Pontifícia Universidade Católica
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# (Re)imagining Resistance:

## Narratives from Postcolonial Maghreb and the Limits of IR



**Tese de Doutorado**

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais of the Instituto de Relações Internacionais of PUC-Rio as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Relações Internacionais

Advisor: Profa. Carolina Moulin Aguiar

Co-Advisor: Profa. Alina Sajed

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To the few certainties in this life:
Mom, Dad – my “joias raras” –,
and Joerg.

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# Abstract

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Maghreb is a region located between many worlds – African, Occidental, Oriental, pan-Arab, Islamic, to name a few. Thus, not surprisingly, it is permeated by a number of depictions and narratives trying to capture and make sense of such diversity and the types of encounters it generates. The thesis is an exploration on the politics of narrating postcolonial Maghreb in the writings of Francophone Maghrebian writers such as Abdelkebir Khatibi, Fatema Mernissi, Kateb Yacine and Jacques Derrida, who explicitly embraced the task of (re)imagining their respective societies and, importantly, their subject-positions as Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals after independence from the colonial yoke and subsequent nation-building processes by postcolonial states in the region. The main line of inquiry throughout the dissertation focuses on the politics of *imagination, disenchantment* but also *hope* bridging these texts together and draws attention to the "worldliness of texts" (a terminology coined by Edward Said) in order to both situate texts in their contexts and discuss the potential of narrative strategies (and of critical imagination) to promote political change. I therefore consider narratives as political acts and draw attention to the turbulent contexts in which postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian literature emerges and constantly reinvents itself as a site of resistance and contestation. In addition, I argue that there are important parallels between the politics of (re)imagination in these texts and the reflections some IR scholars have been putting forward in their turn to narratives as alternative methodologies in IR. What does this attention to the tropes of narrative, voice and reflexivity as theoretical problems entail to the study of international and global affairs? What sorts of anxieties and hopes does the turn to narratives both as modes of communicating knowledge to the world and as modes of knowing, (re)imagining

and thus (re)telling the world bring about in the field of IR? In providing an answer to these questions, I promote an encounter between narratives about/from the Maghreb and narratives about/from IR and IR theory in their attempts at making sense of the world of international and global affairs.

## Keywords

Postcolonialism; narrative; Maghreb; worldliness; autobiography.

# Resumo

Oliveira, Jessica da Silva Correia de; Aguiar, Carolina Moulin (Orientadora); Sajed, Alina (Coorientadora). (**Re)imaginando resistência: narrativas do Magrebe pós-Colonial e os limites das RI**. Rio de Janeiro, 2018. 249p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

O Magrebe é uma região localizada entre diversos mundos - africano, ocidental, oriental, pan-árabe, islâmico, para citar alguns – e, portanto, permeada por uma série de representações e narrativas que tentam capturar e conferir sentido à essa diversidade e os tipos de encontros que suscita. O presente trabalho é uma investigação sobre a política das narrativas no âmbito da chamada Literatura Pós-Colonial Francófona do Magrebe – mais precisamente nos escritos de Abdelkebir Khatibi, Fatema Mernissi, Kateb Yacine e Jacques Derrida. Dentre outros pontos de interseção, tais escritores explicitamente abraçaram em suas produções textuais a tarefa de (re)imaginar suas respectivas sociedades e, principalmente, suas subjetividades (posição de sujeitos) enquanto intelectuais franco-magrebinos no contexto pós-colonial e subseqüentes processos de construção da nação pelos Estados pós-coloniais da região. Dessa forma, a tese se centra na política da imaginação, desencantamento, mas também na esperança que une esses escritos, e chama atenção para o "mundanismo dos textos" (*worldliness of texts*) – conceito cunhado por Edward Said –, num esforço tanto de situar textos em seus contextos como de discutir o potencial e os limites das estratégias narrativas (e da imaginação crítica) em promover a mudança política. Busca-se então avançar a noção de narrativas como atos políticos à medida em que se lança luz sobre o contexto turbulento em que surge a literatura pós-colonial francófona do Maghreb, bem como sobre sua constante reinvenção enquanto espaço de resistência e contestação. Argumenta-se ainda que existem paralelos relevantes entre a política de (re)imaginação que se desprende desses textos e as reflexões que têm sido avançadas por um conjunto de intelectuais de RI acerca do lugar das narrativas enquanto metodologias alternativas para compreender o internacional e o global. Quais as implicações dessa renovada atenção aos tropos da narrativa, voz e

reflexividade enquanto problemas teóricos legítimos no estudo das relações internacionais e globais? Que tipos de ansiedades e esperanças tal movimento em direção às estratégias narrativas – seja como modo de comunicação do conhecimento seja como modo de conhecer, (re)imaginar e, assim, (re)contar o mundo – suscita no campo das RI? Ao fornecer possíveis respostas a esses e outros questionamentos, esta tese de doutorado busca ainda promover/imaginar um encontro entre narrativas sobre/ a partir do Magrebe e narrativas sobre / a partir da teoria de RI em suas semelhantes tentativas de representar e compreender o internacional e o global.

## Palavras-chave

Pós-colonialismo; narrativa; Magrebe; mundanismo; autobiografia.

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*In a world of magnets and miracles*
*Our thoughts strayed constantly and without boundary*
*The ringing of the division bell had begun*
*Along the long road and on down the causeway*
*Do they still meet there by the cut*

(Pink Floyd, *High Hopes*)

# 1. Making the Case for Reimagination - An Introduction

> *[W]hat do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever-colonized.*
>
> (Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*)

I would like to start by telling three short stories about some of the uncountable encounters that have made this research project what it happens to be right now. The first concerns my first contact with International Relations theory, in my first semester as an IR undergrad student at a small Catholic university in Niteroi, a city next to the city of Rio de Janeiro, and separated from it by a bridge symbolically called Rio-Niteroi bridge. As a naïve seventeen years-old student who had just finished high school, I believed that by studying hard about international politics, historical facts and important personalities and their actions and discourses regarding the "world" of international affairs, I could work to change that world for better. The IR readings and discussions I was presented to were distant, emotionless, with a scientifically-inflicted language and problem-solving orientation to which I could not connect no matter how hard I tried. They led us, students, to picture the world of IR as an eternal battle between realists and liberals, both theorizing about war and peace among great powers and promoting little "word wars" against each other. At some point, I started to struggle to remember the reasons why I decided to pursue a degree in IR.

Nonetheless, every time I tried to picture the "world" of IR by that time, for some reason, two images often (and helplessly) came to my head: either a colored and well-drawn world-map, or the famous picture of a naked girl running down a road after a napalm attack during the Vietnam War; and, to be fair, both could be perfect representations of the sort of hopeless world I was introduced to in my theory classes. For uncountable times, I tried to picture something else, but the world I was being trained to see seemed to indulge those two images up to the point that I started wondering if was not that all that we have for the world of IR. Similarly, I had hard times trying to find people, real people (including myself), among all those metaphors about nation-states behaviour, international anarchy,

balances of power, institutions, anarchical society, perpetual peace, etc. But what my first encounter – and many subsequent others – with IR theory has shown me was that the world of international politics – at least the one presented to me in that context – accepts little change, if any, in its constitution and *modus operandi*. Only in the last weeks of the IR Theories II course, in the fourth semester, we had a few readings assigned under the label "alternative approaches to international politics". My levels of curiosity and anxiety went the highest since I had started in an IR program. I was hoping to find something I could finally relate with in the middle of those tedious discussions and complex theoretical language. My thoughts were all on the question of what an "alternative approach" to IR theory might look like. Cynthia Enloe's words in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* caught me on for good. I remember feeling I had finally encountered real human beings doing things that matter to international politics, even though their roles or features as international actors did not connect them with high politics and international affairs in the conventional ways I had heard so far.

Later on, when I was already pursuing my Master's degree at the International Relations Institute of PUC-Rio, I had more encounters with Enloe, but also with other names whose words and theoretical insights became meaningful to me and have supported my decision to remain working in the field of IR. The works of Sankaran Krishna, Himadeep Muppidi, Naeem Inayatullan and David Blaney, to name a few, have shown me that there was more to IR than that world of most IR narratives, where states are privileged subjects of politics and of the international. I thus realized that a number of scholars have been bothered by the displacement of the world from IR theories and narratives. Many were already working upon the disconcerting absences of a discipline which supposedly deals with "world" politics. The worlds they were trying to portray seemed closer to the world as I imagined it. A world of a variety of actors, their overlapping voices, experiences, memories, histories and demands. A world of conflicts, for sure, but *hope* as well.

The second story could be named "when I first encountered the Maghreb". The Maghreb is the locale I decided to engage with in most of my research endeavours. As far as I remember, my first encounter with the Maghreb in IR literature took place during my fourth year in university, when I was stressing about the idea of writing a thesis as a final requirement before I could finally call myself an IR baccalaureate. European Union's policies, structure and uncertain political

nature and future were amongst the hottest topics in IR by that time. Because of that, perhaps, I was very interested in the dynamics through which European countries were trying to conform the EU as a platform for decision-making procedures and taking action abroad. EU and European national officials were working hard on the delineation of policies and partnerships focused on the countries on its surroundings – notably the Mediterranean region –, releasing a number of reports, scheduling official meetings and delivering thousands of speeches with an explicit emphasis on questions involving European immigration/border policies towards those countries. At first, as an immature and ambitious undergraduate, I thought I could succeed in a case-by-case study involving EU policies towards each country in the Mediterranean. At this point, I think, I was already biased by the all-encompassing discourse in EU delegates' speeches and institutional policy statements with regard that region. Nonetheless, I quickly abandoned the idea after one of my Professors' kindly suggested me to look at the relations between the EU and the Maghreb. "These countries are so overlooked in IR literature. You may find some interesting stuff to think about and work with" – he said.

As a matter of fact, Professor Dias was right in more than one sense: Maghrebian societies were (and still are) largely overlooked in both IR literature and international politics; and I was indeed able to find an interesting discussion about the connections and contradictions in EU's discourses on poverty/underdevelopment, migration, and terrorism regarding Maghrebian countries and individuals. I was able to conclude my research and write a final paper at that time, but with the frustrating feeling that I was collaborating with a persistent silence and effacement. I sensed I could only ask and engage with questions about these and other non-European – or "non-Western"– societies through the eyes and the work of scholars speaking from a limited number of institutions and *loci* of enunciation. Not to mention the very limited range of assumptions and themes I could find when researching about the place of the Maghreb and its societies in world politics – most of them, as I could realize effortlessly, relied upon a chain of ideas and concepts such as "terrorism", "poverty", "failure", "underdevelopment", and "insecurity", to name a few. May the reader forgive me for my confessional tone now, but truth is I constantly see myself, even nowadays, somehow being complicit with this easy move of displacing IR as well as the Maghreb from the

world, even while trying to make sense of (post)colonial Maghreb from a perspective that highlights its various locales and voices rather than conceiving it as simply the sum of several (problematic) nation-states. Every time I catch myself wondering about my own anxieties, expectations and my relationship with my research project, I am still haunted by this awkward feeling.

Finally, the third short story is the "mean reviewer" story. It happened more recently, when I could already fancy myself as a PhD candidate. In the occasion, I was trying to publish for the very first time in an important journal in the field. When I finally got a message from the editorial board accepting my submission and requiring a few reviews before publishing, I could not image I was just starting a long journey along with my text and my anxiety towards the whole writing process. The words of one of the anonymous reviewers made me go through a chain of mixed feelings – anger, indignation, shame, and helplessness among them. In his/her view, the article's contents were fine, the argument was fine, but somehow s/he could not find my motivations in the text. To paraphrase his/her words, mine was not a "wordless" text, but certainly a "lifeless" one, for I could not even express clearly to my reader what I was up to when I decided to bring a view on the uses and misuses of the concept of region in IR (my article's theme). S/He was looking for my motivation, the reason why I was moved to start that research endeavour in the first place. "What does s/he want from me? A personal account on the reason why I think a certain concept is overlooked in our careless discipline?" – I remember thinking. Looking back, I am not sure if that was exactly what s/he was looking for. Maybe s/he just wanted a more open and less jargon-inflicted account on the research problem I was claiming to address; a text in which the reader could feel more welcomed and find a safe space to start a dialogue in case she or he feels like to. Wasn't I claiming that most accounts in our field addresses the region from a narrow, territorially bounded perspective which is mostly blind to individual's own claims towards regional identity and space after all? Perhaps my reviewer was just interest in hearing the aspects of the author-voice I was trying so hard to hide in order to sound more like "a professional scholar" as I understood it. It was not as if s/he was asking me for the impossible, but it sounded like that to me at the time.

Truth is that it took me a while to realize that I was angry with myself – not with the poor "mean reviewer" for his/her meticulous reading and honest feedback. I remember experiencing that lingering sentiment of being a fraud that seems to be

shared by most academics but that is usually well-masked by academic performance and by our fast-paced deadlines. Was I accepting the role of hostage of the same jargon-inflicted, world-less disciplinary accounts that I loved hating and pointing fingers at? From the "mean reviewer's" perspective, it seems, the answer was yes, for s/he could not find any glimpse of the world I was claiming to portray. In that occasion I realized, as never before as a novice scholar and writer the real difficulties some of us – perhaps most of us –, academics, may experience at some point when trying to transmit our ideas. I started wondering if there were any tricks or common knowledge on ways to continue our efforts at connecting with the worlds we want to understand, describe and address in innovative ways without being constantly jeopardized by our personal anxieties regarding academic protocols of researching, writing, and being.

Hopefully, the reader will soon understand the connections between this personal account and the PhD research to be presented in this Introduction and developed in the following chapters. Above all, this is a project about the practices of thinking, (re)imagining and writing global politics from various different places – we could name them "*loci* of enunciation", "subject-positions", "disciplines", "textual modalities" etc. Most of these places are somehow related with the Maghreb as either a geohistorical site, a *locus* of enunciation or a created language itself. But not exclusively, for this research also has to a certain extent converted itself into an examination of the motivations behind the recent turn towards narratives in IR. What does this attention to the tropes of narrative, voice and reflexivity as theoretical problems entail to the study of global affairs? What sorts of anxieties and hopes does the turn to narratives *both as modes of communicating knowledge* to the world *and as modes of knowing, (re)imagining and thus (re)telling* the world bring about in the field of IR? In trying to answer these and other related questions, in the following chapters I also dared to put myself into some risk through the exercise of imagining an encounter between narratives about/from the Maghreb and narratives about/from IR and IR theory in general in their own attempts at making sense of the world of international and global affairs.

