réflexions sur Albert Camus* (Montpellier: Chèvre-feuille étoilée, 2006)

—— *L’Une et l’autre* (Paris: Éditions de l’Aube, 2009)

Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edn., (London; New York: Routledge,1994; repr. 2004)

Blanco, María del Pilar, and Esther Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, repr. 1997)

Bonn, Charles, and Farida Boualit (eds), *Paysages littéraires aégeriens des années 90: témoigner d’une tragédie?* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999)

Bouderbala, N., *Les Nouveaux voyages de Sindbad : Chez les Amazones et autres étranges peuplades* (Casablanca, Morocco : Le Fennec, 1987)

Boudjedra, Rachid, *Les 1001 années de la nostalgie* (Paris: Gallimard Folio, 1988)

Böwering, Gerhard, ‘The Concept of Time in Islam’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 141 (1997), 55-66

Branche, Raphäelle, The martyr's torch: memory and power in Algeria". *The Journal of North African Studies* 16 (3): 2011, 431-43

Brogan, Kathleen, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1998)

Brozgal, Lia, 'The Critical Pulse of the Contre-enquête: Kamel Daoud on the Maghrebi Novel in French', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 20.1 (2016), 37-46 <10.1080/17409292.2016.1120549>

——*Absent the Archive: Cultural Traces of a Massacre in Paris, 17 October 1961* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020)

Buse, Peter, and Andrew Scott, *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999)

Butor, Michael, 'À propos de *Salammbô* in *Improvisations sur Flaubert* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1984)

Camus, Albert, 'Appel pour une trève civile en Algérie' (1956), repr. in *Actuelles, III: Chroniques algériennes* 1939-1958, *Œuvres complètes* IV*,* ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 372-380

—— 'Misère de la Kabylie' repr. in *Actuelles III, Chroniques algériennes* 1939-1958*, Œuvres Complètes* IV*,* ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), pp. 307-336

—— 'Ni victimes ni bourreaux', *Combat* (1946), repr. in *Œuvres complètes II*, 1944-48, ed. by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 436-456

—— 'Discours du 10 Décembre 1957' repr. in *Discours de Suède, Œuvres complètes IV,* 1957-1959, ed. by Raymond Gay-Crosier (Paris: Gallimard 2008), 237-243

Camus, Renaud, *Le Grand Remplacement* (Paris: Reinharc, 2011)

Caracciolo, Peter, 'Introduction', *The Arabian Nights in English* (New York, 1988), 1-80

Carroll, David, *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2007)

Caruth, Cathy, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995)

Carvajal, Doreen, 'An Algerian Author Fights Back Against a Fatwa', *New York Times*, 4

January, 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/books/an-algerian-author-fights-back-against-a-fatwa.html> [accessed 17 February 2020]

Césaire, Aimé, *Une Tempête* (Paris: Seuil, 1969)

Césaire, Suzanne, 'Misère d'une poésie', *Tropiques* IV (1942), 48-50.

Chassany, Anne-Sylvaine, "Kamel Daoud: 'I refuse to let fear take centre stage in my life'", *Financial Times*, 'Books', 11 April 2019 <https://www.ft.com/content/a2f6393a-56f7-11e9-a3db-1fe89bedc16e> [accessed 10 January 2020]

Condé, Maryse, *La Migrations des cœurs* (Paris : Éditions Robert Laffont, 1995)

—— 'Liaison dangereuse' in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed. by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, 205–216

Constable, E, L, 'Critical Departures: "Salammbô's" Orientalism, *MLN*, 111.4 (Johns Hopkins University Press,1996), 625-646

Cooper, Frederick, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

Crowley, Patrick, *Algeria: Nation, Culture and Transnationalism 1988-2015* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017)

—— 'Algerian Cultural Production Sixty Years After Independence', *French Studies,* 76. 4 (2022), 627-44

—— 'Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form: An interview with Salim Bachi', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies,* 4.1 (2013), 2-11

—— 'Mythologizing the City, Rethinking the Nation: Salim Bachi's Cyrtha Trilogy' in *Mediterranean Cities: Real and/or Imaginary*, ed. by Federica Frediani (Florence: Nerbini Editore, 2014)

—— 'Temporalities. Algerian Revolutions: Whose Star? Then/Now?', *Interventions*, 24.7 (2022), 1106-1126, DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2022.2054008

Damrosch, David, *What Is World Literature?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003)

Daoud, Kamel, 'Cologne, lieu de fantasmes', *Le Monde*, 29 January 2016, <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantasmes_4856694_3232.html> [accessed 15 March 2020]

—— ‘Djazairi: le manifeste de ma langue’, *Algérie Focus*, 4 June 2013 <algerie-focus.com/blog/2013/06/djazairi-le-manifeste-de-ma-langue-par-kamel-daoud/> [accessed 8 January 2020]

—— ‘En Algérie, l’humiliation de trop’, *Le Monde* [online], 9 March 2019 <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/03/09/kamel-daoud-en-algerie-l-humiliation-de-trop_5433573_3232.html> [accessed 22 July 2020]

