

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AND FICTIONS OF THE 'GREY ZONE' IN JÉRÔME
FERRARI'S *OÙ J'AI LAISSÉ MON ÂME* (2010)

Abstract

This article considers Jérôme Ferrari's 2010 novel *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* to examine the currency of the 'grey zone' in recent memory studies. I argue that the proliferation of comparative and transnational accounts of remembrance has coincided with a re-examination of memorial ethics, which has called into question the productivity of victim-identification and produced approaches that seek to accommodate moral complexity. Ferrari's novel follows a parallel ambition in relating the transformation of a former fighter of the French Resistance into a perpetrator of colonial violence during the Algerian War of Independence. The moral 'grey zone' — a notion derived from Primo Levi's Holocaust testimony — offers an appealing way of grappling with such an unsettling of ethical positions across situations of extreme historical violence. However, Ferrari's text also demonstrates that the concept is vulnerable to misappropriations, which present the continuous circulation of victim- and perpetrator-positions as quasi-inevitable and flatten the ethical terrain on which violence plays out. Ultimately, *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* invites its reader to understand the 'grey zone' as a deliberately deceptive form of fiction, highlighting links between remembrance and representation and suggesting the need to approach history itself with a literary-critical eye.

Où j'ai laissé mon âme (2010) de Jérôme Ferrari met en relief l'actualité de la notion de 'zone grise' dans les études mémorielles. L'avènement de méthodologies transnationales et comparées a conduit à un ré-examen de l'éthique mémorielle, notamment à travers le dépassement de l'identification à la victime et la recherche d'une véritable complexité morale. Le roman de Ferrari poursuit une ambition parallèle, retraçant la transformation d'un

ancien héros de la Résistance en bourreau de la guerre d'Algérie. La notion de 'zone grise' morale, issue du témoignage que Primo Lévi livra de la Shoah, semble permettre de tenir compte d'un tel bouleversement éthique. Cependant, le texte de Ferrari montre que le concept peut aussi être détourné et mis au service d'une logique fataliste qui représente comme inévitable le passage de la position de victime à celle de bourreau et aplatit le terrain éthique sur lequel la violence se joue. Ainsi, *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* indique que la 'zone grise' mémorielle doit être reconnue en tant que fiction. Le roman met en évidence le rapport entre mémoire et représentation et encourage ses lecteurs à rencontrer l'histoire elle-même à travers un regard de critique littéraire.

Introduction: the 'grey zone' in recent memory studies

In the last two decades, the field of memory studies has undergone a far-reaching transformation, described by Debarati Sanyal as a shift 'from memory contained to memory unbound, from national frames to worldwide itineraries'.¹ Classic accounts such as Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire*, which sought to establish a homogeneous and clearly bounded 'inventaire' of memory sites on the basis of a stipulated national consciousness, have been called into question in light of new social realities shaped by globalization, mass migration, and increasing cultural heterogeneity.² Responding to these changes, a new generation of memory scholars has sought to extend frames of analysis beyond the national arena and trace

¹ Debarati Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 5.

² Pierre Nora, 'Présentation', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by id., 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92), I (1984), VII–XIII (p. VII).

the circulation of ‘global’ or ‘transnational’ memories across different settings and communities.³

Within this new wave of scholarship, the relationship of Holocaust and colonial memories has proved both an especially dynamic and a uniquely contested area of enquiry. Michael Rothberg’s 2009 monograph *Multidirectional Memory* provided a key impulse in arguing that a productive interaction between these memory discourses can be traced back to the period of decolonization immediately after the end of the Second World War. A significant part of Rothberg’s study is dedicated to transitions in French public discourse around 1960, which saw a first wave of public Holocaust remembrance coincide with the culmination of the Algerian War of Independence. At this key moment, he contends, memories of National Socialism provided a crucial historical precedent for an anti-colonial critique of state violence and notably, of the widespread use of torture by the French military in Algeria. At the same time, the colonial question invested Holocaust remembrance with a sense of political urgency, raising interest in survivor testimonies and contributing to the emergence of the Holocaust witness as a public figure.⁴ To Rothberg’s mind, this ‘cross-referencing’ demonstrates the

³ See e.g. *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. by Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin, Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2014).

⁴ See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 2–7 and 175–262. See also the 2010 special issue which proposes ‘noeuds [sic] de mémoire’ as a counter-image to Nora’s ‘lieux de mémoire’: *Noeuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French*

ethical potential of ‘multidirectional memory’, which consists in the creation of ‘new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice’ between apparently disparate communities and historical settings.⁵

Running counter to the moral enthusiasm which marks these new theories of inter-memorial encounter, however, existing historiographies of public remembrance in France have continued to show that memories relating to National Socialism on the one hand, and to colonialism on the other, have led an eminently uneasy coexistence throughout the post-war decades. Henry Rousso’s *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987) includes the Algerian War of Independence as ‘un rejeu de la guerre franco-française’ between collaborating and Resistance forces, but he at once emphasizes that the recourse to the Occupation was by no means exclusive to partisans of Algerian independence. If the radically pro-colonial OAS (Organisation armée secrète) was able to proclaim itself a new Resistance and compare De Gaulle’s alleged betrayal of French Algeria to Pétain’s capitulation in 1940, Rousso demonstrates, the Second World War offered a potentially treacherous ‘miroir composite’ of the French-Algerian present.⁶ Published the same year, Pierre Vidal-Naquet’s *Les Assassins de la mémoire* describes a similar, quasi-universal instrumentalization of the memory of the Shoah: ‘[L]a Shoah sert à tout’, he notes, being invoked by Zionists and anti-Zionists, by

and Francophone Culture, ed. by Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Maxim Silverman (= special issue of *Yale French Studies*, 118–19 (2010)).

⁵ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 3, 5.