## 1.1 **Framing the Question**

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau wrote "[w]hat the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (1984:130). Certeau's remarkable words resonate with a number of efforts from inside and across the field of IR and IR theory which share the unease with the discipline's narrow, self-referential and life-less world. With the declared task of rethinking knowledge frames such as the state-centric world that most IR students find in their first encounter with IR theory and historiography, the reproduction of state-centered politics in world affairs, as well as the Eurocentric, excluding, and violent cultural background informing such frames, the flourishing "critical imaginations" in IR – to use Mhurchú & Shindo's (2016) terminology – also indicates a continuous effort at exploring alternative ways of thinking and talking about the world[1]. For quite a while now, it has been crystal clear that the statist logic of rigid borders and the understanding of the world as "made up of bounded subjects within bounded political communities" (Mhurchú, Shindo 2016:2) that such logic indulges do not reflect the complexities of the overlapping voices, memories, world views and political formations one may find when looking for stories instead of maps of the world.

With this in mind, the main general goal of this PhD thesis is to explore "what it might mean to bring the world back into IR" (Sajed 2013:2). Some authors have already offered important hints in that direction. Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney (2004), for instance, not only traced the discipline's denial of its colonial character when dealing with difference but also argued for the reintroduction of the language of "culture" as means to speak of difference. They suggest us to reimagine IR as a site of "heterology" (a term they borrowed from Michel de Certeau) – i.e. "the study of many modalities of difference" (Inayatullah & Blaney 2016:71). The language of culture here points to a shared human condition, that is, our ability to construct, maintain and transform "meaningful and purposeful schemes of existence", yet these schemes also appear "as multiple, diverse, and often competing human projects" (Inayatuallah & Blaney 2004:17). This reminds us that "human endeavours in meaning-making and world-making are multiple and diverse – and thereby partial" (Inayatullah & Blaney 2016:70); they are ongoing processes

[1] The challenges to state-centric thinking and to "rationalist theories" in the field of IR dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the notable blossoming of postmodern/poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches in IR. See, for example: Darby and Paolini 1994; Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; McClintock et al. 1997; Walker 1993.

"exhibiting the varied possibilities admitted by cultural encounters", which includes violence and silence, but also learning and hope (Id.,2004:17). Thus, culture points to commonality, but also to partiality and diversity of *human* experience and modes of thought. From this perspective, IR can be reimagined as an encounter with difference. Here, difference can be translated in various ways, including what is beyond the language of otherness, intractability and conflict.

Another important insight comes from Cynthia Weber when she suggests – paraphrasing Clifford Geertz – that IR theory can be conceived as an "ensemble of stories" IR experts tell about the world (Weber 2001:129-30). Seeing IR theory and the practice of theorizing in this way allows us to read the various approaches to IR as narratives mediating the world from specific standpoints rather than objective reproductions of an outside reality. Weber's perspective makes visible the authorship to texts and turns the IR theoretician into a subject as much embedded in the world s/he claims to portray as the "characters" (e.g. individuals, institutions, relations, states, etc) in the narrative. In other words, the researcher is a subject-position within the process of theorization, rendering him/her complicit with, rather than disengaged from, the world-making exercise that is knowledge production.

More recently, Aoileann Ní Mhurchú and Reiko Shindo advocated a re-understanding of IR as "a site where relations between various groups such as nations, states and political communities, have been imagined and reimagined" (2016:2). Besides the ethical and political motivations animating critical approaches to IR, Mhurchú and Shindo follow Sungju Park-Kang's insights when they highlight the epistemological value of imagination in carving out non-state-centric worlds and vocabulary within and across the field. Theirs is an effort to complicate commonsensical views on how global politics and its related categories and relevant actors have been evolving in a diverse and complex world.

I hereby highlight these three perspectives on how a "worldly" IR – to resort to Edward Said's (1983) terminology – might look like precisely because "encounters", "narratives", and "imagination" are key conceptualizations and analytical devices to my own efforts at reimagining IR in the following pages. In emphasizing an alternative framework for looking at international relations in which the aesthetics of encounters are privileged over a state-centric logic of rigid borders, subjectivities and geographies, I am not suggesting that the state is irrelevant as political site or as a level of analysis in IR. It is rather an attempt to

indicate that there is more to spatial, political and subjective formations that are relevant to world politics than a state-centric grammar would allow us to see. Fortunately, I have not felt alone since I started this endeavour. There is a number of referential works in IR exploring international and global relations from the perspective of encounters to which I am in great debt[2].

The locale I chose to engage with in this research, the Maghreb, is a region located between many "worlds" – African, Occidental, Oriental, Mediterranean, pan-Arab, Islamic, etc. Thus, not surprisingly, it is permeated by a number of depictions and narratives trying to capture and make sense of such diversity and the types of encounters it generates. This becomes implicit in the very meaning of the word "Maghreb" − "place where the sun sets", i.e. the West −, usually defined in opposition to Mashreq − "place where the sun rises", i.e. the East – and the many geo-cultural senses this may evoke[3]. In Walter Mignolo's words, the "geohistorical" location of this region is precisely what turns it into a sort of "crossing of the global in itself", or a "crossing" instead of a "grounding (e.g. the nation)" (Mignolo 2012:69). In addition to the Orientalist lens through which the Maghreb has been portrayed in European literature since nineteenth century and early twentieth century travelogues (see Mortimer 2001), we now have a renewed wave of stereotypical understandings highlighting the region's political, economic and social inadequacy, and inherent problematic nature. Such images are the most usual points of departure in the recent literature produced in Comparative Politics and in International Security Studies approaches addressing the region[4]. Poverty, (post)colonial injustice, violence – and, importantly, exile – are also recurrent themes in the literary production – novels, poetry, plays, etc – as well as in more academic oriented texts produced by Maghrebian indigenous writers during colonial as well as postcolonial periods. But what a review of these latter mentioned



[2] For now, I would like to cite, for example, Inayatullah & Blaney, 2004, 2016; Sajed 2013; Shilliam 2011.

[3] See: MAGHREB STUDIES. The Word Maghreb. 2003. Available at: http://www.maghreb-studies-association.co.uk/en/allhome.html (Acess in November 16, 2010).

[4] See, for example: CALLEYA, S.C. Subregional Dynamics in the Western Mediterranean. Mediterranean Quartely, n.4, vol.14, 2003, p. 139-157; CELSO, A. N. Al Qaeda in the Maghreb: The "newest" front in the war on terror. Mediterranean Quartely, vol.19, n.1, 2008, p.80-96; ZARTMAN, I. W. Why the Maghreb matters – threats, opportunities and options for cross-border cooperation in North Africa. Paix sans fronteires: building Peace across borders issue 22, 2011. Available at: http://www.c-r.org/accord/cross-border [Access in: April 6, 2012]; See also: Al-Jabri, 1985; Hiddleston, 2005.

works reveals is a "plural Maghreb", that is, a site that also evokes a plurality of memories and claims about philosophical, religious and cultural heritages which sometimes corroborate, but also resist to these various attempts of "capturing" the region's diversity as intractable and inherently problematic (Khatibi [1981a]1983).

Thus, borrowing Alina Sajed's words, the Maghreb I chose to engage with "encapsulates the richness of *encounters*, the painful *weight of violence*, and the intricate *webs of memory*" (2013:2, my emphasis). I tend to perceive these dimensions as more truthful and worldly-situated referents to the study of *world* politics rather than simply conceiving that region as the sum of nation-states and their interactions – i.e. the "international" as it often appears in IR literature. Regions, at least as I see them, are constituted of topological (i.e. what concerns "the deformations of figures", or an understanding of places and boundaries as ever-moving constructs) rather than simply topical (i.e. what concerns spatial demarcation, or the conception of places as inert and stable) geographical and geo-historical foundations[5]. More to the point, I am especially interested in the Maghreb as *locus* of enunciation, rather than as a region or "area" in the pure geopolitical sense of the word (see Mignolo 2012). Also, I want to emphasize the constellation of experiences, of modes of thinking and – why not? – of desires and hopes stated by Maghrebian voices that cannot be grasped by conventional approaches in IR. My aim is to look at spatial imaginaries, vocabulary, and subjectivities that are not necessarily "confined to the methodological spatiality of the nation-state"[6] (Sajed 2013:7) and the "official" portrayals of histories and politically relevant facts and characters.



[5] In this passage, I drew upon, once again, de Certeau's words as source of inspiration: "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across. In Greek, narration is called "diegesis": it establishes an itinerary (it "guides") and it passes through (it "transgresses"). The space of operations it travels in is made of movements: it is topological, concerning the deformations of figures, rather than topical, defining places. It is only ambivalently that the limit circumscribes in this space. It plays a double game. It does the opposite of what it says. It hands the place over to the foreigner that it gives the impression of throwing out. Or rather, when it marks a stopping place, the latter is not stable but follows the variations of encounters between programs. Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are also metaphorai" (de Certeau 1984:130). See also: Oliveira, 2013; 2017.

[6] It is by looking at these different claims of belonging and subjective-positions that Alina Sajed (2013), for example, suggests the notion of "translocality" as an alternative topology to understand the webs of relationships conforming France-Maghreb postcolonial encounters, and notably the experiences of Maghrebian diasporic individuals in France. Although the Franco-Maghrebian encounter and the "webs of translocal relationships" they constitute are not my main focus here, I am in great debt to Alina's imaginative and rich explorations of literary narratives from the Maghreb and of the politics of postcolonial encounters in conforming the variety of subjectivities, modes of thought and political claims stemming from the region.

In order to get a picture of (post)colonial Maghreb, I chose to examine the portrayals offered by Maghrebian writers themselves – Francophone Maghrebian writers, more specifically – in their efforts to (re)think the Maghreb – to paraphrase Abdelkebir Khatibi[7] – in the postcolonial context, as well as their subject positions as Francophone Maghrebian intellectuals in their respective societies, but also, and importantly, in a global context. As Rèda Bensmaïa (2003) posits it, postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian writers turned the Maghreb into an "experimental" language, an imaginative tool to express an ideology and aesthetics of difference in the language (i.e. French) that refers back to a specific colonial encounter (i.e. the Franco-Maghrebian encounter) but also, and importantly, to alternative paths towards creative appropriation and less violent forms of cohabitation after decolonization took place in the region. I hereby take literary texts of the so-called Postcolonial Maghrebian Literature written in French as my main substrata of analysis in order to make sense of specific subjectivities produced within the various (post)colonial encounters in the Maghreb (which, of course, can neither be reduced nor ignore the encounter with French colonialism).

My particular interest in the role of the Francophone Maghrebian intellectual relates with my focus on narratives as political acts and takes into consideration the turbulent contexts in which postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian literature emerges and constantly reinvents itself as a site of resistance and contestation. The writers whose works I examine here – notably, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Kateb Yacine, Tahar Djaout and Fatema Mernissi[8] – share the *desire* to "reflect on and to mediate in their narratives the persistence of colonial memory" (Sajed 2013:3), which led them to design complex maps of Maghrebian cultures, landscapes, individuals, and (hi)stories. Importantly enough, they are also united by the *hope* of telling silences and saying what is "unsayable" in face of the "orthodoxies" of their time (Hiddleston 2015:161). To paraphrase Jane Hiddleston's words (2015), literature

[7] In his 1981 seminal essay *Pensée-autre*, Moroccan writer Abdelkebir Khatibi advocates for an adoption of the Maghreb as an horizon for rethinking the place of the region and its populations in the world from a Third-Worldist and decolonial perspective.

[8] I should highlight to my reader that the Moroccan writer Fatema Mernissi can be deemed, at least to a certain extent, as exception here once a considerable part of her work was not originally published in French. Although Mernissi's first books – *L'Amour dans les pays musulman* [1984] and *Les Sindbads Marocains* – were written in French, the two emblematic pieces of her oeuvre I chose to engage with in Chapter 5, for example, were originally published in English and have only gained French translations afterwards. One of her most emblematic published works, *Dreams of Trespass* was translated into more than twenty languages.

can be figured out here as the starting point (rather than a definitive strategy) taken up by these writers in order to articulate a mode of questioning and of exposing their ethical-political motives when pursuing such work of memory and reinvention – or, in the terminology I prefer to adopt here, "reimagination".

My main line of inquiry throughout this PhD thesis focuses on the politics of *imagination* and *hope* that bring these texts together. *What is at stake in (re)imagining the Maghreb through literary narratives rather than through other textual spaces? What does it mean to take the Maghreb – and post-coloniality – as locus of enunciation in these con-texts? What do these specific subject-positions show us in their wonderings about their place – and their societies` place – in the world that others might not? To what extent do these narratives pose themselves as alternatives narratives to so-called Eurocentric forms (i.e. Western knowledge, the nation-state etc) – and, accordingly, to what extent do they provide a "counter-story" (or "counter-stories") to political modernity dominant historical trajectory?* In the following chapters, I use this set of questions as strategy to read and interpret the works of the Francophone Maghrebian writers with whom I chose to engage. However, there is more to that, for I believe such exploration brings about useful parallels with the reflections some scholars have been putting forward in their turn to narratives as alternative methodologies in IR. The voices speaking from and with what has been called "Narrative IR" share a symptomatic unease in relation both to traditional academic modes of inquiry and to academic writing. The questions, themes, and gestures IR scholars have been made in these directions show not only a preoccupation with the ethical-political implications of textual strategies but also, and importantly, bring to the fore a problematization of the role of the intellectual in the world he/she is trying to make sense through analytical efforts. And this is precisely one of the recessive themes connecting the works of the Maghrebian intellectuals I chose to engage with in this project. I will thus juxtapose these two distinct sets of texts in order to address the following questions: *What are the potentialities and limits of adopting a more reflexive author-position in writing? Is there any specificity in literary texts and/or in other supposedly more reflexive narrative strategies (such as autobiography, autoethnography etc) that makes them more prone to translate cultural encounters, as well as the experience of the self and of others in less violent ways? What does*

*it all mean in the context of the relationship between knowledge production and political change?*

This project is thus inspired by the desire to bring a more "worldly" perspective on IR, what translates into a set of general goals I will pursue throughout the following chapters. Firstly, I pay due attention to the (dis)connections between "the emancipatory potential of imagination in our contemporary world", which has animated people's efforts to congregate in innovative forms of solidarity and political mobilization across geographical but also cultural and epistemological borders, and our still "impoverished research imagination" and our lack of "vocabulary to capture these emerging webs of relations" (Sajed 2013:5). In this sense, I want to make the case for both the epistemological and the political value of imagination. Adopting a perspective that draws attention to the performative role of encounters allows me, among other things, to acknowledge that even when protocols of "being" and of "being with" are already well-established between individuals and societies, there is still space for imagination, agency, and hopefully, for change (Rosello 2005). More to the point, mine is a humble effort to engage with the work that people`s imagination tend to perform in rethinking the realms of "being" and "being with" in the face of situations of social and political unrest. I believe that literature – as well as other inventive forms of expression, including poetry, cinema and arts in general – provides an inviting space for critical imagination and expression in that sense. I will return to this point in the next pages, when I present some of the issues at stake in postcolonial Francophone North African literature, in the role assumed by the Franco-Maghrebian intellectual, and in the issue of re-imagining and writing the Maghreb after decolonization took place in the region.