—— ‘La Préface du nègre’ (Algiers: Barzakh, 2008)

—— ‘Les 36 millions de Meursault’, *Quotidien d'Oran*, 13 March 2011 <http://www.lequotidien-oran.com/?news=5150404&archive_date=2011-03-13> [accessed 4 January 2020]

—— ‘Lettre à un ami étranger’, *Quotidien d’Oran*, 15 February 2016 <http://lequotidien-oran.com/?news=5224963> [accessed 28 July 2020]

—— ‘Kamel Daoud nomme l’invisible dans *Meursault, contre-enquête’*, radio interview with Augustin Trapenard, *France Inter*, ‘Boomerang’ series, 4 November 2014 <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/boomerang/boomerang-04-novembre-2014> [accessed 14 January 2020]

—— ‘On en naît pas djihadiste, on le devient’, interview with *Europe 1*, 20 March 2015 <https://www.europe1.fr/international/Kamel-Daoud-on-ne-nait-pas-djihadiste-on-le-devient-783882> [accessed 2 July 2020]

—— ‘Rapatrier un jour les cendres d’Albert Camus?’, *La Cause littéraire*, 11 November 2013 <http://www.lacauselitteraire.fr/rapatrier-un-jour-les-cendres-de-camus> [accessed 22 July 2020]

—— ‘The Sexual Misery of the Arab World’, *New York Times*, 12 February 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/the-sexual-misery-of-the-arab-world.html> [accessed 14 July 2020]

—— with Augustin Trapenard, interview, *TV5 Monde*, 12 February 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO9aktEbDEI&t=69s > [accessed 15 March 2022]

—— and Raymond Depardon, *Son oeil dans ma main: Algérie 1961-2019* (Alger: Barzakh/Images Plurielles, 2022)

Davies, Simon (ed.), ‘“Islamogauchisme”? Moral Panic, Culture Wars and the Threat to Academic Freedom’, *French cultural Studies* (special issue)*,* 34.3, August 2023

Davis, Colin, ‘Altericide: Camus, Encounters, Reading’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies,* 32 (1997), 129-141

—— *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

—— ‘Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms’, *French Studies*, 59.3 (2005), 373–379

Davis, Muriam Haleh and Thomas Serres, ‘Political Contestation in Algeria: Between Postcolonial Legacies and the Arab Spring’, *Middle East Critique,* 22.2 (2013), 99-112

Derrida, Jacques, ‘Cogito et histoire de la folie’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 4 (1963), 460-494

—— *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967)

—— ‘La Différance’, *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie,* 62.3 (1968), 73-101

—— *La Pharmacie de Platon* in *Tel Quel,* 32, 33 (Paris: Seuil, 1968), repr. in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 77-214

—— *Mal d’arhive* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995)

—— ‘Marx, c’est quelqu’un’ in Jacques Derrida, Marx Guillaume, and Jean-Pierre Vincent, *Marx en jeu* (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1997)

—— *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993)

Devecchio, Alexandre, ‘Cologne, « islamophobie » : ce que révèle l’affaire Kamel Daoud, *Le Figaro*, 19 February 2016, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2016/02/19/31003-20160219ARTFIG00298-cologne-islamophobie-ce-que-revele-l-affaire-kamel-daoud.php> [accessed 28 July 2020]

D’Haen, Theo, *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2012)

Djebar, Assia, *Le Blanc de l’Algérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995)

—— *La disparition de la langue française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003)

—— *La Femme sans sépulture* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002)

—— *Loin De Médine: Filles D'Ismaël* (Paris: A. Michel, 1991)

—— *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (Paris: Fayard, 2007)

—— *Ombre Sultane* (Paris : Lattès, 1987)

Djebel, Mourad, *Les Cinq et Une Nuits de Shahrazède* (La Différence, 2005)

Djemaï, Abdelkader, *Camus à Oran* (Paris: Michalons éditions, 1995)

Donadey, Anne, 'Introjection and Incorporation in Assia Djebar's *La Femme sans sépulture'*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, 438.4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)

Draï, Raphaël, 'L'Étranger à la justice' in *'L'Étranger' : Cinquante Ans Après,* ed. by Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi and Raymond Gay-Crosier, Actes du colloque d'Amiens, 11-12 December 1992, *Revue Des Lettres Modernes,* 16 (1995), 27-44

Ducas, Sylvie, 'L'entrée en littérature française de Kamel Daoud : « Camus sinon rien ! »', *Littératures*, 73 (2015), 185-197

Dunwoodie, Peter, *Writing French Algeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

elhariry, yasser, 'The Mediterranean Lyric', in *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Æsthetics & Deployments of a Sea in Crisis*, ed. by yasser elhiary and Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (London: Palgrave, 2018)

Emery, Meaghan, *The Algerian War Retold: Of Camus's Revolt and Postwar Reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2020)

Esposito, Claudia, *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb*, *After the Empire. The Francophone World and Postcolonial France* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015)

Evans, Martin, and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University press, 2008)