⁶ Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1987, repr. 1990), p. 111. See pp. 103-11.

conservative anti-communists and progressive advocates of decolonization alike.⁷ Expanding on these axes of comparison, Robert Frank further points to the First Indochina War, which covered almost the entire interim between the Second World War and the Algerian War of Independence; and yet, seems truly ‘oubliée’, fading even behind the Algerian ‘guerre taboue’ in remembrance discourses which are ‘souvent en retard d’une guerre’.⁸ As Benjamin Stora and others have shown, finally, the ‘guerre des mémoires’ which resulted from the diverging interpretations of these conflicts and their relationship to each other, has continued into the twenty-first century, where the still-potent desire for a unified French national memory has coincided with growing anti-immigrant sentiment and fears regarding a splintering of remembrance along the lines of ethnicity and religion.⁹

Given these ongoing contestations, it is highly welcome that more recent contributions in transnational memory studies have tended to nuance some of the more sweeping claims regarding the ethical productivity of inter-memorial comparison. Sanyal’s above-cited 2015 monograph *Memory and Complicity* and Rothberg’s own, more recent work

⁷ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Les Assassins de la mémoire: ‘Un Eichmann de papier’ et autres essais sur le révisionnisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987), p. 162. See also pp. 167, 166–80.

⁸ Robert Frank, ‘Les Troubles de la mémoire française’, in *La Guerre d’Algérie et les Français: colloque de l’Institut d’histoire du temps présent*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 603–07 (p. 604).

⁹ See Benjamin Stora and Thierry Leclère, *La guerre des mémoires: la France face à son passé colonial* (La Tour d’Aigues: Aube, 2007), p. 50. See also *Les Guerres de mémoires: la France et son histoire, enjeux politiques, controverses historiques, stratégies médiatiques*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

on the ‘implicated subject’ thus acknowledge that the stakes of memory are fundamentally changed when it takes place on an ethically uneven terrain.¹⁰

Encounters between the memories of historical victims, perpetrators, and those in between, as well as of the subjects of ‘postmemory’ who position themselves as heirs to such roles, have become the focus of this new strand of criticism.¹¹ Institutionalized forms of remembrance, both Sanyal and Rothberg lament, too often operate through identifications with history’s victims, which tend to reduce the ethical complexity of the links which tie societies, especially in the ‘West’, to past instances of violence. Citing slogans from the 1968 student movement’s ‘Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands’ to the claim ‘Je suis Charlie’ which circulated after the 2015 terror attacks on the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, Rothberg highlights risks of ‘over-identification and appropriation’ in memory discourse.¹² Sanyal in turn speaks of instances ‘where identification leads to appropriation’, referencing, among others, a policy proposed by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008, which intended to have every French primary school student adopt the memory of one of the Jewish children deported from France during the Occupation.¹³ These forms of identificatory rhetoric, Sanyal and Rothberg highlight, are harmful insofar as they dilute the experiences of specific historical actors or

¹⁰ Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

¹¹ On ‘postmemory’, see Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1997) and *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, NY; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2012).

¹² Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*, pp. 3, 5.

¹³ Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 2.

minority groups in order to assure the social mainstream of its own moral righteousness — and obscure, by contrast, the ways in which the latter may be ‘complicit’ or ‘implicated’ in the structures that allowed violence to occur in the first place.

In seeking to move beyond victim-identification and envisage forms of memory which accommodate a greater degree of ethical complexity, both Sanyal and Rothberg refer to Primo Levi’s writings on the ‘grey zone’ in Nazi concentration camps. In his 1986 testimony *The Drowned and the Saved*, the Italian-Jewish chemist, writer, and Auschwitz survivor described the existence of a zone ‘with ill-defined outlines which both separate and join the two camps of masters and servants’ within the concentrationary system’.¹⁴ A complex hierarchy of prisoner-functionaries, he elaborates, was established by the SS command in an ‘attempt to shift on to others — specifically the victims — the burden of guilt’.¹⁵ As violence moved down the ranks within the camp, ethical boundaries were blurred, the prisoners’ moral sense of self was eroded, and their capacity for resistance diminished. Levi’s description of a football game between teams representing the SS and the SK — the *Sonderkommando* [special command] of prisoners charged with operating the camp crematoria — encapsulates this logic. On the playing field, which appears as a microcosm of the camp at large, the very distinction between victims and perpetrators is temporarily rendered invisible, binding both teams together on an apparently equal moral footing and making them resemble each other by way of mimetic identification.¹⁶

¹⁴ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988, repr. London: Abacus, 1989), p. 27.

¹⁵ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 37.

¹⁶ See Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 38.

As Sanyal outlines, Levi's first-hand account of the 'grey zone' has become a powerful model for theories of intergenerational trauma and testimony. Studies such as Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1998) drew on Levi's model of ethical ambivalence to envisage subsequent generations' indirect relationship to the Holocaust, positing them both as second-hand victims in the experience of trauma and as 'complicit' in the ongoing perpetuation of structures said to resemble the 'grey zone' in the present.¹⁷ In his own reading of the football game in Auschwitz, Agamben depicts life under capitalism as a 'grey zone' of its own, which produces power relations so volatile, dispersed, and depersonalized as to make victim- and perpetrator-positions within the system increasingly impossible to distinguish.¹⁸

In making the 'grey zone' an 'eternal cipher' for 'everyday life' in the present, however, Sanyal argues, thinkers like Agamben make a crucial mistake. They neglect the fact that Levi's original account marks the apparent 'reciprocity' of victim- and perpetrator-positions as 'false', a 'fiction' which is designed to obscure the actual, extremely stratified

¹⁷ Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 26.

¹⁸ '[T]hat match is never over; it continues as if uninterrupted. It is the perfect and eternal cipher of the "gray zone," which knows no time and is in every place. Hence the anguish and shame of the survivors [...]. But also hence our shame, the shame of those who did not know the camps and yet, without knowing how, are spectators of that match, which repeats itself in every match in our stadiums, in every television broadcast, in the normalcy of everyday life', Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Rozen (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1999), p. 26. See Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, pp. 30–31.

distribution of power, violence, and guilt in the camp.¹⁹ Thus, the SS and SK's meeting on a level playing field during the football game does not correspond to a situation of actual moral parity. Quite the contrary, the terms of the game are designed by the SS precisely to obfuscate the extreme coercion and constant threat of extermination which affects the SK alone.