I also draw my attention to the "worldliness of texts", to use a terminology coined by Edward Said in his latest works, in order to both situate texts in their contexts and discuss the potential of narrative strategies (and of critical imagination) to promote political change. In this regard, I start an investigation on the relationship between author and reader within texts by focusing on the dimension of authors vis-à-vis the audience they expect for their writings and, by contrast, the audience they manage to reach. By the same token, an attention to the worldliness of texts helps me to rethink imagination and writing practices as "political acts". Paraphrasing some of the exponents of the idea of "acts of

citizenship", my own understanding of "political acts" here refers, firstly, to the concept of politics as an open "practice of contestation (agon) through which subjects become political" (Isin, Nyers, and Turner 2009:1 quoted in Shindo 2012:149). Secondly, it highlights the fact that because it is an open practice (i.e. something always in the making, therefore constantly performed), "political acts" allow for practices of contestation that constantly challenge the boundaries of political community and collective identity, thus destabilizing given definitions of political subjectivity. It is one way of saying that "the political subject is fluid because 'acts' constitute political subjectivity", and of drawing our attention to those "important *moments* when the subject becomes political to challenge the boundary of the political community, which determines who can act politically" and on which terms (Ibid., 150, emphasis in the original).

In my view, this conceptualization of politics as "acts" also opens space for conceiving narratives as political acts, and allows me to go through avenues I suspect would otherwise remain unknown if this was a project focused predominantly on textuality – if by "textuality" one understands "the somewhat mystical and disinfected subject matter of (…) theory" that "does not take place anywhere or anytime in particular" (Said 1983:4; see Krishna 1993). In this sense, I highlight the political value of movements towards "insurrectional textuality", that is to say, to a "writing practice that is resistant to familiar modes of representation, one that is self-reflective enough to show how meaning and writing practices are radically entangled" (Shapiro 1989:13). I argue that that is the case of both Narrative IR and postcolonial Maghrebian literature – considering, of course, their own particularities and contexts. I also discuss some of the limits of these critical approaches in their attempts to move beyond that first notion of textuality. For instance, without deeper reflections on the contextuality of definitions of margins and subalternity, critical approaches may jeopardize their declared pursuit of opening spaces for a genuine dialogue with difference (Krishna 1993).

Another general goal pursued by this project is to emphasize the constitutive role of colonialism and imperialism in the birth and replication of international relations both as a field of knowledge and a set of practices dictating understandings in what regards political, economic and cultural adequacy (see Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 2016). This also includes an attention to the global colonial context

of knowledge production, which brings to the fore a double recognition: on the one hand, the violent, Eurocentric frame in which IR has constituted itself as an "Anglo-American space that renders all other spaces and voices as both inadequate and dispensable" (Sajed 2013:5); and, on the other hand, the persistence of these marginal voices, knowledges and ways of being and speaking of the world – which are often unproblematically translated as intractable limits to Western-centric frames of knowledge (Khatibi [1981a]1983; Mignolo 2012; Shilliam 2011).

Last but not least, in connection with what I understand to be a more "worldly" perspective on IR, I want to privilege the exploration of non-Western voices and imaginaries in my work. Of course, I do not see that to be enough as strategy to tackle the complex task of de-centering IR from Eurocentric worldviews and turn it into a less self-referential and excluding field of knowledge. However, I do believe it is a necessary and yet unexplored path in the task of rethinking and re-imagining the discipline and its subjects of inquiry, which, sadly enough, still tend to resemble a collection of similar stories about the West and the *rest*, about West and non-West as two discrete and unproblematic entities. In this sense, what I understand by "West" throughout this thesis refers not so much to a geographical or geo-cultural entity; rather, it works as a broad referent for an epistemic privileged position and the persisting and multifaced violence it entails in our contemporary world. In fact, I believe that the intellectuals whose work I examine in this project bring nuance to the common view of East and West, of Western and non-Western as unproblematic and self-explaining referents to two discreet geo-cultural identities and epistemological opposites. Notably, the works of Abdelkebir Khatibi and Fatema Mernissi – which I discuss in Chapter 5 – complexify such views by showing how oppositions between "West" and "non-West" – or between "East" and "West" – have largely been constructed by colonial and imperial epistemology. In addition, they show how this opposition have been retrieved by both governmental elites and postcolonial intellectuals in other to rethink the place of the Maghreb and its three main countries in the world after decolonization took place in the region.

My attempt to re-situate the Maghreb in the world of international relations by paying due attention to voices who have adopted the Maghreb as *locus* of enunciation is different from the flat expectation that these voices will necessarily bring about more authentic and reliable pictures of the region. By contrast, it is an

effort to highlight the heterogeneity and complexity of social worlds and worldviews beyond the European/American geo-cultural imaginary in which everything that is non-Western tend to be automatically converted into either mere archive or "the repository of derivative, substandard or exotic knowledge" (Shilliam 2011:18). In this regard, this research project is about claims to identity and difference in the senses of "being" and "being with", as well as about how these claims relate to the broader questions of epistemological and political violence in the context of postcolonial Maghreb, specifically, and in the context of the global production of knowledge, in general. This certainly demands combined efforts of "intellectual decolonization" (Khatibi [1981a]1983) and "border thinking" (Mignolo 2012). Intellectual decolonization here implies, among other things, an engagement with the colonial traces in the ways places and societies have been converted into objects of knowledge in the context of Western-centric epistemology, its related concepts and canons in social sciences and humanities. Border thinking, in turn, might come across as a more intimidating task. It surely directs our attention to "an intense battlefield in the long history of colonial subalternization of knowledge and legitimation of the colonial difference" (Mignolo 2012:12-13). Moreover, it signals towards the fact that one must go beyond the mere recognition of subaltern epistemologies and the means by which they tend to be submerged by Western epistemology and modes of being. As Walter Mignolo and many others remind us, the subaltern condition and, more importantly, the liminal condition[9] not only highlight the existence of privileged *loci* of enunciation, but also bring to surface a productive critical dimension that needs to be addressed[10]. In other words, the characteristic liminal condition of (post)colonial encounters also generates different strategies to "returning the gaze", as one can find in Khatibi's concepts of *bi-langue* and *plural Maghreb,* in Tahar Djaout's reflections on *coherence as fiction in historical narratives*, in Kateb Yacine's rearticulations of the *landscape as memory*, and in Fatema Mernissi's *re-reading of cultural borders* through the Muslim conception of frontier (*hudud*). Thus, it also

[9] According to Mignolo, liminal condition refers to the possibility of being or inhabiting in between different local projects, that is, to inhabit two worlds simultaneously. In Mignolo's words, it is precisely this liminal condition what renders one a privileged position to acknowledge "colonial difference" (see Mignolo 2012).

[10] At this point, it is interesting to mention Mignolo's own analysis of Abdelkebir Khatibi's book Maghreb Pluriel and how Khatibi's work (specially his notion of double critique) has inspired the first in his formulation about "border thinking".

brings to the fore the importance of dealing with both the potentialities *and* the limits of those modes of thought emanated "from the perspective of their subaltern" (Mignolo 2012:12-13) in their "complicity, resistance, adaptation and indifference" (Sajed 2013:186) in the complex interplay of encounters between local (hi)stories and global designs (Mignolo 2012).

## 1.2 Three senses of Worldliness

It may sound odd to start this introductory chapter stating that one of my main motifs in pursuing this project is to engage with a "worldly" IR and, right after that, reveal to the reader that I plan to do so through an exploration of literary texts (predominantly). However, as Rèda Bensmaïa (2003) and many others remind us, literature should be seen beyond its aesthetic form and value. Literary texts have been frequently used as resourceful spaces to reinvent and articulate languages and worlds that are particularly relevant to catch a glimpse of real people's lives and worldviews, especially in what touches what is beyond the conventional and thinkable. Although "literary text" appears as a broad and sometimes contentious designation, it is often applied to describe textual genres which are not committed with "truth" as synonym with "factual", nor with communication as linear transference between writer and reader, words and *the* world. In spite of deploying anecdotal language and forms, literary texts are never "out-worldly" (see Said 1983). When read in these terms, the frontiers between fact and fiction may become a fragile and not well resolved aspect of texts independently of genre, form and style.

In this work, I draw attention to the "worldliness of texts" – a notion I encountered in Edward Said's later writings – in order to both situate texts in their contexts and to discuss the potential that narrative strategies have to articulate alternative views aimed at political change. The reason why I resort to Said's work and life experience as an important source of inspiration and toolkit to develop my own analysis throughout this PhD thesis becomes clear once we pay attention to the plentiful ways this author managed to bridge disciplines and worlds himself – literature and international affairs among them. I hereby take Said's definition of "worldliness", his discussion on what it means to link text to context, knowledge to (the hope of) social change, and his plea for intellectual "wakefulness" as analytical

device to make sense of the politics of (re)imagining community and subjectivity in postcolonial literature from the Maghreb. A glimpse on the ambivalences Said himself experienced in his intellectual trajectory may also provide us assistance in the discussion about the limits of theoretical criticism – "the approved practice of high culture" – when it is "marginal to the serious political concerns of society", that is to say, when theory and intellectual criticism are indifferent to their connections with power – i.e. to its worldly aspect (Said 1983:2).

In addition, I draw on the analogous concept of "worldism" (Agathangelou & Ling 2009) in order to suggest a third meaning of "worldliness". I argue that the notion of "worldliness" not only signals toward the relationship between text and context, world and critic, and the productivity of these connections. It also describes an ontology of multiple worlds that can assist us in dealing with the limits of scholarly critic. Moreover, it allows for other modalities of "worldism" to be conceived as valid knowledge – and thus to remain opened to dialogue and susceptible to criticism as well. As my own engagements with postcolonial Maghrebian literary texts and imaginative writing show, literature appears as an important method for worldism and worldist interventions.

In *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983), Edward Said discusses how modern critical discourse has been strengthened, among other things, by the writings of authors such as Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault, and by influences such as structuralism, linguistics, Marxism and psychoanalysis. He argues, however, that the methods encouraged by these theoretical schools and even by the more contemporary "apostles of European revolutionary textuality", to use his own words, have a had a crippling effect (Said 1983:3). Through their tendency to compel works of literature and other fields to meet the requirements of a theory or a system, these so-called "critical approaches" have overlooked the complex affiliations binding texts to the world. While acknowledging his own intellectual debts to poststructuralism, Said also expresses his disenchantment with the kind of politics this and other exclusively textually and theoretically-bound approaches seem to entail. Even though such approaches speak in the name of historicity and contingency, they end up by favoring space-clearing moves through broad assertions concerning the violent nature of power and discourse, and through an unqualified commitment with ambiguity. In this sense, Said argues, little or no space is left for human action, that is, for translating high philosophical exercises

and critique into political activism beyond academic spaces and orthodoxy. By stating every action or positionality taken as inherently violent, the terms in which violence occurs as well as the materiality and historicity of power are often in danger of remaining untouched. The line between assuming a critical stance and turning critique into dogmatic assertions is thin – Said seems to alert us. He writes:

> Textuality has therefore become the exact antithesis and displacement of what might be called history. Textuality is considered to take place, yes, but by the same token it does not take place anywhere or anytime in particular. It is produced, but by no one and at no time. It can be read and interpreted, although reading and interpreting are routinely understood to occur in the form of misreading and misinterpreting. […] [T]extuality [has for the most part been isolated] from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work (Said 1983:3-4).

Even though Said accepts the argument put forward by Hayden White and other radical sponsors of narrative as a central aspect of human political and knowledge practices – that is, that "there is no way to get past texts in order to apprehend 'real' history directly" (Said 1983:4) –, in his perspective, it does not need to overpass interest in the events and in the circumstances expressed in texts. One dimension is never divorced from the other. Texts are worldly precisely because they inevitably take part in social realities, structures and their affiliations to power, and in the contingencies of human life, not to mention "of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (Said, p.4). This is one aspect of Said`s notion of worldliness, which expresses a connection between the political aspect of narratives and intellectual critique. In this sense, the sort of disembodied criticism encouraged by different instances of the modern discourse (e.g. Western academia) where there is a clear separation between subject and object, text and context, appears as deeply political. In what regards more contemporary literary theory and criticism – which are Said's main focus in that book –, for instance, he explains that the emergence of "so narrowly defined a philosophy of pure textuality and critical noninterference" has part of its constituency in the depersonalization of modern society and subjects, "who have been left to the hands of 'free' market forces, multinational corporations, the manipulations of consumer appetites" (Said 1983:4).