Fabbiano, Giulia, 'Le temps long du hirak: le passé et ses présences', *L'Année du Maghreb,* 21, Special Issue: *Quand l'Algerie proteste* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.5334> [accessed 21 January 2024]

Ferreday, Debra, and Adi Kuntsman (eds.), 'Haunted Futurities', *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces in the Humanities,* 10. 2 (2011), <http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol10no2_2011/ferrkun_intro.pdf. > [6 December 2020]

Fieu, Regis-Pierre, 'De 1984 à 2084 : Mutations de la peur totalitaire dans la dystopie européenne', *Carnets: Revue électronique d'études françaises,* II (November 2017), 91-10 <10.4000/carnets.2344 > [accessed 10 February 2023]

Flaubert, Gustave, *Salammbô* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1862)

Ford, Joseph, 'Rethinking Urgence: Algerian Francophone Literature after the 'Décennie Noire', *Francosphères*, 5.1 (2016), 39-57

——*Writing the Black Decade: Conflict and Criticism in Francophone Algerian Literature* (London: Lexington, 2021)

Forsdick, Charles, Alec Hargreaves, and David Murphy, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

Foucault, Michel, 'Cours du 17 mars 1976' (lecture given at Collège de France, 1976), repr. in *Il faut défendre la société* (Paris: Gallimard, Seuil, 1997)

—— 'Des espaces autres' (1967), repr. in *Dit et écrits II*, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris : Gallimard, 2001), 1571-1581

—— 'La volonté de savoir', *L'Histoire de la sexualité* Vol.1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976)

—— 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' (1969), repr. in *Dits et écrits* I, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Eswald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 789-821

French government, 'Loi 158: Article 4', 23 Februrary 2005, available from *Légifrance*: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=912B6DCAFB091874B155B7FFC8064D4B.tplgfr29s_1?idArticle=LEGIARTI000006238938&cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&categorieLien=id&dateTexte=20060215> [accessed 20 January 2020]

Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), in *On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement: Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 243-258

—— *The Uncanny*, trad. David McLintock et Hugh Haughton (New York: Penguin Books, 2003) ['Das Unheimliche', *Imago* 5 (1919)]

Fudge, Bruce, *A Hundred and One Nights* (New York: New York University Press, 2016)

Genette, Gérard, *Nouveau Discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983)

—— *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982)

Ghanem, Ali, 'L'actualité ça se vend, l'Algérie aussi', *Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 Septembre 2000, available at *Algeria Watch*, <https://algeria-watch.org/?p=60963> [accessed 24 January 2024]

Glissant, Édouard, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996)

—— *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990)

—— *Traité du tout-monde: Poétique IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997)

Goellner, Sage, 'Spectres Insistants: Primary and Secondary Hauntings in Kamel Daoud's Meursault, Contre-Enquête', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 56. 3 (2019), 221-233. <doi:http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2094/10.3828/AJFS.2019.16 [accessed 12 May 2021]

Gordon, Avery, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

—— 'Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity', in Debra Ferreday and Adi Kuntsman (eds.), 'Haunted Futurities', *Borderlands E-Journal: New Spaces in the Humanities,* 10.2 (2011) <http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol10no2_2011/gordon_thoughts.pdf> [accessed 30 November 2019]

Grine, Hamid, *Camus dans le narguilé* (Paris: Éditions Après la Lune, 2011)

Gubińska, Maria,'« Écrire l'absence » selon Assia Djebar: *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*', *Quêtes littéraires,* 2 (2012), 144-151

Guemriche, Salah, *Aujourd'hui, Meursault est mort: Mes retrouvailles avec Albert Camus* (Alger: Éditions Franz Fanon, 2017)

Gueydan-Turek, Alexandra, 'Reinventing Algeria Through a Transnational Literary Community: Assia Djebar's *Le Blanc De L'Algérie*', *Cincinnati Romance Review,* 31, 85-102

Habermas, Jürgen 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25, (2008) 17-29 <10.1111/j.1540-5842.2008.01017.x> [accessed 9 Febrary 2022]

Haddawy, Husain, 'Introduction', *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Text Edited by Muhsin Mahdi* (New York, London: WW Norton & Co., 2010)

Hallward, Bertrand, 'The Fall of Carthage' in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. VIII: 'Rome and the Mediterranean 218-133 BC', ed. by F.E Adcock, S.A Cook, and M. P Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930)

Harbi, Mohamed, ' "L'Histoire est instrumentalisée"' en Algérie, *Jeune Afrique*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/140818/politique/mohammed-harbi-l-histoire-est-instrumentalis-e-en-alg-rie/> [accessed 17 December 2023]

—— and Benjamin Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie: 1954-2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris: R. Laffont, 2004)

Harchi, Kaoutar, *Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne* (Paris: Pauvert, 2016)

Harrison, Olivia, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization*, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016)

Hartley, Daniel, and Beatrice Ivey, 'Rupture, Repression, Repetition: The Algerian War of Independence in the Present', *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 21. 3-4 (2018), 185–207