Referring to his own captivity, Levi asserts:

The mimesis, this identification or imitation, or exchange of roles between oppressor and victim, has provoked much discussion. [...] I do not know, and it does not interest me much to know, whether in my depths there lurks a murderer, but I do know that I was a guiltless victim and I was not a murderer.²⁰

Mobilizing a term that ordinarily denotes the imitative representation of reality in literature or art, Levi employs 'mimesis' to distinguish between the deceptive version of reality projected by the Nazi guards — according to which victims and perpetrators resemble each other — and the truthful account he himself seeks to give of the highly stratified and coercive distribution of moral agency within the camp. In seeking to assimilate Levi's account to the conditions of contemporary life, however, scholars like Agamben ignore this crucial distinction. Reading a fiction of reciprocity as fact, they suggest an *actual* interchangeability of victim- and perpetrator-positions and uncritically accept the mimetic distortions which Levi's testimony originally set out to deconstruct.

In *The Implicated Subject*, Rothberg clearly seeks to avoid a wholesale assimilation of the 'grey zone' to contemporary life, envisaging Levi's work instead as a model for thinking on an ethical 'continuum between victims and perpetrators', which does *not*, for that matter,

¹⁹ Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, pp. 36, 31.

²⁰ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 32.

fall into moral ‘relativism’.²¹ The uniquely problematic role played by mimesis in the ‘grey zone’, however, is not addressed by Rothberg, who therefore omits that deceptive mechanisms of representation exist precisely to obscure the moral spectrum he seeks to chart.

This article, on the other hand, argues that a critical attention to these mechanisms is essential to an understanding of how complex historical violence might be conveyed in narrative — and thereby, of the specific contribution which literature can make to contemporary practices of remembrance. By contrast with Sanyal, I do not understand these distortions to be due primarily to ruptures between first- and second- or third-generation memories. Drawing on Jérôme Ferrari’s novel *Où j’ai laissé mon âme* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2010) — a text which was published by a ‘postmemorial’ author but focuses on first-hand experiences of violence —, I instead envisage them as evidence of challenges which affect the fictional rendering of historical violence more widely, owing to the uniquely problematic status of literature as a medium that itself operates through mimetic processes.

Où j’ai laissé mon âme forms part of a growing corpus of contemporary French and Francophone texts, including Assia Djebar’s *Les Nuits de Strasbourg* (1997), Boualem Sansal’s *Le Village de l’Allemand* (2008), Maïssa Bey’s *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* (2010), Alexis Jenni’s *L’Art français de la guerre* (2011), Anouar Benmalek, *Fils du Shéol* (2015), and Joseph Andras’s *De nos frères blessés* (2016), which engage with these legacies in conjunction. Within this field of texts, Ferrari’s contribution proves particularly productive insofar as it centres its attention on the ethically ambivalent individual positionalities at stake in these encounters.

In so doing, I will begin by demonstrating, the novel effectively probes the ethical stakes of ‘multidirectional memory’. Its outlook hinges on the specific trajectory of the

²¹ Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*, pp. 40–41.

principal protagonist, who occupies both victim- and perpetrator-positions at different points in his life. The protagonist's participation in the French military's use of torture during the Algerian War of Independence, which is at the heart of the novel's main strand of narration, is shot through with memories of his previous victimization under the Nazi Occupation of France. In seeking to grapple with the contradictions of his biography, I will continue, the protagonist invokes a version of the moral 'grey zone', which is figured both as the site of his own corruption and as the catalyst of ever-proliferating cycles of violence. Though this account initially seems to offer a way of integrating moral complexity, its consequences prove troubling insofar as they allow the continuous circulation of victim- and perpetrator-positions to appear as a matter of quasi-mechanistic necessity; and yet, this perspective in the novel is not allowed to stand for itself, as the protagonist's testimony is interspersed with that of a secondary narrator who, at a later point in history, calls into question the protagonist's version of events. Ultimately, therefore, the reader of *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* is left with a highly self-conscious, hybrid testimonial account, which will allow me to conclude in highlighting the moral 'grey zones' which are produced in the very act of representing complexly layered historical violence in literature.

Où j'ai laissé mon âme between victim-identification and complicity

Captain André Degorce, the protagonist of Ferrari's *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*, is a devout Catholic. As a secondary school student in German-occupied France, he joins a Resistance network. He is soon captured by the Gestapo, tortured, and deported to Buchenwald. Having survived the concentration camp, he becomes an officer in the French army and, in this function, comes to serve the declining French Empire in the post-war years. After an initial deployment to Indochina, where he is imprisoned in a communist re-education camp, he ends by participating in the French army's use of torture during the Algerian War of Independence.

The main strand of narration in the novel provides a meticulous account of this episode, retracing just three days of Degorce's deployment to Algeria in March 1957. Set on the premises of the Saint-Eugène villa, one of the French military's notorious torture prisons in Algiers, it places the violence of French colonialism centre stage, highlights the protagonist's intensifying feelings of guilt, and retraces his loss of faith in the face of his own moral corruption.

While Degorce is placed at the heart of narrative interest, however, the reader's access to his perspective is far from straightforward. The account of the three days in 1957 is filtered through an extradiegetic third-person narration, with Degorce's first-person perspective appearing only in fragments, which are placed in parentheses, set in italics, and therefore separated from the main body of the text: 'Il essaie de penser à tous ceux dont la vie a été sauvée [...]. (*On ne peut pas compter les vies sauvées, on ne peut compter que les morts. Je suis si fatigué de compter les morts. Mon impuissance est sans limites*)' (pp. 34–35). What is more, the main narrative is framed by and interspersed with a belated secondary testimony, which provides a radically different version of events. On a return visit to Algiers in the mid-1990s, at the height of the Algerian Civil War, the Corsican lieutenant Horace Andreani recalls his relationship with the captain, whom he used to love and admire. 'Je me souviens de vous, mon capitaine' (p. 11), he begins his testimony, which is formulated as a series of second-person monologues addressed to the absent Degorce. The two men bonded over shared experiences, as Andreani, too, had resisted the Nazi Occupation, served in Indochina, and been imprisoned in the same re-education camp before becoming part of Degorce's unit in Algeria. Unlike the captain, however, the lower-ranking Andreani has remained a staunch imperialist, who does not regret the acts of torture he committed and dismisses Degorce's moral qualms as signs of weakness.