This resonates with the critic of poststructuralist and postmodern approaches in IR that Sankaran Krishna has launched in his 1993 review essay in *Alternatives* – in which the author himself resorts to Said`s writings. Krishna acknowledges the

contribution of the postmodernist turn in IR theory in opening space for critical discourse in the field, but also problematized the tendency of some of these works to be excessively focused on practices of signification and representation, rendering practices of violence the appearance of a purely textual trait since they tend to efface its "vital and physicalistic sense" (Krishna 1993:388). Moreover, he argues, the postmodern suspicion of subjectivity and agency as inherently violent also makes a gesture towards unqualified pre-conceptualizations that are oblivious to the notion of historicity, that is, to the contingency of social formations, subject-positions, and worldviews *as both politically enabling and disabling*. Krishna offers various examples that corroborate to this perception, but he specifically highlights the fact that postmodernist "self-contained and self-referential view of the West" as a knowable discourse to be criticized and defied is "oblivious to the intimate dialogue between 'Western' and 'non-Western' economies, societies, and philosophies that underwrite the disenchantment with modernity" of our time (Krishna 1993:388). That is, it renders everything that stems from contact zones and from non-Western spaces either unacknowledged or unassailable.

In this sense, the forgetting of a whole history of imperialism in the writings of Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Derrida, to name a few, are symptomatic of a theoretical anxiety that indulges more than defy the historical blindness of the modern discourse they are so apt to criticize (see Sajed 2013; Hiddleston 2005). In chapter 4, I read the works of Abdelkebir Khatibi and Jacques Derrida contrapuntally and argue that such theoretical anxiety towards otherness, combined with an ahistorical view of violence in Derrida's writings culminates in a problematic pre-discursive sense of difference as inherently intractable. This, in turn, prevents deconstruction from fulfilling the decolonial purpose Khatibi had envisioned for it.

Said's critic of such "retreat into the labyrinth of 'textuality'" at the expenses of ignoring important aspects of what is "worldly, circumstantial, or socially contaminated" (Said, p. 3) also resonates in the realm of subjectivity more specifically. At stake in his later works is the subjectivity of the (postcolonial) public intellectual. Besides acknowledging the power-encoded character of all social narratives – what obviously includes the dogmas and orthodoxies of the hegemonic culture but also the critical systems trying to depose it –, Said is also

trying to articulate a space for a politically and ethically informed practice of critique as activism.

At this point, it is worth recalling that Said himself was a controversial figure in the eyes of both his admirers and his critics. The same author who has insisted on an "explicit anti-essentialist, radically sceptical" stance about all categorical designations – such as Orient and Occident in *Orientalism* [1978][11], for instance –, also happened to be the vigorous advocate of Palestinian nationalism who introduces his book *The Question of Palestine* [1992] as a work that attempts to portray the "reality" of the Palestinian people, the "plain and irreducible core of the Palestinian experience" before his reader (Said 1992:7 quoted in Rao 2010:129). In this work as well as in his public engagements with the Palestinian cause, Said seemed to abandon the fluidity and imprecision of identity in order to engage in articulations of the essentials of Palestinian identity. "I am Palestinian", Said asserts; "we have a collective identity that while Arab is not only generally Arab but specifically Palestinian, and an attachment to the actual land of Palestine antedates Zionism in Israel" (Said 1994: xvi quoted in Rao 2010:129). It is not my intention here to explore the intricacies of Edward Said's whole oeuvre, or the connections between his intellectual and public life and his work, especially in what touches his well-known ambivalences as a spokesman for Palestinian self-determination who could distance himself drastically from the more "cosmopolitan skepticism of stable, essentialized identities" stance he had adopted in a number of his writings. It should be noted, however, that this connection between the cognitive and the political and its effects upon the possibility of change seems to be present as a major feature of his intellectual work and stance as a Palestinian activist[12].



[11] This quote appears in the afterword to the 1995 edition of the book (See Rao 2010:128).

[12] Rahul Rao summarizes the "Saidian paradox", that is this tension between Said's simultaneous advocacy of the Palestinian nationalist cause and his criticism of nationalism per se: "Said's position should be appreciated for its sensitivity to the dispersed nature of threats to the freedom of the political community he was helping to imagine. It is this sensitivity that leads him to hold his cosmopolitan inclinations in tension with the nationalist imperatives of the Palestinian struggle. In his work as a literary theorist, Said insists that we eschew analytical essentialism and normative blame in the study of cultures. Yet as a Palestinian activist, he uses precisely these tools in the construction of a Palestinian identity. [...] Benita Parry describes this tension running through Said's work as one between a 'cognitive recognition of cultural heterogeneity and the political need for solidarity'. In her view, Said recognizes the subject as decentred and culture as hybrid, but also acknowledges the potential imaginary collectivities constructed under conditions of subjugation to confront and perhaps overcome such conditions. This is correct, although I am not sure that Said experiences these tensions in separate realms – the cognitive and the political – as if Said the literary

Thus, what Said seems to highlight throughout his work is that *"intellectuals have* a *special responsibility* to promote a state of wakefulness by moving beyond the language of pointless denunciations" (Giroux 2004:345, my emphasis). This indeed sounds as a defense of intellectuals' privilege of voice and discourse disguised as duty and responsibility toward the oppressed at some points of his work. Another way of reading it, however, is to pay attention to Said's constant plea for intellectuals to make their critique "worldly", that is, politically situated and relevant to those who are inside and those who are outside academy. By recognizing that power is not simply a crushing form of oppression and that not all narratives and political acts are equally oppressing and violent, Said actually renders individuals and collectivities status as "potential agents and not simply [...] victims or ineffectual dreamers", or ahistorical, apolitical, and faceless pieces on a board game. As Giroux has pointed out, Said's legacy can be read as one of "critique and possibility, of resistance and agency", of course, with its own limitations (Giroux, p. 345).

This dimension is key to understand a second aspect of his notion of "worldliness", which now appears more as an ethical-political stance destined to put knowledge into the service of humanity beyond the privileged spaces and logics of academic affiliations. Despite the limits and discipline imposed by academic discourse and the cultural system it helps to legitimate and perpetuate, in Said's perspective, "individual scholars can sometimes elude the constraints of discourse to have a transformational impact on the field" (Rao 2010:128).

Said outlines the two meanings that inhere within his notion of "worldliness" in a 1989 article in which he discusses the politics of representation in Anthropology:

> [O]ne, the idea of being in the secular world, as opposed to being "otherworldly," and two, because of the suggestion conveyed by the French word mondanité, worldliness as the quality of a practiced, slightly jaded savoir faire, worldly wise and street smart. […] Geographical dislocation, secular discovery, and the painstaking recovery of implicit and internalized histories: these stamp the ethnographic quest with the mark of a secular energy that is unmistakably frank. Yet the by now massed discourse, codes, and practical traditions of anthropology, with its authorities, disciplinary rigors, genealogical maps, systems of patronage and accreditation have

critic could afford to acknowledge the fluidity and hybridity of identity, while Said the political activist must insist on stability and solidarity. Even within the realm of the political, Said believed that political exigencies of different sorts pulled in both directions, demanding both split and united selves" (2010:127-128;130).

> been accumulated into various modes of being anthropological. Innocence is now out of the question of course. And if we suspect that as in all scholarly disciplines, the customary way of doing things both narcotizes and insulates the guild member, we are saying something true about all forms of disciplinary worldliness (Said 1989:212-213)

In this sense, worldliness appears as both an unescapable sense of being in the world which is constantly affected by the interaction with the world we live in but also, and in connection with that, as an unescapable ethical and political stance towards this world. In the case of the postcolonial intellectual, it translates as "responsibility for challenging structures of domination and for alleviating human suffering" in ways that "rejects modes of education removed from political or social concerns, divorced from history and matters of injury and injustice" (Giroux 2004:342; see Krishna 1993). In chapter 2, I discuss, among other things, Said's depiction of the figure and the role of the (postcolonial) public intellectual – as opposed to the figure of the traditional scholar "critic" – and his/her responsibility towards secular criticism as key for this author's understanding of liberation/emancipation as an "intellectual mission" (Said 1994:332). There, I observe that there are important parallels between Said's depiction of the role of the intellectual and the ethical-theoretical anxiety permeating certain critical approaches in IR which have been especially attentive to the role of narratives, research practices and to the politics of writing IR. In both scenarios, questions such as narrative, academic voice and academic subjectivity are no longer considered residual and have been moved to centre stage as theoretical problems in themselves.

The notion of "worldliness", as discussed so far, represents a thread of connection between the text, the "secular world" and the critic, but says little about the critic's role in envisioning and creating alternative worlds herself. Critical views seem to be still articulated from within the same framework and grammar they purport to defy for there seems to be no way to do it otherwise. In Said's framework, "from within" means, first, from the standpoint of the postcolonial "diasporic intellectual" (see Said 1994) who is capable of assuming a more reflexive stance and fearlessly embrace an ethical-political commitment towards those who are oppressed. Secondly, and paradoxically, it is expected to originate in no other place but from the authorized spaces of scholarly disciplines as privileged *loci* for the articulation of emancipatory and liberationist projects onto the secular world. Thus,

on the one hand, there is an assumed responsibility towards rethinking structures of power and our compliance with the hegemonic culture, and "the political necessity of taking a stand, of 'strategically essentializing' a position from the perspective of those who were and are victimized and continue to suffer in various ways from an unequal (…) world order" (Krishna 1993:389). But, on the other hand, this responsibility might translate in quite problematic (and paradoxically excluding and disempowering) ways for those who occupy marginal positions. In this sense, Said's perception is undoubtedly insightful (especially in the case of the Maghreb, considering the standpoint I purport to examine it), but I also feel his perspective requires scrutiny. When portraying liberation as predominantly an "intellectual mission" (Said 1994:332) nurtured by what he has called "intellectual wakefulness", Said does bring important nuances to practices of knowledge production, but at the same time fails to acknowledge and further engage with other forms of "critical consciousness" stemming from unauthorized, non-academic sources. As I will show throughout the following chapters, such assumption and the ambivalence it entails are largely shared by the Maghrebian writers whose works I chose to examine here.

By the same token, I argue that by reading the recent movement toward narratives in IR in parallel with Said´s previous explorations of the relationship between "the world, the text, and the critic", one is able to situate this new "turn" in the field within a broader and more complex context: i.e. that of a crisis in Eurocentric forms of representation and the reactions it has entailed both within and beyond IR. Building upon insights emerging at the intersections of disciplines such as Literature, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, these critical engagements problematize IR as a field with an inclination to "erase the political status of women, colonized and indigenous people, and racialized objects as being secondary, 'before' or 'outside' of normative state politics" (Vrasti 2017:273) and render these voices unheard as either irrelevant or unassailable. As Said's own reading of the situation of crisis and conflict that has been brought about by Eurocentric forms of representation uncovers, there is an underlying paradox connecting the realm of *speaking of (or in the name of) subaltern subjectivities* and the realm of *speaking with subalternity,* for both tend to be performed by resorting to the rubric of "radical

otherness"[13]. In other words, the practice of rendering anything and anyone who is somehow beyond the Western text as "fundamentally and constitutively different" as either "subaltern" or "alien" to that logic (Said 1989:212). In his insightful words:

> The point I am trying to make is that this kind of scrubbed, disinfected interlocutor is a laboratory creation with suppressed, and therefore falsified, connections to the urgent situation of crisis and conflict that brought him or her to attention in the first place. It was only when subaltern figures like women, Orientals, blacks, and other "natives" made enough noise that they were paid attention to, and asked in so to speak. Before that they were more or less ignored, like the servants in nineteenth-century English novels, there, but unaccounted for except as a useful part of the setting. To convert them into topics of discussion or fields of research is necessarily to change them into something fundamentally and constitutively different. And so the paradox remains. […] The histories, traditions, societies, texts of "others" are seen either as responses to Western initiatives – and therefore passive, dependent – or as domains of culture that belong mainly to "native" elites (Said 1989:212)

As Said writes, words such as "interlocutor", "representation", and "subaltern" are not fixed referents, and thus "can be assigned any very essential or fixed signification" except for in situations of strategic essentializing aiming towards political change. Thus, in my reading of postcolonial Maghrebian literary productions with an attention to the politics of (re)imagination stemming from these texts, I am encouraged to suggest a third sense of "worldliness". In focusing on the ways Maghrebian intellectuals picture the encounters between various and contending ways of being, knowing and relating in their writings, I aim to understand what is at stake in the move of turning the Maghreb into an experimental language in order to imagine and express alternative (and often multiple) aesthetics of difference in which subaltern voices are heard and (ideally) occupy significant positions. The notion of worldliness that I want to suggest allows for a conceptualization of relationships as "performative encounters" rather than as given protocols. As Mireille Rosello (2005), who has focused on the dimensions of the postcolonial encounter between France and the Maghreb, has described it, performative encounter refers to:

> a type of encounter that coincides with the creation of new subject-positions rather than treating pre-existing (pre-imagined) identities as the reason for, and justification of, the protocol of encounter – whether it is one of violence or trust, respect or hostility (Rosello 2005:1)

[13] See Inayatullah & Blaney 2004, specially Chapter 2.

Although I do not focus on the dimension of performativity specifically, I do aim to highlight the dimension of "the encounter between memories" (Rosello 2005:22; see Sajed 2013) these writers aim to portray in their writings and how they situate themselves and other Maghrebian subject-positions with regard this collection of memories in their narratives. More than situating themselves into the world and trying to make sense of this world through literary strategies, I believe that these writers are also carving out alternative vocabularies and alternative paths towards creative appropriation and less violent forms of cohabitation. They are trying to think and write beyond the orthodoxies of their contexts while trying to make sense of the persistence of multiple forms of violence in postcolonial Maghreb. Their narratives are, therefore, "worldly" rehearsals or "worldist interventions", to use Agathangelou and Ling's (2009) terminology. Building on the postcolonial utmost affirmation that "all parties make history", and thus, that "all parties, despite inequities and injustices" owe the agency to imagine, build and articulate worlds, Agathangelou and Ling suggest that we envision "world politics as a site of multiple worlds" (Agathangelou & Ling 2009:85,86). Here, the complexity of the definition offered by the authors deserves the long quote:

> Worldism […] refer[s] to the various and contending ways of being, knowing, and relating that have been passed onto us from previous generations. Histories, languages, myths, and memories institutionalize and embody multiple worlds through simple daily acts […] but also through larger events like trade, development, conflict and war. Worldism registers not only the "difference" that comes from multiple worlds […] but also their entwinements. Selves and others reverberate, producing multi- and trans-subjectivities that leave us legacies of reinforcement and conflict, reconstruction and critique, reconciliation and resistance. *Such syncretic engagements belie seeming oppositions and contradictions among multiple worlds to reveal their underlying connections despite hegemony's violent erasure*s. On this basis, communities have opportunities to heal and recuperate so they can build for another day, for another generation.
> *Worldism as everyday life* enacts self-other reverberations and syncretic engagements […]. *Worldism as an analytical framework* theorizes about them (Ibid., 85-86, my emphasis)

Thus, the notion of worldism as conceptualized above allows, among other things, for an ontology of multiple encounters and multiple worlds (see Blaney and Tickner 2017; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004) and serves as complement to the analytical framework orienting this research. Therefore, I attempt to look at their narratives – mostly literary, autobiographical or semi-autobiographical texts – not (only) as anecdotal stories but as expressions of a mode of knowing in their own

ways considering the context from which they are offspring. I argue that, despite their differences, they are united by a common attempt at speaking about the(ir) world(s) – both "real" and envisioned ones – in worldly, politically and ethically meaningful ways.