Harzoune, Mustapha, 'Boualem Sansal, *2084. La fin du monde*', *Hommes & migrations*, 1312 (2015) < https://doi.org/10.4000/ hommesmigrations.3543> [accessed 23 September 2020]

Hawes, Elizabeth, *Camus, A Romance* (New York: Grove Press, 2009)
Hiddleston, Jane, *Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006)

——*Writing After Postcolonialism: Francophone North African Literature in Transition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2019)

Hachemaoui, Mohammed, 'La Représentation politique en Algérie entre médiation clientélaire et prédation (1997–2002)', *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques*, 53.1 (2003), 35–72

Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012)

Horton, Sarah, 'Solidarity and the Absurd in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête', Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy,* XXIV. 2 (2016), 286-303

Houellebecq, Michel, *Soumission* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015)

Humaydan, Iman, 'Tyranny of sorts', *Qantara.de*, 6 June 2016, <https://en.qantara.de/content/boualem-sansals-novel-2084-the-end-of-the-world-tyranny-of-sorts> [accessed 9 February 2023]

Hunter, Michael, 'The Decline of Magic: Challenge and Response in Early Enlightenment England', *Historical Journal*, 55. 2 (2012), 399-425 <www.jstor.org/stable/23263343>

Irwin, Robert, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1995)

Jaffeux, Vincent, ‘Alger au temps des « Vraies Richesses » : l’ascension d’une génération littéraire nord-africaine autour d’Edmond Charlot (1936-1944)’, *Cahiers d’Histoire Immédiate* (2013), 19-29 < https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01865765> [accessed April 12 2020]

J’ai rêvé l’Algérie: témoignages, fictions et récits (Alger: Barzakh & Friedrich-Ebert, 2020) [ebook] <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/algerien/17243.pdf> [accessed 21 March 2021]

Jacquemond, Richard, and Felix Lang (eds), *Culture and Crisis in the Arab World: Production and Practice in Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 129-144

Jervis, Jill, *Decolonizing Memory: Algeria and the Politics of Testimony* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021)

Joslin, Isaac, ‘Futurité en francosphère: Enjeux du fantastique et de la Science-fiction’, *Oeuvres et critiques,* XLIV,. 2 (2019) <10.2357/OeC-2019-0017> [accessed 6 December 2022]

Kałuża, Maciej, ‘Rethinking Camus's Truce Appeals: Neither Colonizer nor Colonized in Relation to Memmi's Colonial Dichotomy’, *Interventions,* 21. 2 (2019), 219-234

‘Kamel Daoud et les « fantasmes » de Cologne, retour sur une polémique’, *Le Monde*, 19 February 2016, <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/02/20/kamel-daoud-et-les-fantasmes-de-cologne-retour-sur-une-polemique_4868849_3232.html> [accessed 28 July 2020]

‘Kamel Daoud: Meursault contre-enquête ou contre-sens ?’, *L’Internaute,* November 2014 <http://salon-litteraire.linternaute.com/fr/kamel-daoud/review/1909673-kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete-ou-contre-sens> [accessed 10 January 2020]

Kaplan, Alice, ‘Camus Redux: Today, Albert Camus is still alive but changed, thanks to the art of David Oelhoffen and Kamel Daoud’, *The Nation,* 4 Februrary 2015 <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/camus-redux/> [accessed 8 January 2020]

—— *Looking for the Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

—— ‘Making *L’Étrange*r contemporary: Kamel Daoud’s *Meursault, contre-enquête* in Lia Brozgal and Sara Kippur (eds), *Being Contemporary: French Literature, Culture and Politics Today* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

—— ‘Meursault, contre-enquête de Kamel Daoud’, *Contreligne,* June 2014 <http://www.contreligne.eu/2014/06/kamel-daoud-meursault-contre-enquete/> [accessed 8 January 2020]

Khatibi, *Figures de l’étranger dans la littérature française* (Paris: Denoël, 1987)
Khiari, Saad, *Le soleil n’est pas obligé* (Alger: Hibr édition, 2017)

Kilito, Abdelfattah, *Je parle toutes les langues mais en arabe* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2013)

Kirkup, James, ‘Edmond Charlot: Discoverer and Publisher of Camus’, *Guardian UK*, ‘Obituaries’, 20 April 2004 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/edmond-charlot-549790.html> [accessed 25 April 2020]

Kiwan, Nadia, and Jim Wolfreys (eds.), ‘Islamophobia in France’, *Modern & Contemporary France* (special issue), 31.2 (2023)

Labter, Lazhari, *Journalistes algériens entre le bâillon et les balles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1995)

Lacan, Jacques, ‘Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je: telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique*’, Revue française de psychanalyse* (1949), 449-455

Laredj, Waciny, *2084, Hikayat al-arabi al-akhir* (Amman, Jordan: al-Ahlia Publishing, 2016)

Larousse, Virginie, ‘Kamel Daoud : « Il est difficile de s’exprimer sur l’islam quand on est coincé entre islamistes et islamophobes »’, *Le Monde des Religions*, 29 October 2018 <http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/une/kamel-daoud-il-est-difficile-de-s-exprimer-sur-l-islam-quand-on-est-coince-entre-islamistes-et-islamophobes-29-10-2018-7562_115.php> [accessed 8 September 2020]