The asymmetrical interplay of the two characters' perspectives structures the work's engagement with multiple moments, sites, and scales of historical violence — an endeavour which is mirrored by the novel's own position within Ferrari's wider work. *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* forms the central volume of a loosely organized trilogy, whose other two tomes, *Balco Atlantico* (2008) and *Le Sermon sur la chute de Rome* (2012) concern the independence movement in Ferrari's native Corsica and its impact on social and economic tensions affecting the island today.²² Incorporating references to Andreani and Degorce, who is married to a Corsican woman, and retracing the lives of their descendants, the other two works strengthen the sense that violence reproduces itself across multiple settings and generations while taking on ever-new, insidious forms.

Despite the sustained nature of the author's engagement with historical violence, however, the pertinence of his writing to current memory studies has only partially been explored. Existing secondary literature frequently mentions memory as a *leitmotif* of Ferrari's work,²³ and a 2018 article by Timo Obergöker has read *Le Sermon sur la chute de Rome* in light of Max Silverman's thinking on the memorial 'palimpsest' and Rothberg's

²² Jérôme Ferrari, *Balco Atlantico* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2008) and *Le Sermon sur la chute de Rome* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012).

²³ For André-Alain Morello, it is the oscillation between memory and forgetting which structures Ferrari's *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*. See 'Histoires de soldats: Jérôme Ferrari et Alexis Jenni', in *Chutes, ruptures et philosophie: les romans de Jérôme Ferrari* ed. by Sarah Burnautzki and Cornelia Ruhe (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018), pp. 183–95 (p. 186). See also, in the same volume, Marine Miquel, 'Histoire, espace et structure dans les romans de Jérôme Ferrari', pp. 19–33, and Florence Lhote, "'Le mal sous l'apparence du bien": *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* de Jérôme Ferrari', pp. 81–95.

‘multidirectional memory’.²⁴ The specific interest of *Où j’ai laissé mon âme* to this field of theory, however, remains to be examined.

Its significance emerges in relation to the controversies which marked French memory politics at the turn of the millennium. In 1999, after decades of political amnesia, the French government had reluctantly recognized that what had thus far been referred to euphemistically as ‘événements’ or ‘opérations’ in Algeria was in fact, a war, and officialized the use of the term ‘guerre d’Algérie’.²⁵ This belated acknowledgement, however, did not reconcile the perspectives which different ‘implicated’ groups adopted towards the conflict, with controversies crystallizing, for example, around the official commemoration of 19 March — the date of the Evian Accords —, the status of *harki* and *pied-noir* communities, and the alleged ‘positive’ role of French colonization, which Sarkozy’s government attempted to sign into law in February 2005.²⁶

Ferrari has explicitly situated *Où j’ai laissé mon âme* in relation to these debates, emphasizing, notably, that the text was written in response to Patrick Rotman’s *L’Ennemi intime* (2002) — a three-part documentary compiling oral testimonies of French soldiers and

²⁴ Timo Obergöker, ‘*Le Sermon sur la chute de Rome, une poétique de l’enracinement*’, in *Chutes, ruptures et philosophie* ed. by Burnautzki and Ruhe, pp. 133–47 (p. 143).

²⁵ ‘Loi n° 99–882 du 18 octobre 1999 relative à la substitution, à l’expression “aux opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord”, de l’expression “à la guerre d’Algérie ou aux combats en Tunisie et au Maroc”’, <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000578132>>.

²⁶ After intense protest, the article which contained this formulation was removed from the final version of the law. ‘Loi n° 2005–158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés’, <<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000444898/>>.

officers who participated in the Algerian War of Independence.²⁷ Crucially, Rotman's feature includes an episode that relates the capture and murder of Mohamed Larbi Ben M'Hidi, the head of FLN (Front de libération nationale) operations during the Battle of Algiers, thus providing the central plot line of *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*.²⁸

At the same time, Degorce's experiences under the Occupation invest the novel with a transtemporal dimension, which calls into question the positive normative value which France has tended to derive from a victim-centred memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust. In the text, France's colonial crimes thus appear all the more scandalous because they are perpetrated in part by former Resistance heroes and, in Degorce's case, by a concentration camp survivor, undermining the moral exemplarity which these figures are ordinarily ascribed. Ferrari's approach may therefore be described as 'multidirectional' insofar as the different historical layers in the novel are 'cross-referenced' in a way which

²⁷ Patrick Rotman, *L'Ennemi intime* (France 3, 2002). Rotman's film itself forms part of a wider wave of cinema and TV features engaging with the Algerian War of Independence and other colonial histories in the early 2000s. See Benjamin Stora, 'La guerre d'Algérie: la mémoire par le cinéma' and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, 'Les Guerres de mémoires à la télévision: du dévoilement à l'accompagnement', both in *Les Guerres de mémoires*, ed. by Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson, pp. 262–72 and 273–86. Stora's article discusses an identically named fictional cinema adaptation of *L'Ennemi intime*, which was directed by Florent-Emilio Siri and released in 2007 (see pp. 268–69).

²⁸ Sara Leulmi discusses Ferrari's engagement with Rotman's work at length in 'Histoire, mémoire, fiction et deuil dans *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* de Jérôme Ferrari', *Synergies Algérie*, 24 (2017), 163–74 (pp. 164–65). Note also the novel's dedication to Jean-Yves Templon, one of Rotman's interviewees.

allows them to acquire an explicit political charge, contravening official efforts in France to preserve a unified and morally edifying image of the nation's past.