Said seems to constantly remind us that all writing styles are complicit with the power that allows them to *be there*. Thus, when reading these specific stories and simultaneously looking at the contexts from where they stem, I am caught by the impetus of understanding narratives as not only stories we tell about ourselves and the world, be them fictitious or not, but as political acts. For texts are always "worldly" forms.

## 1.3 Postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian Literature and the Task of (Re)imagining the Maghreb

> Are you strong enough to begin again? To mark out in writing the trajectories doomed to be blank? Only then would you begin to understand the enigma of the Almoravide history – and that of the whole Maghreb, no doubt: to mark out a moving surface that swallows boundaries in its restless wandering [Djaout 1987:103-4][14]

> But one fine day, the boundaries surrender to sand, the water sinks deep into the early like a frightened scorpion, the horizon collapses like an old fence – and the aimless wandering without landmarks is taken up again… Yet it is up to him to find water, the word that reinvigorates; it is up to him to reveal the territory – to invent it as needed [Ibid., 122][15]

The words of Algerian writer Tahar Djaout [1954-1993] reproduced above appear in his 1987 novel entitled *L'Invention du Désert*. Djaout's *L'Invention* was one of the first Maghrebian novels I had the chance to read, a few years ago, when I was already moved by the suspicion that Maghrebian postcolonial literature had much to offer to someone who was trying to better understand that region`s history and its place in contemporary world affairs. By that time, I was tired of reading IR manuals in which I could barely find anything about North Africa – let alone any

[14] The original in French reads: "Es-tu assez fort pour recommencer? Pour rebaliser par l´écrit des trajectoires vouées à être blanches? Alors seulement tu commencerais à comprendre l' énigme de l´histoire almoravide – et de tout le Maghreb sans doute: baliser une surface mouvante qui avale les bornes dans son errance". Here, I used Rèda Bensmaïa's English translation. See Bensmaïa 2003:74.
[15] The original in French reads: "Mais, un beau jour, les bornes capitulent devant le sable, l´eau s' enfonce loin dans la terre tel un scorpion apeuré, l'horizon s' abat comme une vieille cloture – et l´errance sans balises reprends…C' est pourtant à lui de trouver l'eau, la parole qui revigore, c'est à lui de révéler le territoire – de l'inventer au besoin". Here, I used Rèda Bensmaïa's English translation. See Bensmaïa 2003:75.

North African account of world politics –, not to mention the lack of official documents, discourses, and media news available. Despite the fact of being a literary text embodying all the allegorical and dreamy language one might expect from a novel whose title carries the load of the term "invention", Djaout`s book also appeared, above all, as a very self-conscious exploration of the imaginative, fragmented and fragile task that is writing a nation`s history from the perspective of someone who grew up through the period of decolonization (and by resorting to the former colonizer's language, i.e. French). As I would soon realize, it is a common trace in most exemplars of Francophone North African literature written in the period ranging from the immediate aftermath of decolonization to late 1980s.

Literature of French expression from the three Maghrebian countries – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – entered the realm of Francophone literature via the process of French colonial conquest. As the French settlers arrived in numbers following the conquest of the region[16], a new mode of living was introduced in North Africa, which included land appropriation by settlers, social and spatial segregation, and the imposition of the colonizer´s language and educational system upon the local population. At the time, the Maghreb conversely had a cultural impact upon the metropole as a new frontier to be explored, visited and settled. French writers crossed the Mediterranean Sea seeking adventure and exoticism, and the Maghreb soon became a subject of literary inspiration for a number of French tales and travelogues – Gustave Flaubert's 1853 novel *Salammbô* is an emblematic example of that period (Mortimer 2001:2). Tunisian novelist and social critic Albert Memmi has referred to this group of metropolitan writers who tend to narrate the Maghreb through an Orientalist perspective as "tourist writers" [*écrivains-touristes*] (Memmi 2009:27). For them, the Maghreb has appeared as "a catalyst for escape from the quotidian" and for their search for "self-discovery". In other words, it has not been a true encounter with the other as it was usually claimed (Mortimer 2001:2).

According to Memmi, this metropolitan literature focused on the Maghreb was radically different from the autochthonous Francophone Maghrebian literature which flourished by the end of the first half of the twentieth century. It was also in

[16] Algeria fell under French imperial rule in 1830, Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1881, and Morocco followed in 1912. While colonial Algeria became an integral part of metropolitan France, Tunisia and Morocco had the status of protectorates.

sharp contrast with *pied-noir* (the European born in North Africa) literature in which the colonizer was usually depicted as the heroic descendant of the Romans, and in which Arab and Berber population was either absent or appeared as a stereotype (Albert Camus´ works are one of the most often cited example of the latter case). Memmi has expressed his view on this duality – which is the main thread of the argument he developed in his now classic *Portrait du Colonisé* (1957) [*The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1974) in the English translation][17] – distinguishing early Francophone Maghrebian literary texts as follows:

> This literature produced by natives has helped to bring the dramas of colonization to the knowledge of the French. There had been what I have called, without indulgence, I admit, the "writers-tourists", or the descendants of metropolitans who came there according to the whims of the administration, by direct testimony, and by a good level in expression, that was new. The French, at least the metropolitans, did not really know the colonized; […] What did not prevent France to enlarge its army of Senegalese and Moroccan Tabors, promoted "guard dogs of the empire", and to send them on the frontline to save its own national youth. This literature revealed the existence of men and women of flesh and blood, who were suffering and who soon revolted (Memmi 2009:27, my translation)

The years of more acute anticolonial struggle, in particular of the Algerian War of Independence [1954-1962] and its immediate aftermath thus witnessed the emergence of a body of Francophone Maghrebian writers whose works were focused on exposing – mostly to a French educated audience in the metropole itself – the situation of injustice and violence of the colonial period. In the occasion of the publication of his masterpiece *Nedjma* [1956] – which I explore in Chapter 3 – , Algerian writer Kateb Yacine explained: "There was radical ignorance… I intended it [Nedjma] to be a novel that would show French people, in their language, that Algeria was not French. I wanted to give French people an idea of what Algeria was really all about" (Kateb 1988 quoted in Aresu 1991:xxxi).

In his mapping of the main trends in the changing site that Francophone Maghrebian literature has become, Mildred Mortimer (2001) explains that the novel – especially the largely autobiographical or semi-autobiographical texts emerging from that period on until the late 1980s – is perhaps the most interesting form to study the ambivalence of these writers toward the former colonizer and the specificities of Maghrebian postcolonial wounds. Maghrebian writers made use of the language inherited from the colonizer and of a traditionally European literary

[17] See: Memmi, Albert (1974). The Colonizer and the Colonized. London: The Orion Press.

form highly explored in French literature to express their anger with colonialism and their frustration with their postcolonial societies – in which the Francophone postcolonial intellectual remained in a condition of exile, but of a different kind. This is what Mortimer has called "the Maghrebian paradox" (Mortimer, p.3). It refers to the condition of those writers who first expressed (mostly to a French audience) their rage because colonized subjects were treated as second-class citizens; but then experienced exile not only in the former colonizer`s language but also within their own societies in the course of the Arabization process and other policies deployed by the governments of independent Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria (see Toumi 2002). They were made "orphan writers", for they could not reach the public most of them had envisioned inside their own countries (Mortimer 2001:3)[18].

Ironically, works published in Paris, the former colonial capital, offered the writer greater opportunities in terms of distribution and therefore a potentially larger audience than texts published in their home countries. In this dimension, although I do not fully agree with Kwame Anthony Appiah's critique of postcolonialism as a commodification of Third World artwork and intellectual production by both Western elites and native *intelligentsia*[19], here I do take seriously his warning against "Western fetishism" over the discourses and aesthetics production under the "postcolonial" rubric (Appiah 1991). However, as Hafid Gafait's insightful study on the complex relationship between literary production, distribution and censorship in North Africa shows, there is more going on in this dimension than the combination of market forces, fetishism over indigenous traditions, or intellectual privilege alone. Besides practical limits such as the high levels of illiteracy of North African populations at the time of independence, "the repression of artist and writers [by local governments] fluctuates in accordance with the internal power relations between sociopolitical groups and the international status of the artist"

[18] In this realm, a quick looking into our contemporary scenario shows that beyond North African borders, Maghrebian texts written in French are much better known than their Arabic-language counterparts – and the ways I chose/were available to me to design this PhD project, of course, are to a large extent an effect of such lingering trend. As Mortimer points out, although Arabic-language literature has been growing in the region since independence, just a limited number of Maghrebian Arabic-language texts have gained enough international attention and have been translated to French or English (Mortimer 2001:4-5). See also Hiddleston 2015b.

[19] Native intelligentsia here refers to an Europhone elite educated in former metropoles and who mediates the commercialization of cultural commodities from former colonies under the appeal of "nativism" (Appiah 1991; See Spivak 1990).

(Gafait 1997:60). This dimension cannot be overlooked in any analysis of the politics of postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian literature.

Francophone Maghrebian literature has been a changing and diverse site of cultural, aesthetical and political expression which is still very much alive up to nowadays – despite Albert Memmi's famous assertion in his *Anthologie des écrivains maghrébins d'expression française*, of 1964, that literary production in French would soon disappear after decolonization (Mortimer 2001:4; see Toumi 2002). Some analysts trace a close link between the interpretation of (post)colonial experience and the emergence of three different key moments or trends in the Francophone literary landscape in colonial and postcolonial Maghreb. These moments are not neatly defined though, as certain themes and narrative strategies tend to linger throughout the years and became recognizable features of the genre. However, although such exercises of categorization and periodization are slippery, they can be useful in making sense of broader contexts and trends inasmuch we acknowledge their artificiality and imprecision.

The first moment, usually referred as "*la littérature du mimétisme*" ["literature of mimicry"], refers to Francophone Maghrebian literature early years. Maghrebian texts from this period are usually seen as outcomes of France's *mission civilisatrice* and the establishment of colonial educational system (see Bensmaïa 2003)[20]. Notably, as Gafaiti (1997) has pointed out, the idea of "mimicry" here is more related to the attachment of native Maghrebian writers to a French style of writing rather than a lack of imagination or will to defend their own views and articulate the specificities of their culture and identity.

In the so-called "Fanonian period", starting around late 1940s, by contrast, Francophone literary writing in the Maghreb was mainly dedicated to narrate the terms of resistance against colonial rule – usually converging in the ideal of becoming an independent *nation.* Those who were writing in this period seemed to consciously resort to the colonizers' language in order to express the terms of

[20] By the time of the establishment of French colonial rule in the Maghreb, one of the emblematic stages of French "mission civilisatrice" and colonial cultural politics was the colonial school and the reform of the educational system through the closing of the existing Arabic and Berber schools followed by the offering of only limited access to French education. Thus, besides the fact that in the Maghreb there is the predominance of the culture of orality over written storytelling and historical record, by the time of independence in Algeria, for example, about 80% of the population was illiterate, while the local elite was divided into two main groups, Arabophones and Francophones (Gafaiti 1997:61; See Toumi 2002, especially p. 57).

resistance as well as to envision postcolonial futures. Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* – which is my focus in Chapter 3 – is an emblematic example of such trend. According to Mortimer (2001), Kateb's novel symbolized the transition in Francophone Maghrebian literature between the era of anticolonial struggle and the postcolonial period. The circle of violence narrated by Kateb showed colonized subjects being both victims of colonial violence and perpetrators of other forms of oppression, such as patriarchalism, inside their home society.

In a third moment, however, a great number of Maghrebian literary works was dedicated to express the semantic and practical limits of the very idea of an "imagined community" or nation when seen from the limited (and limiting) horizon of post-independent government administrations, their cultural politics and policies toward a forged ideal of unity and homogeneity, and the violent attempts of assimilation and effacement such ideals have entailed (see Bensmaïa 2003; Gafaiti 1997; Prashad 2007; Toumi 2002). As highlighted by Toumi (2002), one of the most emblematic new forms of assimilation and silencing in the context of Maghrebian societies was the Arabization process initiated in the new independent nation-states. Facing the controversies regarding the use of French language in Maghrebian countries, and unlike the writers of the 1950s and 1960s, postcolonial writers "now use the [former] colonizer´s language as a revolutionary tool to express an ideology and aesthetics of difference"[21] (Mortimer 2001:3-4). However, even thought many of these francophone Maghrebian writers share sentiments of exile and the desire to question the legitimacy of French language in the region, such lingering anxiety cohabits with their eagerness to "make something happen with this [French language]", *both aesthetically and politically* speaking (Derrida 1998:51). This ambivalence appears in both Abdelkebir Khatibi's novels *La Memoire Tatouée* (1971) and *Amour Bilingue* (1983), although French appears in the latter as the language that allowed the author-narrator to experience an intercultural love relationship as well as to enter the cosmopolitan world denied to most of Maghrebian locals – Khatibi's *Amour Bilingue* is put under scrutiny in

[21] The debate over the linguistic landscape and its relationship to cultural politics in the Maghreb is especially strong and experimented different phases in local intellectual circles during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. About this issue, Kateb Yacine highlighted and struggled against the absence of a national debate regarding the linguistic issue in Algeria. In his own words, "[w]hile the issue of rejecting the language of the colonizer was a political and aesthetic debate in the 1960s, it became repressive when appropriated by the state in the 1970s" (Gafaiti 1997:65).