Leech, Nick, ‘The other Arabian Nights: New Translation of Arab Folktales, 101 Nights’, *National News* (‘Arts and Culture’), 8 September 2016 <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/the-other-arabian-nights-new-translation-of-arab-folk-tales-101-nights-1.232453> [accessed 25 January 2020]

Leeuwen, Richard, *The Thousand and One Nights and Twentieth-century Fiction: Intertextual Readings*, vol. 124, ‘Section 1: The Near and Middle East’ (Leiden; Boston: Brill Publishing, 2018)

Leperlier*,* Tristan, *Algérie, les écrivains dans la décennie noire* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018)

—— ‘Camus et la « littérature algérienne »’, *French Politics, Culture and Society,* 35.3 (2017), 68-90

—— ‘Un champ littéraire transnational ? Le cas des écrivains algériens’, *Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 224 (2018), special issue: ‘Espaces intellectuels transnationaux’, ed. by Gisèle Sapiro, Tristan Leperlier, and Amine Brahimi, 12-35

Lewis, Jonathan, *The Algerian War in French/Algerian Writing: Literary Sites of Memory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018)

Lorek-Jezińska, Edyta, *Hauntology and Intertextuality in Contemporary British Drama by Women Playwrights* (Turán, Poland: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, 2013)

Luckhurst, Roger, ‘The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the “Spectral Turn”’, *Textual Practice,* 16 (2002), 527-546

Makhlouf, Georgia, ‘Edouard Glissant et Patrick Chamoiseau: de la nécessité du poétique en temps de crise’, *L’Orient Littéraire*, 164 (2009)

‘Manifeste des 121: Déclaration sur le droit à l’insoumission dans la guerre d’Algérie’, *Vérité-Liberté,* 6 September, 1960

Manceron, Gilles and Hassan Remaoun, *D’une rive à l’autre: la guerre d’Algérie de la mémoire à l’histoire* (Paris: Syros, 1993)

Marcandier, ‘Christine, Kaouther Adimi: « Cette libraire a une grande histoire » (Nos richesses)’, *Diacritik*, 6 September 2018 <https://diacritik.com/2018/09/06/kaouther-adimi-cette-librairie-a-une-grande-histoire-nos-richesses/> [accessed 25 April 2020]

Mariamou, Siby, ‘Un Paris littéraire sous les yeux d'un Arabe dans le roman de Salim Bachi, *Amours et aventures de Sindbad le Marin’*, *Altre Modernità*: *Rivista di Studi letterari e culturali*, 23 (2020), 1-10. <https://doi.org.10.13130/2035-7680/13389>

Martin, Jacques, ‘Le Spectre de Carthage’*, Aventures d’Alix* 13 (first published in *Tintin* magazine*,* 1976)

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), trans. by Samuel Moore [*Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848)]

Mbembe, Achille, *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l’imagination politique dans l’Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Karthala, 2000, repr. La Découverte, 2020)

—— ‘Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola’, trans. by R. H. Mitsch, *Research in African Literatures,* 34 (2003)

—— ‘Necropolitics’, trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public culture* 15 (2003), pp. 11-40

—— *Politiques de l’inimitié* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016)

McDougall, James, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2017)

——‘Fetishism of Identity: Empire, Nation and the Politics of Subjectivity in Algeria’ in John Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani (eds), *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 49-71

—— *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria: Colonialism, Historical Writing and Islamic Modernism, 1899- 2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

McQueen, Fraser, ‘Zombie Catholicism Meets Zombie Islam: Reading Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission* with Emmanuel Todd’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 56. 2 (2020) 155-176 <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqaa002>

Meagher, David, ‘The Uncanniness of Spectrality’, *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 44. 4 (2011), Special issue: ‘Freud After Derrida’, II, 177-193 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44029575> [accessed 25 January 2021]

Mechaï, Hassina, ‘Kamel Daoud, à l’ombre de Camus’, *Middle East Eye*, 9 April 2015 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/reportages/exclusif-kamel-daoud-l-ombre-de-camus-612863598> [accessed 8 January 2020]

Memmi, Albert, ‘Camus ou le colonisateur de bonne volonté’, *La Nef* ,12 (1957)

Meretoja, Hanna, ‘Narrative and Human Existence: Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics’, *New Literary History,* 45. 1 (2014), 89-109 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542583> [accessed Jan 21 2021]

Mernissi, Fatima, *Sheherazade Goes West*: *Different Cultures, Different Harems* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001)

Mestaoui, Lobna, ‘Le « butin de guerre » camusien, de Kateb Yacine à Kamel Daoud’, *Babel*, 36 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.4000/babel.5002> [accessed 25 April 2020]

Miliani, Hadj, *Une littérature en sursis? Le champ littéraire de langue française en Algérie* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002)

Mokhtari, Rachid, *La Graphie de l'horreur: essai sur la littérature algérienne (1990–2000)* (Algiers: Chihab, 2002)