However, the novel simultaneously poses certain challenges for the 'multidirectional' model, given that the principal protagonist himself repeatedly fails to make consistent ethical choices based on his own previous experiences of victimization. Indeed, the very first evocation of Degorce's own torture at the hands of the Gestapo in the novel serves a deliberate and indeed, highly cynical purpose: Tasked with interrogating Abdelkrim Aït Kaci, a fictional FLN fighter who is dismissively referred to by his ethnicity as the 'Kabyle' and has already undergone torture at the hands of Degorce's men, the captain decides that the most prudent way of approaching his prisoner is not through further acts of brutality but by conveying a deceptive sense of empathy. Having sat down opposite him on the prison floor, he begins:

Vous avez été très courageux, vous savez. Mes hommes sont tous très impressionnés, vraiment. Ils vous respectent beaucoup. De toute façon, c'est terminé, maintenant, le sergent a dû vous le dire. Nous ne sommes pas des sauvages. Tout le monde sait que vous ne direz rien, on n'insiste pas, à quoi bon? Je suis très admiratif. (pp. 31–32)

Having handed the prisoner a cigarette, he adds:

Admiratif, vraiment [...]. Vous savez, j'y suis passé aussi, en 1944, je sais de quoi je parle. (p. 32)

Through Degorce's strategic confession, the use of torture emerges as a point of comparison between National Socialism and French colonialism, constituting an experience which he supposedly shares with the 'Kabyle'. As Rothberg and others have demonstrated, the publication of testimonies of torture such as Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958) during the Algerian War of Independence recalled the German Occupation, producing 'multidirectional'

memories that helped catalyze the French Left's opposition to the war effort.²⁹ The use of the same analogies by a *perpetrator* of torture, however, provides a troubling inversion of this argument, which emphasizes that the ethical productivity of inter-memorial comparison as a vector of 'solidarity' or 'justice' is not to be taken for granted.³⁰

Instead, the scene appears as a particularly troubling example of an 'over-identification' with historical victims, which is central to more recent theorizations of 'complicated' or 'implicated' remembrance. Whereas Sanyal and Rothberg primarily focus on the currency of victim-identification among individuals and groups with indirect, mediated or inherited ties to the perpetration of past violence, Ferrari's novel shows it to work in direct conjunction with the instruments of physical torture in the very situation in which violence occurs. The obvious moral duplicity of Degorce's attempts to sympathize with the man whose suffering he himself has authored, in this sense, may be viewed as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the wider social currency which identificatory engagements with historical violence have enjoyed.

At the same time, Degorce's case is interesting precisely because his identification with the 'Kabyle' — selective and manipulative though it may be — is *not* unfounded, as he truly did undergo the extremes of physical torture when he was interrogated by the Gestapo in 1944. The traumatic impact of these experiences becomes more apparent as the narrative progresses. It is catalyzed by Degorce's relationship with the most important one of his prisoners, 'Tahar', the head of the FLN resistance network in Algiers, who is captured thanks

²⁹ See Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 192–94.

³⁰ Note also the use of the term 'sauvages', which operates an analogous inversion of the colonial rhetoric designating indigenous populations as *savages*.

to the information obtained from the captain's interrogation of the 'Kabyle' and can be recognized as a fictionalized Ben M'Hidi.

Tahar's questioning, which takes place on the second day narrated in the novel, begins with the same routine admission that Degorce himself was arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo (see pp. 79–80, 83). In what follows, however, the captain gradually loses control of the interrogation:

[P]our la première fois, les mots le renvoient dans les locaux de la Gestapo de Besançon où deux hommes dont il a oublié les visages, mais pas l'odeur de tabac et d'eau de Cologne, tournent lentement autour de lui en retroussant leurs manches avec un soin extrême dans la chaleur du mois de juin. (p. 80)

Counterpointing the cursory and strictly strategic references to 1944 in Degorce's interaction with the 'Kabyle', a sudden proliferation of sensory details — smell, heat, an acute awareness of the torturers' and his own positions in space — indicates an involuntary re-emergence of memory, which transports Degorce back to Besançon and, immediately thereafter, to his ten months in Buchenwald concentration camp.

Feeling the traumatic impact of these memories and simultaneously recalling how he abused them in previous interrogations, Degorce first verbalizes the full extent of his transformation from victim to perpetrator at this point:

[I]l a maintenant la certitude absurde et intolérable qu'il n'a été arrêté à dix-neuf ans que pour apprendre comment accomplir une mission qu'on lui confierait en Algérie, treize ans plus tard. Mais cela, il ne peut pas le dire à Tahar. (p. 83)

Contrasting with the rhetoric of victim-identification he adopted previously, Degorce is now able to recognize the ethical contradictions of his biography, managing to hold together both the resemblance of forms which connects National Socialism and the Algerian War of

Independence and the stark ethical differences which separate his respective positions in both settings.

At the same time, this new recognition spawns a problematic sense of teleology. Retrospectively reassessing his previous victimization in light of his new role as perpetrator, Degorce claims that he must have undergone the former *in order to* become the latter. According to this logic, we note, his guilt would simultaneously be extended *ad infinitum*, encompassing even the moment of his most innocent suffering, and erased altogether, as Degorce suggests that he really had no other choice but to follow the path that was prescribed for him. On a practical level, this claim is obviously and perversely true, as the experience of the Gestapo cell, quite literally, equipped him with knowledge of the physical and psychological techniques of torture which he employs in Algeria. On an ethical plane, however, the continuity appears deeply *absurd*, as any conventional understanding of morality would presuppose that Degorce's Christian faith, his participation in the Resistance, and his first-hand experience of the horrors of Nazism should *prevent* him from inflicting similar extremes of violence on others. The attempt to deal with this unbearable dissonance, I will argue in what follows, prompts Degorce to develop a new account of morality under the sign of the 'grey zone'.