Chapter 4 of this thesis. Therefore, the diverse linguistic landscape and its relationship with cultural politics in the Maghreb are important features to understand the different contexts in which each of the writers with whom I engage here were living and writing, and especially in terms of how such contexts may have inflicted their *acts of thinking and writing the Maghreb* – i.e. their adoption/ re-imagination of the Maghreb as *locus of enunciation*.

In *Le Roman Maghrébin* [The Maghrebian Novel], one of the first studies of the developments of this genre in the Maghrebian context, for instance, Abdelkebir Khatibi affirmed that the mission of the novel at that time – the essay was published in 1968, six years after the end of the Algerian War of Independence – was to "express the drama of a society in crisis" [*'exprimer le drame d'une société en crise'*] (Khatibi 1968:11 quoted in Hiddleston 2015b). Thus, it is hard to overlook the debate on the relevance of literary strategies and their place as artifacts in the domains of historical and political reflection (and the anxieties created by such processes) in late colonial and postcolonial Maghreb (see Bensmaïa 2003; Bonn 1990; Hamil 2007; Hiddleston 2015, 2015b; Šukys 2007; Toumi 2002). Of course, this does not mean that every work produced in contexts of social and political crisis will necessarily take the form of straightforward depictions of such environments. As Jane Hiddleston clarifies, literary texts and literary writing not necessarily have to "provide an unmediated portrait in order to be able to bear witness" since they may "gesture rather more allusively towards experiences that are occluded by public discourse" (Hiddlestone 2015b:83). Khatibi's analysis nevertheless highlights Maghrebian literature's complex engagement with its epoch and its potential to intervene in contexts of social and political upheaval.

In the context when Khatibi's essay came out, Maghrebian novelists writing in French were willing to expose and analyze the drama of decolonization, and yet they also used literary forms to understand and articulate that drama in challenging new ways (see Bensmaïa 2003). Thus, in Alek Toumi's words, "literature and politics are extremely related" and "text and context are inseparable, especially in the context of the Maghreb" (Toumi 2002:6). As Rèda Bensmaïa (2003) interestingly pointed out, the Maghreb has been converted into a sort of experimental language against colonial dominance and its capillaries, as well as a tool to make sense of the complexities of the postcolonial context. It touched not only upon the relationship with France but also, and importantly, upon the clash of

social projects in different sections of these societies[22]. In a nutshell, it is possible to notice that a number of postcolonial Maghrebian writers focused on unearthing the negative factors that have been eroding Maghrebian societies after independence was achieved in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and up to nowadays, such as authoritarianism, religious fanaticism, violence against cultural minorities, social inequality, and lack of liberty of expression.

Thus, I believe that the literary narratives I engage here, created by Francophone Maghrebian writers such as Abdelkebir Khatibi, Fatema Mernissi and Kateb Yacine, are particularly relevant not only because they attempted to perform "precisely what has not been done within the 'public' sphere" neither in the former metropole nor in the former colonized societies, that is, a "work of memory and responsibility" (Sajed 2013:10). I acknowledge "the originality of the literary strategies deployed by postcolonial Maghrebian writers to re-appropriate their (…) cultural heritage, to regain their idioms, and to reconfigure their history, territory, and community", but I am particularly interested in how these writers seem to be constantly trying to open their idioms "to what was escaping it on all sides" (Bensmaïa 2003:8). And more to that, in how these experimental languages can be relevant in opening our own understanding and practices of world(ing) politics. In other words, and echoing Rèda Bensmaïa's stance in his *Experimental Nations, or, the Invention of the Maghreb* (2003), and Mildred Mortimer`s in his edited volume *Maghrebian Mosaic*, I want to explore the ways in which writers from Maghrebian countries questioned state-centrical boundaries and common-sensical political vocabulary and understandings in order to enter into dialogue both with the "diversity, plurality, and multiplicity" of the region (Mortimer 2001:5) and with the *world* of international and global affairs at large.

I draw some inspiration from Khatibi in his *Maghreb Pluriel* [1983] in the ways he calls for a transgressive stance against the duality expressed in the "Maghrebian paradox" (Mortimer 2001:3). There, Khatibi calls for a "double critique" of both Western metaphysics and foundationalism in the Arab-Islamic

[22] The Algerian civil war was probably the most tragic and emblematic result of these struggle between different groups and tendencies in the Maghreb. The clash between two social projects, one based in a mix of state capitalism and centered in the established ruling party (FLN), and the other anchored in Muslim local, archaic and patriarchal traditions centered on the FIS and based on the slogan "responsible democracy" culminated in a blood wash civil war (Gafaiti 1997:70). See also: Prashad 2007.

world. In a nutshell, Khatibi argues against the notion of an unified Arab culture specifically and against conceptions of identity based on origins and a single religion or heritage in general (Khatibi [1981a]1983). The author invokes the notion of a "plural Maghreb" [*Maghreb pluriel*] as "an alternative to the regressive ideologies of local nationalisms" (Hiddleston 2015b:88). From his point of view, the only way available for postcolonial Maghrebian societies to enter in dialogue among themselves and with the world at large is through the recognition of its plurality as an asset to be epistemologically explored rather than an aberration to be tamed. If, on the one hand, the unifying term "Maghreb" bears the risk of lumping together the distinct cultures and histories of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia[23], on the other hand, Khatibi deliberately applies it with the purpose of imagining a new dialogic form of cultural activity, working across languages and borders and more open to the world. "The risk of a plural thinking (various poles of civilization, various languages, various technical and scientific developments) is", as Khatibi affirms, "what distinguishes the turning of this century on the worldly scene"[24] (Khatibi [1981a]1983:14). In this matter, if, on the one hand, colonial legacy continues to exert influence on contemporary experience, on the other hand, "there has been a move to understand the cultural activity of North Africa [and other postcolonial spaces] beyond the concepts of colonizer and colonized or of European culture versus Islamic culture" (Hiddleston 2015b:88). Thus, Maghrebian authors muse and struggle to put forth in their narratives strategies that both complicate and move beyond the duality – or the paradoxical merger between two irreconcilable identities, as Jacques Derrida envisioned in *Monolingualism of the Other* [1998] – suggested in the hyphenated term "Franco-Maghrebian". This, I believe, is the common issue (more than simply a single theme) which in a sense unifies the works of these writers in the first place.

Though writers share a common ground in this sense, they nevertheless project individual voices in their respective texts. At a first glance, it may sound

[23] This view is both endorsed and contested at different moments in one of the most important postcolonial historical accounts of the Maghreb's history: Abdallah Laroui´s L´Histoire du Maghreb: un essai de synthèse, originally published in 1970 and translated into English in 1977. See: Laroui, Abdallah (1977). History of the Maghrib – an Interpretive Essay. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[24] My translation from the original in French: "Seul le risque d'une pensée plurielle (à plusieurs poles de civilisation, à plusieurs langues, à plusieurs élaborations techniques et scientifiques) peut, me semble-t-il, nous assurer le tournant de ce siècle sur la scène planétaire".

odd, for instance, to put Fatema Mernissi's disruptive engagements with the categories of East and West from the perspective of a Moroccan woman in her semi-autobiographical *Sheherazade Goes West* [1994] in parallel with Abdelkebir Khatibi's explorations of bilingual encounters in *Amour Bilingue* [1983]. Not to mention Kateb Yacine's intricate and violent narrative about an Algeria in the middle of colonial rule and anticolonial struggle in *Nedjma* [1956], a novel in which female voices and hybrid subjectivities are basically absent. However, even though I highlight the importance of contextualizing these writers as symptoms of their own contexts, acknowledging the particularities of the literary strategies adopted by each of them in their narratives, and recognizing that each of these texts bring along with them recessive themes that are beyond the purpose of this research, this unifying issue (or shared desire) of reinventing the Maghreb is my point of entry to read these works. More than anything, at least in my reading, these writings appear as a set of alternative narratives about the world(s) Maghrebian societies had to face in the aftermath of decolonization.

More than alternative narratives of postcolonial Maghreb, I believe that the sort of engagements performed in these literary texts may also encourage reflections on our current political categories and common-places as well as call our attention to the power and limits of imagination when gazing and speaking from certain subject-positions, specially when what is at stake is the issue of speaking with/about subaltern selves and others. Put differently, I intend to read these texts in terms of how they explore questions of identity, difference, memory and violence in colonial and postcolonial Maghreb, specifically; and how in "seeking ways out of the confines" of "the structural constraints within which…[they] are entrapped" (Rao 2010:31) such explorations can possibly help us to rethink the socio-political myths creating ourselves and our visions regarding the world and subjects of international relations in general. To use Khatibi's terminology, *to what extent can these literary narratives promote "an other thought" (une pensée-autre)?* (Khatibi [1981a]1983). *In what ways do the modalities of reflexivity presented in each of these texts encourage and/or jeopardize dialogue with otherness and, importantly, with subaltern voices, worldviews, and positions?*

The limited number of Maghrebian writers whose names and works I decided to include in this project by no means should be considered an overall picture of so-called postcolonial North African literature. Although the names of Abdelkebir

Khatibi, Fatema Mernissi, Jacques Derrida, Kateb Yacine and Tahar Djaout are frequently deemed to be representative of Maghrebian literary writing (Derrida being an exception, since his work is more often read as the work of a French philosopher rather than of an Algerian or Maghrebian writer), I do not wish to suggest that these writers should be seen as the most important voices coming out from the Maghreb[25]. However, I believe that they share particular tensions in their writings – as I discussed above – and they somehow managed to have their voices reverberating and made public their work of colonial memory and denunciation of postcolonial violence within French-Maghrebian frameworks but also beyond. One example in this sense is the number of volumes focused on postcolonial writing and/or Francophone literature in which one can find chapters dedicated to the works of these particular writers (See Bensmaia 2003; Forsdick and Murphy 2003; Hiddleston 2005, 2015a; Mortimer 2001; Rosello 2005; Woodhul 1993). In addition to that, I must mention the fact that, not by coincidence, these authors had a number of their works translated and published abroad, beyond the Francophone world. Thus, their public recognition suggests that they are somehow deemed representative as mediators between their societies and the world, what of course includes the dimension of encounters between the Maghreb and the "West".

In addition, the choice of taking literary texts – especially those containing a considerable autobiographical stance – as the primary substrata of analysis is closely related to one of my main assumptions in this research project: that the complexities of individual experiences and the numerous encounters constituting them gain texture and are rendered visible through remarkable tropes in these texts – such as language, the city and its historical ruins, orality and storytelling etc. By contrast, these dimensions remain remarkably absent or somehow hidden in most IR accounts, especially regarding non-Western peoples. Similarly, I believe that literary texts, perhaps due to their open "use of imagination" and their "experimental, non-argumentative form of language", might also offer alternative interpretations and vocabularies for us to make sense of the complexities of social and political contexts (Hiddleston 2015a:149; See Agathangelou & Ling 2009:99). To paraphrase Naeem Inayatullah's (2011) insightful words, it seems to me that

[25] There are important omissions here such as Albert Memmi, Assia Djebar, Leïla Sebbar, and a large spectrum of other authors whose works I could not include in this project. I hope to engage these other authors in future research, though.

people's life trajectories are all far more complex than our IR theories and our dominant myths about politics, collective identity, and belonging can permit us to make sense. The process of subjectivity production in the act of writing "(which implies the (re)creation of worlds we have seen, witnessed, dreamed of or feared)" are complex and "the literary imagination exploring identities alerts us to these complexities in useful ways not normally available to social scientists" (Sajed 2013:16). In this way, literary texts have the ability to offer a glimpse into more complicated notions of belonging, individual and collective allegiances, space and time which are usually disregarded or obliterated by denotative and territorial epistemologies[26] and other dominant narratives of Western-centric sciences. In this sense, Alina Sajed (2013), Anna M. Agathangelou & L.H.M Ling (2009), Michael Shapiro (2008), Reiko Shindo (2012), Sankaran Krishna (2013), among others, interestingly called attention to the ways literary texts are not only products of their specific social, cultural and political contexts, but can also affect our understanding of these contexts.

As a domain of individual but also collective political expression – and here I am thinking both in the politics of writing and in the politics of reading texts –,



[26] By "denotative and territorial epistemology" I am referring, in a broad sense, to the dominant notion of epistemology in Western logocentric context which emphasizes "denotation" and "will to truth" and is usually blind or indifferent to the geopolitics of knowledge. In a nutshell, Mignolo calls "geopolitics of knowledge (…) the diversification, through history, of the colonial and the imperial differences" (Mignolo 2008:227). In a passage of one of his numerous texts which touching upon this theme, Mignolo resorts to seventeenth century philosopher Francis Bacon's words in ways that help him trace how modernity came to be "imagined as the house of epistemology" (Mignolo 2006:93 quoted in Alcoff 2007:83). I find the quote is worthy of reproduction: "According to Bacon, 'the best division of human learning is derived from the three faculties of the rational soul, which is the need of learning. History has reference to the Memory, Poesy to the Imagination, and Philosophy to the Reason…Wherefore from these three fountains, Memory, Imagination and Reason, flow these three emanations, History, Poesy and Philosophy, and *there can be no others*' (Bacon, Novum organum 1875[1620], 292-93). The three "emanations" were expanded and modified in the subsequent years. However, the assertion that "there can be no others" persisted. And at the moment when capitalism began to be displaced from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic (Holand, Britain), the organization of knowledge was established in its universal scope. "There can be no others" inscribed a conceptualization of knowledge to a geopolitical space (Western Europe) and erased the possibility of even thinking about a conceptualization and distribution of knowledge "emanating" from other local histories (China, India, Islam etc) (Mignolo 2008:227). In his 2000 [2012] book, Mignolo then tried to open spaces for "enactive" epistemologies – i.e. epistemologies "whose will to truth is preceded by the will to transform" that emerges from the experience of colonial difference – which are aware of and sensitive to the colonial difference sustaining the geopolitics of knowledge of (Eurocentric) modernity. I find the tension that Mignolo – inspired by many other names such as Aníbal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Rigoberta Menchú, to name only a few – between "hegemonic epistemology with emphasis on denotation and truth" and "subaltern epistemologies with emphasis on performance and transformation" indeed compelling, but only if this attention to the energies emanating from "border knowledges" and subaltern positions remains aware of the dimensions of contention and exclusions that these other knowledges and modes of thinking may also contain (Mignolo 2012:24-26)

literary narratives also have their own limits in their endeavours of "thinking beyond what is to what might be", to use Rao's (2010) words, and importantly, in their quality as tools for social change. Besides the fact that they can easily be converted into mere objects of "consumption" of the "exotic" in Western societies[27], Hiddleston (2015a) also highlights the dangerousness in depicting the politics of writing as a domain of production of change in itself:

> literature works to challenge orthodoxies in its creation of an encounter with otherness. This is not, however, a straightforward affirmation of literature's ability to transform the social and political world, and clearly literary experimentation, as challenging and stimulating as it might be, will not likely become an actual creator of social change. What literature can do (…) is simply call its reader to ask questions, to doubt, to refuse to submit to a single unchanging Truth, and to perceive the world in ever changing ways. This alone will not bring the downfall of an oppressive regime, but it will introduce new ways of thinking to any readers prepared to take up the challenge (Hiddleston 2015a:160).