Mony, Olivier, 'Albert Camus: un anniversaire polémique', *Le Figaro*, 7 November 2013 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2013/11/07/03004-20131107ARTFIG00334-albert-camus-naissait-il-y-a-un-siecle.php> [accessed 9 January, 2020]

Morisi, Ève, *Camus Et L'éthique* (Paris: Rencontres, Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2014)

Mortimer, Robert, 'Boualem Sansal: novelist, polemicist, eulogist', *Journal of North African Studies* 13. 1 (2008), 119-125

Muhawi, Ibrahim, 'The "Arabian Nights" and the Question of Authorship, J*ournal of Arabic Literature*, 36. 3 (2005), 323-337

Mukherjee, Anuparna, 'After the Empire: Narratives of Haunting in the Postcolonial Spectropolis', *South Asian Review*, 40.4 (2019), 271-289 <10.1080/02759527.2019.1604061>

Naddaff, Sandra, 'The Thousand and One Nights as World Literature' in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature,* ed. by David Damrosch, Theo Haen, and Djelal Kadir (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 487- 496

Newman, Sandra, *Julia* (London: Granta Books, 2023)

Oancea, Alexandra, 'Compte rendu : Kaouther Adimi, Nos richesses, Paris, Seuil, 2017', *Revista Cercurilor studenţeşti ale Departamentului de Limba şi Literatura Franceză*, 6 (2017), 129-130, *The Central and Eastern European Online Library* <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=757229> [accessed 27 April 2020]

O'Brien, Conor Cruise, *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* (New York: Viking Publishing, 1970)

Okagbue, Osita, *Culture and Identity in Africa and Caribbean Theatre* (London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd., 2009)

Organisation internationale de la francophonie, 'Qui parle français dans le monde ?', 2022 <https://observatoire.francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-le-monde/>

Orlando, Valérie, 'Conversations with Camus as Foil, Foe and Fantasy in Contemporary Writing by Algerian Authors of French Expression', *Journal of North African Studies,* 20 (2015), 865-83 <10.1080/13629387.2015.1069741>

Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1949; repr. Penguin Modern Classics, 2000)

Ostojic, Zvezdana, 'Le verso de la p(l)age de Camus: intertextualité militante dans *Meursault, contre-enquête'*, *Convergences francophones*, 6.3 (2020), 41-57 <http://mrujs.mtroyal.ca/index.php/cf/index>

Ouldlamara, Ania Kaci, 'Edmond Charlot, reviens la Littérature algérienne a besoin de toi', *Libération : Chroniques algériennes* online, 19 October 2017 <http://chroniques-algeriennes.blogs.liberation.fr/2017/10/19/un-homme-qui-lit-en-vaut-deux/> [accessed 30 April 2020]

Ouyang, Wen-Chin, 'Whose story is it? Sindbad the sailor in literature and film', *Middle Eastern Literatures,* 7.2, (2004), 133-147 <10.1080/136661604200023683> [accessed 21 December 2020]

Owens, Susan, *The Ghost: A Cultural History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2017)

Panaïté, Oana, *Necrofiction and the Politics of Literary Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022)

Parkes, Ruth, 'Dealing with Ghosts: Literary Assertion in Statius' *Thebaid*' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) <http:// doi.org/10.1017/S0048671X00000515>

Picard, Gilbert, *Le monde de Carthage* (Paris: Éditions Buchet/Chastel, 1956)

Pierce, Seth, *A Theory of Spectral Rhetoric: The Word Between the Worlds* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

Pister, Danielle, 'Meursault, contre-enquête: les miroitement d'un texte', *Études littéraires africaines* 39 (2015)

Poteau-Tralie, Mary, 'Fictionalizing Fiction through the Metaphor of (De)Construction in Kamel Daoud's Meursault, contre-enquête', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* 43. 2 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2039>

Puce, Michel, *Edmond Charlot, éditeur* (Paris: Domens, 2015)

Qadiri, Sura, *Postcolonial Fiction and Sacred Scripture: Rewriting the Divine?* (Leeds: Legenda Main Series, 2014)

Rabaté, Jean-Michel, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996)

Rachedi, Mabrouck, '« Nos richesses » : Kaouther Adimi, l'étrangère', *Jeune Afrique*, 15 September 2017 <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/472825/culture/nos-richesses-kaouther-adimi-letrangere/> [accessed 12 March 2020]

Rahal, Malika, *Algérie 1962: Une histoire Populaire* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2022)

—— 'Fused Together and Torn Apart: Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria', *History and Memory*, 24.1 (2012), 118-151

—— 'Impossible Opposition: The Magic of the One-Party Regime', *Jadaliyaa*, 4 November 2013, < https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29730/Impossible-Opposition-The-Magic-of-the-One-Party-Regime> [accessed 9 November 2023]

—— 'Le temps arrêté: Un pays sans histoire. Algérie, 2011-2013', *Écrire l'histoire*, 12 (2013), 27-36

Ratti, Manav, *The Postsecular Imagination: Postcolonialism, Religion, and Literature* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 'Introduction: Situating Postsecularism', 1-32. ProQuest Ebook Central: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1108514 [accessed April 29, 2021]