Good and evil blurred: Degorce's vision of the 'grey zone'

In the same scene which evokes his transformation from victim into perpetrator as a matter of teleological necessity, Degorce visualizes his memories of Buchenwald concentration camp as 'une immense steppe grisâtre qui coupe sa vie en deux et le sépare à jamais du continent perdu de sa jeunesse' (p. 83). Pictured simultaneously as a sheer-infinite expanse and as an utterly singular point of division, the camp occupies a paradoxical space within the protagonist's biography, constituting both an inassimilable breaking point in his life *and* the

necessary precondition for his present-day desolation. As Claudia Jünke's reading of the novel has shown, this evocation can be considered a direct reference to Levi's account of the 'grey zone' — an impression which is confirmed as the *greyness* of Degorce's worldview becomes a recurring theme throughout the second half of the text.³¹

Shaken by their first encounter, Degorce returns to Tahar's cell several times over, sharing his meals, attempting to make the prisoner understand his perspective, and even planning on paying his respects by arranging for Tahar to receive military honours on the day of his extradition to France (see p. 105). The following morning, on the third and final day narrated in the novel, however, Degorce learns that Tahar died of a 'suicide' staged by a group of soldiers which included his old comrade from Indochina, Andreani. The news of these events plunge the protagonist into despair. In one of the rare instances where he obtains a first-person voice, he drafts a letter to his wife Jeanne-Marie, which envisages Tahar's death as the culmination of his personal crisis of faith:

S'il m'était donné de le croiser à nouveau, je le reconnaîtrais, quel que soit son visage, je le reconnaîtrais et je saurais quoi faire. Car j'ai aussi appris que le mal n'est pas l'opposé du bien: les frontières du bien et du mal sont brouillées, ils se mêlent l'un à l'autre et deviennent indiscernables dans la morne grisaille qui recouvre tout et c'est cela, le mal. Et j'ai appris que l'esprit de la logique exsangue ne peut rien sans le secours de l'âme, il ne peut qu'errer sans fin dans la brume grise, perdu entre le bien et le mal, et moi, Jeanne-Marie, j'ai laissé mon âme quelque part derrière moi, je ne me rappelle ni où ni quand. (p. 149)

³¹ See Claudia Jünke, 'Continuité et ruptures: passé violent et conception de l'histoire dans *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* et *Le Sermon sur la chute de Rome* de Jérôme Ferrari', in *Chutes, ruptures et philosophie*, ed. by Burnautzki and Ruhe, pp. 51–79 (p. 57).

Through a series of highly synthetic biblical metaphors, Degorce turns Tahar, his victim, into a Christ-like figure who, in the most immediate sense possible, has died for his sins. Degorce in turn appears as Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, as Pontius Pilate, who condemned the Christ, and as one of the disciples who failed to recognize Him on the road to Emmaus (see pp. 147–49). Having framed his experience in these terms, he feels that the right course of action lies plainly before him; yet, as Cornelia Ruhe has emphasized, Degorce’s Christology contains no eschatological hope, no vision of expiation or resurrection.³²

The devastated moral landscape that is left behind by this collapse of Christian ethics closely recalls Degorce’s previous description of Buchenwald concentration camp. The ‘steppe grisâtre’ which characterized the memory of his captivity is thus reflected in the ‘morne grisaille’ of the present, the ‘brume grise’ of Degorce’s moral disorientation, and the paradigmatic greyness of a world where the limits of good and evil are ‘brouillées’ — the latter term itself being notable for its semantic proximity to *brouillard*. The moment at which the irretrievable loss of his soul occurred, moreover, is situated at an intractable moment in the past, which lies beyond the reaches of the protagonist’s conscious mind. It thus acquires a characteristically traumatic structure, which both points back to Degorce’s original violation at the hands of the Nazis and envisages his actions in Algeria as a traumatic return of these events. The experience of trauma and the metaphors of the ‘grey zone’, therefore, work hand in hand in reinforcing the sense that the violence which Degorce suffered in the past and that which he inflicts on others in the present are tragically connected.

³² See Cornelia Ruhe, ‘La lâcheté, l’obscène et le sacré: représenter et transmettre la violence chez Jérôme Ferrari’, in *La mémoire des conflits dans la fiction française contemporaine* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill-Rodopi, 2020), pp. 107–43 (p. 122).

As references to the ‘grey zone’ multiply in Degorce’s account, however, one might question whether the adoption of this model is faithful to the intentions of Levi’s testimony. Indeed, as has been shown above, Levi’s description of the ‘grey zone’ is characterized by the fact that he does *not* adopt an attitude of moral relativism, which would contend that good and evil do not exist. Rather, he seeks to denounce the nefarious *fiction* of an amoral space within a situation of historical violence that is in fact marked by a highly uneven distribution of moral agency. Degorce’s use of Holocaust memory in Algeria, therefore, may be considered not a faithful reflection but yet another misrepresentation of Levi’s original testimony, which parallels the shortcomings of philosophical responses like Agamben’s.

Considering the realities of Degorce’s biography, indeed, one might say that his experiences under the Occupation and in the Algerian War of Independence have remained largely outside the purview of the ‘grey zone’, given that they were situated at opposite extremes of the spectrum between victims and perpetrators, marked by utter coercion in the first case, absolute power and its abuse in the latter. Degorce’s experiences in Indochina, by contrast, could have featured as an episode marked by genuine moral complexity, during which the captain inflicted violence as part of a colonial occupying force but also became the victim of another totalitarian constellation during his imprisonment by the Chinese- and Soviet-backed Viet Minh; yet, remarkably little attention is afforded to this period, which could have offered a crucial hinge between Degorce’s respective positions in 1944 and 1957.

Instead of attempting to explore a nuanced evolution of his moral position over time, it therefore seems, Degorce is interested only in showing its greatest extremes, which lend themselves more easily to the claim that history is cyclical, its moral reversals pre-ordained and ineluctable. In this respect, his rhetoric fails to move past the cynical levelling through which he previously sought to assimilate the position of the ‘Kabyle’ and continues to uphold the dangerous illusion that victims and perpetrators occupy the same moral ground.

In both instances, ethical contradictions inherent in the protagonist's outlook emerge as vectors of what Levi identified as the 'grey zone's' most treacherous feature — its structuring by mimetic processes. Mimesis, we recall in this context, is to be understood not as a straightforward representation of a pre-existing reality. Rather, it constitutes the use of tools that are ordinarily associated with literary fiction for the purpose of *constructing* a version of reality which is deliberately deceptive. In situations of extreme violence and coercion, these tools are at the disposal of those in power alone. In the first-person accounts Degorce provides while interrogating his tellingly silent prisoners, as well as in the narrativization of this scene in his aborted written testimony to his wife, he is shown to wield this power, creating the *fiction* of a moral 'grey zone' which offers a powerful and deliberately deceptive instrument of self-exculpation and control.