Throughout this PhD thesis, I argue that the Francophone Maghrebian intellectuals whose works I examine here have launched "narrative acts", to paraphrase Reiko Shindo (2012) – i.e. they turned writing into an experimental space for, among other things, political activism –, which share a similar orientation towards "re-imagination" as an ethical-political stance and, perhaps, a tool for political and epistemological transformation. The work of re-imagination towards cohabitation and emancipation these Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals have attempted to perform in their writings signals toward both personal freedom and collective good at once, but not always in a "felicitous" or definitive way (Rosello 2005:7). By contrast, an attention to the realm of encounters as they are narrated throughout each of these texts seem to reveal different regimes of tolerance and solidarity across the different subjective-positions they purport to portray. In each of the following chapters, the reader may find, for instance, a disjunction between the desire shared by these writers for reinventing cultural practices in defiance of destructive political and cultural oppression *and* the fragmentary self-questioning that characterises most of these writings and make visible a lingering desire for order, for a safe place for the "self". The figure of the "postcolonial public

[27] One example here can be found in the increased interest from Western readers in novels and other literary genres from the Middle East in general in the aftermath of the 9/11 – what have been accompanied by increases in the number of translations, selling and recognition of these texts beyond their authors' own societies. See, for example: Lindsey, Ursula. The Novel After the Arab Spring. The New Yorker, May 8 2014. Available in: http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-novel-after-the-arab-spring.

intellectual" appears here as one of stating a sense of selfhood in opposition to the orthodoxies both of their home societies but also of modernity at large (namely, capitalism, imperialism, globalization or Western-centric science). In this sense, *anxiety* is another key category that I wish to pay due attention in my inquiry of the politics of imagination and hope bringing these texts together. In fact, the task of thinking subjectivity differently vis-à-vis the specific discourse of modernity and its capillarities – e.g. dominant political forms such as the nation-state – is one common feature of what we often generalize as "postcolonial critique" (Venn 1999). In the case of the Francophone Maghrebian novel, the "unthinkable" seems to emerge from the fractures that the narrative tries to expose, that is, from the ambivalent combinations of a desire to expose modernity`s egocentric ontology of being (even in its postcolonial reverberations beyond the West), and the translation of otherness into limits – the trope of the "intractable" or "radical other". Thus, Franco-Maghrebian writers have also dive into the realms of the unthinkable in order to be able to talk about their difference as the "non-duped" of modernity but something else (Chow 1993:53 quoted in Sajed 2013:3). Venn's attention to the notion of "undecidable belonging" is especially useful here in this sense, for what seems to connect all these texts is precisely the vitality of this restless state of one who reclaims both the status of a marginal and subaltern voice and the ethical-political responsibility that the role of the postcolonial intellectual implies in his/her position as mediator between *worlds* (i.e. between subaltern and dominant cultures)[28].

Before going any further, I wish to spend a few more paragraphs dwelling with some of the ramifications of what I termed as "anxiety" before applying it to individual works. Although it seems to be a common feature gathering together the literary genre I have been describing so far and the more recent branch of critical IR which I refer here as Narrative IR (see Chapter 2), there are certain specificities of place, time, voice and style (four different categories which I boldly conflate in the notion of "subject-position") that cannot be overlooked here.

I should resort once again to Tahar Djaout's *L'Invention du Désert* at this point. One needs not be a very attentive reader to notice that there is a lingering anxiety permeating the trajectory of the main character in the novel. The first-voice

[28] See also: Spivak, The Postcolonial Critic, 1990.

narrative has the reader to believe that the main character (and narrator) is a writer trying to perform the herculean task of telling the story of the creation of contemporary Algerian out of its history of colonial violence, and "through the tracking of its perplexing and disorienting desert landscape" (Hiddleston 2015a:151). In his attempt to recount the history of the violent defeat of the Almoravid dynasty in the twelfth century by the oppressive Almohades, the narrator ends up wandering in unexpected places, sometimes with unexpected companions. Ibn Toumert, who is known both for being the founder of the Almohade dynasty and for his endeavours to moralise local societies by preaching the truth of the Text (i.e. the Koran) since his first incursions in the region, was one of these unexpected companions, for instance. Nonetheless, the task of returning to an unfathomable geo-cultural space and writing a coherent narrative about Algeria's (or Maghreb's) past by violently fixing it inside the boundaries of a written text reveals itself an impossibility during the slow-paced narrative in *L'Invention du désert*. The desert – for some, an allegory for the nation in Djaout`s text (Bensmaia 2003) – presents itself as "the margin without limits that hunts the Text beyond its bounds" (Djaout 1987:81). Moreover, the reader is told at the outset that "he [the narrator] sees himself as multiple, fights with himself" [*il se voit multiple, se bagarre*] (Ibid., 9, my translation), as if the writer-character was using his art to imagine himself beyond his own present limitations to re-establish links with past ancestors and past selves.

I take this feature of Djaout's text as an example of a self-conscious non-indifferent attitude towards the act of writing and towards the writer´s own position (or at least how he sees himself positioned) in the world as he understands/lives it. Above all, Djaout`s narrative clearly reflects back on the political context of late 1980s and early 1990s in Algeria, with the rise of political Islamism and a governmental elite grounding its discourse and practices of oppression in a radical religious doctrine (see Sukys 2007). In this sense, we are encouraged to take the writer-character's retelling of Ibn Toumert`s conquest of the Almoravides as an exploration of his nation`s contemporary plight, in a sort of endeavour to understand the present by means of its links with the past; but also, and importantly, as a realization that recreations of the past are by no means a straightforward project. Here, "the writing process […] provokes doubt rather than providing coherence" (Hiddleston 2015a:153). In other words, if, on the one hand, the narrator's rewriting

of the Maghrebian history will appear as a "disparate and incomplete juxtaposition of moments and spaces that reach beyond the monolithic cultural construction of the Algerian present"; on the other hand, at the end of the day, such exercise of re-imagination and writing that refuses to adhere to "the limits of sanctioned history" will "never form a utopian site of relational harmony" as some would desire (Hiddleston, p. 152). This realization of the juxtaposition of moments, spaces and subject-positions that necessarily characterize narratives of memory and historiographical accounts – even when argued otherwise –, together with the desire to strive against totalizations and violence they entail in that particular context is what seems to characterize the "anxiety" marking Djaout's as well as most of the texts to which I engage throughout this PhD work.

Thus, the anxiety I am talking about here may be better translated as an effect of a "non-indifferent attitude" towards the aesthetics decisions these authors had to take in their writings while taking into consideration the political contexts of their time as well as the shared commitment with a work of (re)imagination and "countermemorializing" (see Connolly 1989; Ashley & Walker 1990) as an intellectual responsibility. Rather than simply a "textual effect" (as suggested by Jane Hiddleston in her examination of Francophone philosophy and literature), anxiety here reflects precisely writers´ efforts to turn narratives into political acts against the orthodoxies of their times. It is one dimension of the worldliness of their texts. Therefore, rather than a question of textuality or, by contrast, of the biographical experience of a living author alone (i.e. "the psychological anxiety of the writer…[as] a living individual"), the anxiety under investigation here refers to the "uncertainty emerging from tensions around the theoretical" and around the narrative "voice" (Hiddleston 2010:4) when confronted with the "worldliness" of texts.

Thus, in drawing attention to the interpenetration of theory with autobiography, this project does not aim to address the direct impact of the writer's lived experience on the process of writing so to speak. Rather than that, it seeks to identify, firstly, the changing stances of the theoretical or narrative-*voice* as well as the uneasy and sometimes contradictory ways in which the writing persona inscribes itself into the text. Secondly, it attempts to make sense of and refer to "anxiety" as a generic modulation when it comes to those instances where the narrative wraps up in ways that differ from its initial premises and aims – what is

indeed common even in academic writing –, through the works of the shifting boundaries of genres and through abrupt unpredictable changes in the discursive stance. And thirdly, following Hiddleston's insights, to name the text's expression of its own limitations, once "[i]n questioning gestures of universalisation" and depoliticization, the writing persona "remains unsure about his or her own position in the text, and anxiety surrounds the persona's subjective reflections" in the form of a "lack of certainty about the contingent 'je' ['I'] weaving in out of the text, and a sense of doubt concerning the values structuring their work" (Hiddleston 2010:4, 6). Anxiety is thus seen here as both an expression of the limits of texts in face of the world the author wants to represent, as well as the energy nurturing intellectual efforts at more reflexive modes of thinking and writing. In this sense, I argue that anxiety can also produce meaningful "worldly" interventions.

In a nutshell, I focus not only on how these writers had to resort to the imaginative realm of the unthinkable in efforts to deal with the questions of community, local (hi)stories, geographies, and individual liberty in a context of cultural and political oppression. I want to draw attention to the epistemological value of these accounts for understanding the intricacies of (post)colonial violence in various dimensions of international and global affairs. The structure of chapters says much about that, since each chapter is to a certain extent dedicated to a different dimension of this complexity. In Chapter 2, I trace parallels between the narratives of postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian writers and IR critical approaches focusing on narratives, especially in what regards the question of writing and the intellectual's voice and political subjectivity vis-à-vis the researched/narrated. I set forth the argument that these two sets of texts, in spite of the fact that they speak from different *loci* of enunciation, share an ethical-theoretical anxiety both towards the main subject of their narratives – i.e. *subaltern* subjectivities and *alternative* worldviews – and towards the role of intellectual critique in the pursuit of political change. Chapter 3 brings the relationship between fiction and history, and between memory and history to the fore, in an exploration of the politics of *re*telling Algeria's past, present and future through the eyes of the young male characters of Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*. In Chapter 4, in turn, I draw attention to some of the effects of the use of the "I" voice in writing subjectivities. I bring a contrapuntal reading of the works of Khatibi and Jacques Derrida in the context of Franco-Maghrebian colonial and postcolonial encounters, focusing on

their engagements with the questions of language, translation and the (im)possibilities of dialogue with otherness as means to decolonization. Finally, Chapter 5 is focused on the issue of writing and thinking the "contact zone" between "East" and "West" through the works of Fatema Mernissi and Abdelkebir Khatibi. In my concluding remarks, I briefly return to the main points of this PhD thesis in order to connect the discussions in each chapter with the general questioning framed here.

Edward Said once highlighted that "[t]he realities of power and authority – as well as the resistances offered by men, women, and social movements […] – are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers and that solicit […] attention" (Said 1983:4). Inspired by this insight, each chapter in this PhD thesis affirms the connection between texts and "the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies and events" (Said, p.4). Beyond the desire of making the case of narrative approaches as valid methodology for the study of world politics, I believe that by "using imagination, creating characters, combining data with fictional narrative" and/or "with one's own experience" (Park-Kang 2015:380), perhaps a more empathetic IR becomes possible. Postcolonial writers seem to have noticed that long time ago. This is one way of stating the politics of hope orienting this study.

## 2. Narrative IR, Worldly IR

> *I am frightened when crossing borders because I am afraid of failing to understand strangers.*
>
> (Fatema Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West*)

> *It seems that in ancient times a brash young warrior sought the hand of a beautiful princess. The king, her father, thought the warrior was a bit too cocksure and callow; he told him he could only marry the princess once he had found Truth. So the young warrior set out on a quest for Truth. He went to temples and to monasteries, to mountaintops where sages meditated and to forests where ascetics scourged themselves, but nowhere could he find Truth. Despairing one day and seeking refuge from a thunderstorm, he found himself in a dank, musty cave. There, in the darkness, was an old hag, with warts on her face and matted hair, her skin hanging in folds from her bony limbs, her teeth broken, her breath malodorous. She greeted him; she seemed to know what he was looking for. They talked all night, and with each word she spoke, the warrior realised he had come to the end of his quest. She was Truth. In the morning, when the storm broke, the warrior prepared to return to claim his bride. "Now that I have found Truth," he said, "what shall I tell them at the palace about you?" The wizened old crone smiled. "Tell them," she said, "tell them that I am young and beautiful"*
>
> (Shashi Tharoor, *Riot*)[29]

I found this version of an ancient Indian story about Truth (as recounted by Indian politician, writer, and former diplomat Shashi Tharoor in his novel *Riot*) for the first time on the introductory pages of one of my favorite books in International Relations, Himadeep Muppidi's *The Colonial Signs of International Relations* [2012]. Muppidi resorts to this short tale in order to expose, on the one hand, the desire for truth or, in his own words, "the aesthetics of rigor, precision and objectivity... [that] haunt[s] IR" mainstream approaches. On the other hand, the story can also relate, as the author manages to show, to the belief sustained by some that in spite of the ugliness of the "truth" about the world of international politics, it is possible to cover up the "the old hag's" dreadful traces with other perhaps more sounding and palatable universalizing claims. At a first glance, one would hardly disagree, for instance, that the world of "liberal peace" is a much more pleasant view than the world where peoples' and States' taste for violence, war, and death dictates our past, present and future as human beings. Muppidi then continues with a provocation: "Could we *imagine* that *our Truth*, when discovered in some dank

[29] Quoted in Muppidi, The Colonial Signs of International Relations, p. 6.

cave, might very well be ugly and yet be *a compelling conversationalist* (as well as a smiling liar)?" (Muppidi 2012:6, emphasis added).