Rérolle, Raphaëlle, interview with Daoud, 'Kamel Daoud, l'insoumis', ep. 1-5, *France Culture*, Radio France, 29 November 2021-3 December 2021 <franceculture.fr/emissions/serie/kamel-daoud-l-insoumis>

Reynolds, Felisa Vergara, *The Author as Cannibal: Rewriting in Francophone Literature as a Postcolonial Genre 1969-1995* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021)

Rhys, Jean, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: The Trinity Press, 1966)

Ridley, R. T., 'To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt: The Destruction of Carthage', *Classical Philology* 81. 2 (1986), 140–146, JSTOR <www.jstor.org/stable/269786> [accessed 23 March, 2021]

Rimbaud, Arthur, *Une Saison en enfer* (Brussels: Alliance typographique, 1873)

Robinson, Samantha, 'Cyclical History: The Political Basis of Islam as a Centripetal and Centrifugal Force', *Macalester Islam Journal,* 2, 17-27

Rosello, Mireille, *Encontres méditerranéennes: littératures et cultures France-Maghreb* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006)

Rothberg, Michael, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019)

—— *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009)

Roudinesco, Élisabeth, 'Jacques Derrida: spectres de Marx, spectres de Freud' in *Un jour Derrida*, ed. by Valerio Adami et al (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque publique d'information, 2006), 51-60 <http://books.openedition.org/bibpompidou/1376>

Said, Edward, 'Albert Camus, ou l'inconscient colonial', *Le Monde diplomatique,* November 2000, 8-9 <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2000/11/SAID/2555> [accessed 9 January 2020]

'Saint-Yrieix: Kaouther Adimi à la rencontre des lecteurs', *Charente Libre*, 30 May 2012 < https://www.charentelibre.fr/culture-et-loisirs/litterature/saint-yrieix-kaouther-adimi-a-la-rencontre-des-lecteurs-6398577.php> [accessed 12 March 2020]

Salhi, Mohand Akli, and Nabila Sadi, 'Le Roman maghrébin en Berbère', in *The Contemporary 'Roman maghrébin': Aesthetics, Politics, Production 2000–2015*, ed. by Patrick Crowley and Megan MacDonald, special issue of *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 20.1 (2016), pp. 27-36

Sansal, Boualem, *Abraham ou la cinquième Alliance* (Paris: Gallimard, 2020)

—— Sansal, *Dis-moi le Paradis* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003)

—— *Le train d'Erlingen ou la metamorphose de Dieu*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2018)

—— *Lettre d'amitié, de respect et de mise en garde aux peuples et aux nations de la terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2021)

—— *Le village de l'Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008)

—— *Poste Restante: Alger. Lettre de colère et d'espoir à mes compatriotes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)

Schaffauser, Agnès, *Salim Bachi* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020)

Schmitt, Carl, *La dictature*, trans. By Mira Köller and Dominique Séglard (Paris: Seuil, 2000)

Schneider, ‘Rejecting Fear, Resisting Islam’, *Exberliner*, 1 September 2016 <http://www.exberliner.com/features/people/rejecting-fear-resisting-islam/> [accessed 5 February 2023]

Schwenger, Peter, *Fantasm and Fiction: On Textual Envisioning* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999)

Sebbar, Leïla, *Shérazade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts* (Paris: Stock, 1982)

—— *Les carnets de Shérazade* (Paris: Stock, 1985)

—— *Le fou de Shérazade* (Paris: Stock, 1990)

Segarra, Marta, *Nouvelles romancières francophones* (Paris: Karthala, 2010)

Senel, Nese, ‘A Postcolonial reading of Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys’, *Journal of Language and Literature Education,* 11 (2014)

Shakespeare, William, *As You Like It*, ed. by Harold Oliver (London: Penguin Classics, 2015) [First Folio 1623]

—— *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016) [c. 1601]

Shaw, Katy, *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Shelden, Michael, *Orwell: The Authorised Biography* (London: Minerva, 1992)

Silverman, Max, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013)

Slimani, Ismail, ‘2084 – la fin du monde – de Boualem Sansal: un roman-palimpseste ou du Sacré en seconde main’, *Synergies Algérie*, 29 (2021), 121-133

Smith, Jackson, ‘“Entre Deux Histoires”: Unearthing Memory, Identity and Time in Kamel Daoud’s *Meursault, Contre-Enquête*’, *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine* (2019), 136-146

Soyinka, Wole, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976)

Steinmetz, Muriel, interview with Adimi, 'Littérature: Entrée dans Les Vraies Richesses d'Edmond Charlot', *L'Humanité*, 31 August 2017 <https://www.humanite.fr/litterature-entree-dans-les-vraies-richesses-dedmond-charlot-641313> [accessed 27 April 2020]

Stoler, Ann Laura, 'Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France', *Public Culture*, 23 (2011), 121-156

Stora, Benjamin*, France-Algérie: les passions douloureuses* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2021)

—— *La Gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris : La Découverte, 1992)