Resisting these mimetic shortcuts, Degorce's case suggests, precisely does *not* mean to 'think[] paradigmatically about the past', as Rachel Mihuta Grimm contends in her reading of *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* through the lens of Agamben's 'state of exception'.³³ Rather, it

³³ As Sanyal outlines, Agamben's thinking on the 'state of exception', in which torture is normalized, parallels his use of Levi's concept of the 'grey zone'. Envisaging the state's powers to suspend its own laws, Agamben posits the most extreme case of state-sanctioned violence as the secret 'paradigm' of statehood itself, prompting an argumentative slippage in which 'the most extreme of conditions reveals the underlying norm of all regimes'. *Memory and Complicity*, p. 31. A caveat at the very end of Grimm's article points out that this risk is inherent in 'paradigmatic' reasoning; to move past this problem, however, her reading of torture would have to account systematically for its embedding within structures of representation. Rachel Mihuta Grimm, 'The Remains of an Empire in Ruin: Remembering

entails thinking memory *as* fiction — as a practice which operates through mimesis and therefore has the potential to distort the histories it purportedly represents. This acknowledgement, finally, acutely implicates the narrative framing which Degorce's testimony is given within the novel at large. Offering yet another mimetic rendering of the protagonist's trajectory, the fictional text itself is invested with the power to corroborate or, on the contrary, contravene and critique, the distortions inherent in the captain's own account.

Contamination and critique: Degorce, Andreani, and the reader

As outlined above, the reader's access to Degorce's perspective is largely indirect, as the description of the three days in 1957 is mediated by an extradiegetic third-person narrator, whereas the protagonist's first-person voice is dispersed and fragmented. The gaps and silences which pervade Degorce's speech, moreover, are counterpointed by the insistent voice of the novel's second narrator, the unabashedly pro-colonial lieutenant Andreani, for whom the captain's torments become an object of disdain:

Vous n'avez rien vécu d'exceptionnel, mon capitaine, le monde a toujours été prodigue d'hommes comme vous et aucune victime n'a jamais eu le moindre mal à se transformer en bourreau, au plus petit changement de circonstances. (p. 23)

Unlike Degorce, it emerges, Andreani never believed in an ethics based on individual moral agency. As Jünke has shown, his morality rests on the supra-individual, defines itself according to circumstance, and draws on cultural, social, and ethnic categories of belonging.³⁴ To his mind, virtue is radically communitarian, being based on the absolute

Torture and the Colonial State of Exception in Jérôme Ferrari's *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*, *International Journal Of Francophone Studies*, 21 (2018), 279–300 (pp. 279, 296).

³⁴ See Jünke, 'Continuité et ruptures', p. 55.

imperative of loyalty which binds him to his comrades and superiors. Andreani's characteristic form of narration reflects this outlook, given the quasi-obsessive dependence of his first-person 'je' on the second-person 'vous' of his hierarchical superior Degorce. From the outset, therefore, the moral sense of self which Andreani asserts in the act of remembrance presents itself as inherently relational and, in this sense, relativistic.

Applying this morality to the progression of history, Andreani justifies violence as the foundation of community, which allows first- and second-person singulars to fuse into a greater, third-person 'nous':

Tout est si léger, mon capitaine, tout s'oublie si vite. Le sang des nôtres et le sang que nous avons répandu ont été depuis longtemps effacés par un sang nouveau qui sera bientôt effacé à son tour. (p. 21)

Doubly based on 'blood' — the blood of genealogy and the blood of the other —, historical communities, Andreani argues, must constitute themselves against external enemies, whether these be the fascist occupants of his native country, the communist Viet Minh in Indochina, or the independence movement in Algeria. History, in his view, is cyclical and repetitive; communities and individuals do not and indeed, *should not* learn from past instances of violence, because violence must be forgotten and repeated to keep ensuring their survival.

In following this logic, Andreani seems to have no problem squaring his memories of the Second World War with the role he played in the Algerian War of Independence, nor with the renewal of civil violence in 1990s Algeria, which forms the narrative present of his testimony and is evoked in his citation of that day's newspaper headlines: 'Dix-sept douaniers abattus à Timimoun. Trois policiers décapités à Sétif. Entre Béchar et Taghit, tout le cortège d'un mariage égorgé à un faux barrage' (pp. 21–22). The intrinsic rhythm of violence, Andreani suggests, has triumphed over ethical dichotomies such as good and evil, victimhood and perpetration, revealing itself as a force which transcends morality itself.

Troublingly, the relativism which is the very premise of Andreani's worldview thus comes to resemble the outcome of Degorce's protracted moral torments, as both men eventually subscribe to a vision of the world in which good and evil are blurred and violence is cyclical. Evoking this convergence in his final monologue, Andreani asserts that he and Degorce must share the same infernal nightmares:

Dans ce rêve qui est aussi le vôtre, mon capitaine, c'est l'heure où je m'approche de vous pour vous serrer contre mon cœur comme un frère. [...] Nous ne nous quitterons pas. Et c'est l'heure où je me penche doucement vers vous pour murmurer à votre oreille que nous sommes arrivés en enfer, mon capitaine — et que vous êtes exaucé.
(p. 154)

Fusing his secular amorality with Degorce's biblical vision of irredeemably fallen man, Andreani's simultaneously erotic and oppressively fraternal embrace defines his and Degorce's perspectives as one, part of the same consciousness, and finally, subject to the same mechanisms of compulsive repetition.

This apparent perspectival collapse is bound to disturb the reader. As Lena Seauve has outlined, the direct insight which the reader gains to Andreani's first-person narration throughout the text is counterposed by the immediate repulsiveness of his character. Imitating what seems to be Andreani's only redeeming feature, the reader is driven to emulate his love for Degorce. Eventually, however, one is confronted with the troubling possibility that the elusive, attractive Degorce is little more than Andreani's double, a man who has embraced the same moral relativism and commits similarly abject deeds.³⁵ Problematically, one might

³⁵ See Lena Seauve, 'Du point de vue des bourreaux: regards sur la torture et émotions du lecteur dans *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* de Jérôme Ferrari', in *Chutes, ruptures et philosophie*, ed. by Burnautzki and Ruhe, pp. 63–78 (pp. 67–68).

therefore say, the very structure of Ferrari's novel appears designed to lead the reader in circles. Merging the positions of characters who initially appeared as relatively 'good' and 'evil' respectively, the terms of narration eventually risk replicating the moral collapse which is at the heart of the protagonists' worldview and underpins their self-justification.

At the same time, one might defend Ferrari's approach in noting that, precisely because it is Andreani who advances this conflation of perspectives in the most aggressive terms, the reader is invited to question and ultimately, to resist it. Because Andreani figures as an intradiegetic narrator, the very terms of his narration can be recognized as the outcome of an ideologically biased and manipulative viewpoint, which arises from his direct, criminal complicity in the violence he relates. Seen in this light, Andreani's insistence that he and Degorce are brothers appears less as an objective truth than as the expression of a deeply troubled mind, which maintains the love-hate relationship with Degorce to ensure its own psychological survival. Even though Andreani has the last word in *Où j'ai laissé mon âme*, therefore, his testimony at once points to the need for a further-reaching critique, which confronts the terms of the narrative as 'implicated' in the ethical problems it presents.

Conclusion

'Le mal n'est certes doté d'aucun éclat [...]; mais sa toxicité est telle que quiconque prend le risque de le décrire peut s'en trouver définitivement contaminé', Ferrari concludes in *À fendre le cœur le plus dur*, a 2015 essay on the photographic representation of colonial violence co-authored with the German-Lebanese writer Oliver Rohe.³⁶ When read in light of this assertion, which paraphrases a warning extended by the eponymous protagonist of J.M.

³⁶ Jérôme Ferrari and Oliver Rohe, *À fendre le cœur le plus dur* (Paris: Inculte/Dernière marge, 2015), p. 69.

Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), Ferrari's own novel *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* appears to offer both an illustration of such contamination and a path towards its potential resolution.

In retracing biographical trajectories from German-occupied France to Indochina and Algeria, the novel highlights the ethical ambivalences which arise within a 'multidirectional' treatment of memories relating to National Socialism on the one hand, to colonialism on the other. Drawing on documentary evidence from Rotman's *L'Ennemi intime*, the novel establishes that clear continuities of personnel connect these histories and that certain forms of violence, including the use of torture and mass imprisonment, are shared between them. At the same time, the work acknowledges that any attempt to account for these histories in conjunction must grapple with the complexity which arises from the dramatically different ethical positions which individual actors occupied within them.

This is exemplified by the character of André Degorce who, at different moments in his life, has been both a victim and a perpetrator of torture, part of the Resistance against the German Occupation and part of the repression of other resistance movements on behalf of the French Empire in Indochina and Algeria. Throughout the novel, his attempts to make sense of these contradictions remain only partially successful. His tendency to identify with his victims in pointing out that torture is an experience they share, notably, instrumentalizes a genuine historical trauma to enable new acts of violence, preventing Degorce from facing up to his present-day role as perpetrator. The invocation of a moral 'grey zone', to which the protagonist resorts when this strategy crumbles, does not seem to provide a viable alternative, as it produces a fatalistic vision of historical violence which forces his initial victimization and later corruption into a relationship of teleological necessity.

The interest of these failures on the protagonist's part is more than psychological, as they can be shown to illustrate the limitations of contemporary practices of remembrance more widely, which themselves tend to rely on an identification with history's victims and

eschew ethically ambivalent legacies associated with feelings of guilt or complicity. In response to the French ‘guerre des mémoires’ of the early 2000s, the moral contradictions of Degorce’s biography reveal the absurdity of any attempts on the part of French national institutions to construct a homogeneous and unequivocally positive relationship to a stipulated shared legacy. In so doing, *Où j’ai laissé mon âme* validates the demand for an articulation of ethical ambivalence in recent memory studies, highlighting the need to think, as Rothberg writes, ‘beyond identification’ and envisage ‘implicated’ or, as Sanyal proposes, ‘complicated’ forms of remembrance.

In Ferrari’s novel, however, such endeavours at once appear to be obstructed by a troubling proximity between Degorce’s worldview and the narrative structure of the text at large. Horace Andreani, the novel’s intradiegetic narrator, positions himself as Degorce’s double, with uncanny resemblances between the two men seemingly confirming that the moral path which they took truly *was* without alternatives. The very terms of the narration, one might therefore say, are ‘implicated’ in creating the impression that cycles of violence reproduce themselves with a quasi-mechanistic necessity and obscuring the moral agency of individual actors.

The embedding of violence within the terms of its narration thus reproduces the deceptive *fiction* of a moral ‘grey zone’, which flattens the ethical terrain of remembrance and seems to render the novel itself morally suspicious. At the same time, one might say that the use of a polyvocal structure and an intradiegetic narrator with obvious ideological biases allows the work to draw attention to this very issue, and in so doing, to generate a possibility of critique on the reader’s part. Precisely because the novel highlights that its own terms are the result of manipulations arising from ‘contamination’ by or ‘complicity’ in patterns of historical violence, it provides the reader with the tools for its own deconstruction and points

to the process of critical reading as the true *locus* of an ethical engagement with complexly layered historical violence.

Remembrance itself, *Où j'ai laissé mon âme* ultimately suggests, is to be understood as a matter of representation, a series of contingent and fallible narratives, which inevitably reduce the potentially infinite complexity of the historical events they reference. Literary representation more specifically, the novel further demonstrates, possesses a unique ability to draw attention to this dilemma, exposing itself to critical scrutiny even as it offers a tool for calling into question the certainties expressed in other forms of discourse. This dual function renders literary works both a challenging and a uniquely valuable object of study for scholars in the field of memory studies. Only if the very terms according to which the past is represented are subjected to an ongoing questioning, we thus conclude, can histories of violence continue to solicit our attention, prompting narrative renditions of the past which remain dynamic, subject to revision, and therefore open to the future.