—— *La Guerre invisible: Algérie, années 90* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2001)

—— *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994)

Strand, Dana, 'Reading Camus in Oran: Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête*', *Contemporary French Civilisation,* 41.3 (2016), 449-460

Swift, Helen, *Gender, Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France, 1440-1538* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Talbayev, Edwige Tamalet, 'Between Nostalgia and Desire: *L'Ecole d'Alger*'s Transnational Identifications and the Case for a Mediterranean Relation', *International Journal of Francophone Studies,* 10.3 (2007), 359–76

—— 'The Languages of Translocality: What Plurilingualism Means in a Maghrebi Context', *Expressions maghrébines,* 11.2 (2012), 9–26

—— *The Transcontinental Maghreb: Francophone Literature across the Mediterranean* (1st edn), *University Press Scholarship Online* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018)

Talley, Catherine, 'The Absurdity of the Aftermath in Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête*', *French Forum*, 45.3 (2020), 295-309. *Project MUSE* <doi:10.1353/frf.2020.0023> [accessed 26 January 2021]

Tanette, Sylvie, interview with Daoud, *Les Inkoruptibles*, 23 Februrary 2017 <https://www.lesinrocks.com/2017/02/23/actualite/actualite/kamel-daoud-publie-chroniques-ne-suis-intellectuel-de-soutien-de-soumission/> [accessed 09 September 2020]

Temlali, Yassin*, La Genèse de la Kabylie: Aux origines de l'affirmation berbère en Algérie (1830-1962)* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2015)

—— ‘Salim Bachi: « un romancier et non un témoin »’, in *Algérie: Chroniques Ciné-Littéraires de Deux Guerres* (Algiers: Barzakh, 2011), 91-100

Toumi, Samir, *L’Effacement* (Algiers: Éditions Barzakh, 2016)

Tournier, Michel, *Le Vent paraclet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977)

Treacy, Corbin, ‘Reading Joyce in Algiers’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 22 (2018), 170-77

—— ‘L’Effet Barzakh’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 20.1 (2016), 76-83

—— ‘2084: La fin du monde', *Journal of North African Studies,* 21.3 (2016), 512-514

Tsobgny, Brigitte, ‘Entretiens avec Boualem Sansal et Yasmina Khadra’, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 25.1 (2021), 42-51 <10.1080/17409292.2021.1865054> [accessed 6 October 2022]

Ulus, Hüseyin Ekrem, ‘Secular Criticism in Dystopia: Time, Space, and Mobility in Boualem’s *2084: La fin du mond*e’, *Neohelicon,* 49 (2022), 403-418

‘Une « fatwa » contre Kamel Daoud’, *Paris Match*, 17 December 2014 <https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Livres/Une-Fatwa-contre-Kamel-Daoud-672278> [accessed 10 January 2020]

Vanney, Philippe, *L'Algérie de Camus* (Paris: Revue Des Lettres Modernes, 2014)

Vince, Natalya, *The Algerian War, The Algerian Revolution* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)

Vurm, Petr, ‘1984-2084. Faux-semblants révélés, émotions refoulées : L’Amour, la haine et l’indifférence à l’âge totalitaire chez George Orwell et Boualem Sansal’, *Philologic,a* 3 (2013), 193-204 <https://doi.org/10.14712/24646830.2018.47>

Walter, Gérard, *La destruction de Carthage* (Paris: A. Michel, 1947)

Warmington, B. H., *Carthage* (London: Pelican Publishing, 1960)

Warner, Marina, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012)

Weidner, Stefan, ‘Kamel Daoud’s novel *Zabor*: Algeria and a patriarch's dying throes’, *Qantara*, 25 April 2019, trans. by Ruth Martin <https://en.qantara.de/content/kamel-

daoud%E2%80%99s-novel-zabor-algeria-and-a-patriarchs-dying-throes?nopaging=1> [accessed 19 November 2021]

Weinstock, Jeffrey (ed.), *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004)

West, Russell, 'Césaire's Bard: Shakespeare and the Performance of Change in Césaire's "Une Tempête"', *Journal of Caribbean Literatures,* 4.3 (2007), 1-16 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40986206> [accessed 17 April 2020]

Whistler, Grace, 'What-It's-Like' for the Other: Narrative Knowledge and Faith in *The Meursault Investigation'*, *Literature and Theology,* 32. 2, (2018), 161–177 <https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/fry005> [accessed 9 September 2020]

Wolfreys, Julian, 'Preface: On Textual Haunting' in *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)

Ya-Chu Yang, Karen, 'Rewriting Canonical Love Stories from the Periphery', *CLC Web: Comparative Literature and Culture,* 15.4 (2013) <http://dx.doi.org/1481-4374.2304>

Zabus, Chantal, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991)

Zaoui, Amin, *Haras de femme* (Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 2001)

Zaretsky, Robert, *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016)

Zerofsky, Elisabeth, 'A Novel Imagines the Life of the Man Who Discovered Camus', *New York Times*, April 28 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/28/books/review/our-riches-kaouther-adimi.html> [accessed 5 May, 2020]