Stories do not only help us to make sense of the world we live in. They essentially produce, shape and transform the world and how we, as social and political beings, perceive, think of, and engage with it. They influence how we see ourselves in this world, as well as how we see others as either sameness or difference (or as both simultaneously), and how we stage our actions when encountering others. The use of narratives strategies – ranging from autoethnography, autobiography, storytelling, fictional IR, among other approaches – has gained growing attention in the study of global politics (Brigg & Bleiker 2010; Dauphinee 2010; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; Doty 2004; 2010; Inayatullah 2011; Muppidi 2013; Park-Kang 2015; Shindo 2012; Vrasti 2010; Wibben 2011). Along with this movement, stories other than the ones we hear from diplomats, politicians, mainstream media and IR theorists are brought to centre stage in order to expose the myths shaping the world of international politics, as well as the violence and silences encouraged and perpetrated by those myths. The narrative "I" voice has been often adopted in many occasions – as Muppidi also does throughout his book – as means to expose the researcher's own motivations and limits in what comes to knowledge production in general, and his/her relationship with his/her subject of research in particular. Moreover, these approaches also help to expose the narrative nature of truth claims when writing the political. These movements are gestures toward an engagement not only with narratives as written, oral, or even sensorial substrata, but with the political aspects of narratives as "knowledge stories". They signal towards the discipline's recent revived attention to narrative strategies in what has been called "narrative IR" (Dauphinee 2013a).

This chapter aims to explore how the notion of narrative has been incorporated into the world of International Relations in general, and how the ongoing debate on Narrative IR connects to the proposal of this PhD Thesis more specifically. Here I present the ongoing debate on this subject as well as some elements of the mindset informing my analytical efforts in the following chapters. I start with a brief exploration of some of the epistemological and methodological implications of taking narratives seriously in the study of international and global affairs, as discussed by emblematic works following the avenues of this powerful

concept in social sciences. The second section is a mapping exercise focused on this more recent turn to narratives in IR. I focus on the thread of connection between a multiplicity of research and writing strategies that are not always clearly related at a first glance, but which, following Elizabeth Dauphinee's insights, I depict as "Narrative IR". It should be noted that I am not concerned with tracing the development of narratives about IR as a field of knowledge, nor a deep historical account of the emergence of Narrative IR itself – although the discussion does touch upon these dimensions at some points, albeit superficially. The questions I engage here are by no means new, and have been constantly mobilized by those who decided to incorporate narrative strategies into their research: What has motivated the so-called 'Narrative turn' in IR? What is at stake – academically and politically speaking – in "Narrative IR" in general, and in narrative writing, more specifically? Are narrative approaches and strategies inherently political? "Do they promote genuine dialogue, or do they simply re-confer epistemic privilege by rendering the 'personal' unassailable?". "How can these approaches allow us to hear and validate the knowledge of 'the researched'" and of subaltern voices to world politics in meaningful ways? "Can narrative approaches provide ways for communities" and individuals who are usually excluded from debate "to play a more dignified and empowered role in the creation of knowledge?" (Dauphinee 2013a).

My initial point is that there is not only a unity of attitude (at least to some extent) in the adoption of narrative strategies as either/both substrata of analysis or/and means to provide a more conscious stance in writing the political, but also a unity of concern guiding these scholars in their anxieties around the need "to bring the *world* back into" the study of international and global affairs (Sajed 2013:2). This, I believe, partially explains the turn to narratives as both substrata and as means to making sense of the world(s) of international and global affairs. Relatedly, there is also an urge to focus on "the stories, voices and social dynamics of groups – central to the making of world orders but usually relegated to the sidelines of scholarly analysis" (Moulin 2016:137-8). And this is the dimension that interests me the most here, since, as I argue throughout the chapter, they tell us something else about the politics of the turning to narratives in IR. As Annick T.R. Wibben (2011) highlights, "narratives both enable and limit representation – and representation shapes our world and what is possible within it" (p.43). This way,

one of the key promises in Narrative IR is "activating multiple interpretations and exploring the politics of contestedness" (Park-Kang 2015:372) in ways that support the view of IR as a discipline whose focus should be the multiplicity of the world of international and global affairs.

In light of these aspects, in the third section I connect this broad map and its key concepts and problematizations regarding academic writing and the politics of representation with Edward Said's notion of "worldliness" in order to highlight the political aspects of narrative strategies within academia and intellectual circles. By reading Narrative IR in parallel with Said´s previous explorations of the relationship between "the world, the text, and the critic" in the context of literary criticism, one is able to situate this "turn" towards narratives in IR within the complexities of a broader context of crisis in Eurocentric forms of representation and the subalternization of knowledge that came along with it[30]. The concept of "worldliness", as I try to build upon it here, allows us not only to better understand these reactions in their shared pursuit of a more empathetic relationship between researcher and researched, between scholars and the public in general, teachers and students, between the "world", the "text", and the "critic" – as Said (1983) himself would posit it. It also assists us in addressing some aspects of the anxieties, desires and ambivalences of those who have been openly deploying narrative approaches. As the mapping exercise in this chapter shows, there is a double-edged movement of scholarly disenchantment and re-enchantment going on at one corner of the discipline that signals towards the productivity of intellectual unease and uncertainty regarding representational practices and the place of the researcher's "I" voice in academic writing. It is in this double movement of scholarly disenchantment and re-enchantment that one may trace the growing interest in narrative approaches and alternative ways of thinking and writing in the field of IR.

The engagement with this literature connects with the general aim of this PhD thesis in its attention to the dimension of narratives as "political acts" (Shindo 2012) aiming at subversion and intervening "worldly" in contexts of political and social unrest. An account of these parallels also guides us in the discussion of the

[30] Notably, Said's engagements have been a constant reference to those adopting narrative approaches in IR, what had also encouraged me to look into these parallels in the first place. See, for example: Doty 2004; Krishna 2013.

potentialities and limits of critical stances emerging out of particular cultural systems and social contexts (e.g. Western academia, postcolonial *loci* of enunciation, etc)[31].

## 2.1 Narratives and the *world* of IR

We all hold narratives about our-selves. Who we are and who we'd like to be or become; where we came from; where we want to go; who are friends, enemies, or just people who pass indifferently by our life-stories. As conscious human beings, we all have intentions and targets, and the link between these two extremes (desire or intention, and execution) is always rendered in narratives. We can be all at once in the position of our own narrator and our own audience, even though we are usually thinking of others as audience. Similarly, we are constantly struggling, with more or less success, to play the story-teller's role with respect to our own actions (Carr 1986), a desire that suggests that narratives are not only a (practical) part of what we are, but also of our own actions toward what we want to be/become and how we want to be seen by others. We narrativize experience and desire in order to make them both intelligible and "real" – or likely to become true. Storytelling

> becomes a prerequisite of action: first we attach metaphors to our unfathomable selves, to the situations we are in, and then we go on telling stories about ourselves and our situations thus understood. We tell ourselves what kind of a person we were/are/will be; what kind of a situation we were/are/will be in; and what such people as ourselves are likely to do under these particular circumstances (Ringmar 1996: 73 quoted in Horn 2011:24)

Narrative representation often implies "the illusion of a centered consciousness capable of looking out onto the world, apprehending its structure and processes, and representing them to itself" – one of the assumptions related to modern thinking and its apprehension of time and human experience in time, and which was transposed to the discourse of modern sciences[32]. This "illusion" is thus

[31] See Mignolo, Epistemic Disobedience, 2009.

[32] Concerning the discourse of modern sciences, and more specifically the problematization of this discourse and its capillarity in the field of International Relations, what immediately comes to my mind is Raymond L. Buell's 'man in the moon' as a metaphor which, as Robert Vitalis comes to remind us, is one usual way to represent the point of view of IR as discipline as well as the role of IR experts, whose "specialized object of knowledge" is usually taken to be "the state system". Vitalis

one of the dimensions that perform the "formal coherency of narrativity itself" (White 1984:14). Therefore, considering the fragmented nature of the self and of the social world itself, "linear narrativity is a fabrication, and all attempts to solidify" coherence are always fictional in a way (Dauphinee 2013c:359; Park-Kang 2015). Along with this illusional or fictional coherence comes the belief that human beings simply uncover facts and then unproblematically rearrange them as narratives, as if narratives and narration itself were not embedded in patterns of power, knowledge and politics in the first place[33]. Hayden White, considered an exponent among critical historians[34] who have been keen to uncover this political nature of narratives, reinforces that narrative leads to ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and specific political implications. They are not merely "a neutral discursive that may or may not be used to represent real events in their aspect as developmental processes" (White 1987:ix quoted in Vaughan-Williams 2005:122). In this alternative view, narrative is not conceived as some kind of empty form of discourse to be filled up with different contents reflecting the reality out there; its form has a composition of its own.



quotes an interesting paragraph from Buell's book *International Relations*, published in 1925: "If this other-world spectator is not color-blind, he would find that these men are of different hues – in Europe and America, what are called 'white men', but in oriental Asia, 825,000,000 beings who mostly are yellow and brown. Beneath the dense foliage of the mysterious continent of Africa, he would see the home of the black man[...] If the Man in the Moon should gaze long enough, he would find that these ant-like men differ not only in physical characteristics, but in material and mental accomplishments. If the Man in the Moon had a political bent, he would soon learn that mankind had split itself into a large number of groups, some of which are called states, other, nations, and still others races" (Buell 1929: 3-4, quoted in Vitalis 2005: 159-60). By resorting to that trope, Vitalis is apt to highlight, among other things, the politics of the discipline's characteristic historical narrative about its own birth and the birth of its main traditional object of knowledge (the state system), as well as the supposedly conflict-prone nature of that the actors and the system itself; but more importantly to us at this point, Buell's trope also condenses modern discipline's (IR among them) usual reliance on "the God's eye view". Looking down from the privileged standpoint of the moon's surface, the man could observe the 'world island' and its 'smaller islands' such as North America, intrigued by the social organization of the ant-like men, a perspective denoting a belief in the possibility of offering a "view from nowhere", or a "disembodied" spectator theory of knowledge when addressing social phenomena (Vitalis 2005). In the field of IR, these issues are present in the works of Richard Ashley (1989), Michael Shapiro (1989), R.B.J Walker (1993), who, at least to my knowledge, have been pioneers in problematizing such aspects in the academic field of international relations.

[33] For an overview of the role of narration and the engagements with narrative stemming from different areas of study, see: Meuter, N. (2011). Narration in Various Disciplines. In: P. Hühn et al (eds). The Living Handbook of Narratology. Hamburg: Hamburg University. Online. Available at: http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narration-various-disciplines, accessed January 5, 2017.

[34] See Chapter 3 of this PhD Thesis.

Narrative thus "offers a plot" – or, in White's terminology, "emplotment" –, it introduces a structure that allows making sense of the events reported. Narrative plots thus work by drawing "arbitrary borders in order to help us forget what is knowingly or unknowingly" and what should be left out (Vaughan-Williams 2005:122). In what touches historiography and historical narrative, for example, White (1984) has built a fierce critique on the usual fictional division between "prehistorical" or "non-historical societies", in which the second distinction stands for societies that do not hold any "valid" (i.e. written) records of their development or do not even share the preoccupation of establishing chronological accounts of their transformations. According to White, the conception that there were (and there still are), on the one side, societies "whose development cannot be similarly *represented*" in "a specifically historical discourse" and who, for that reason, "persist in the condition of 'prehistory'" and, on the other side, "historical societies" is part of the panorama of the expansion of the West, Western sciences, and the multifarious violence they have entailed (White 1984:31-32).

The world of international politics is filled with narratives. When the US government justified its so-called war on terror after the September 11, 2001 attacks, they told a story so powerful that our view on the world is in many ways still imprisoned by it today (Campbell et al 2007; Wibben 2011). In an article published in 1987, feminist theorist Carol Cohn brings a brilliant and ground-breaking account on the practices and language deployed by nuclear defense professionals in a research centre and shows how this everyday politics is central to producing a particular way of thinking, talking about, and dealing with weapons, wars and people's lives, as well as to sustaining the US government's nuclear strategy itself (Cohn 1987). Another interesting example in this sense can be found in Helle Malmvig's study exploring the contrasts in the language employed within the international community during the succession bloody events in two contemporaneous conflicts during the 1990s, one in a North African country, Algeria, and the other in an Eastern European country, Kosovo. Focusing on the articulations of the concept of sovereignty by the international community and the different practices of either intervention (in Kosovo) or non-intervention (in Algeria) they entailed in each case, Malmvig (2006) manages to show the complex ways that discourse and political concepts evolve over time and vary according to

circumstances of time and space. Thus, narratives serve to either encourage or undermine certain responses – as well as the political and ethical grounds on which they rely – in the international arena.

But narratives also appear in less disguised forms in international and global political affairs, such as story-telling. In the emblematic speech "I Have a Dream", the Baptist pastor and activist for American black's civil rights, Martin Luther King Jr., resorted to stories in order to make the civil rights history an essential part of the American history and, indeed, also part of the Biblical Exodus in his quest for justice and citizenship rights to American Negros (King 1963; Mayer 2017). The ancient Indian tale about the warrior's search for truth which is epigraph to this chapter appears in one of Shashi Tharoor's novels, but it is also recalled by the author himself in an article entitled *Making the World Safe for Diversity*, published in *The New York Times* at the time he was a United Nations official – and spoke from such position as well (see Tharoor 1996). In a recent book, Frederick Mayer (2017) works precisely with the power of stories in the construction of collective political positioning and the mobilization of collective action. He engages with narrative politics by asking, for example, how and why is it that activists, candidates seeking for votes, organizers seeking new contributors, or general rallying troops usually resort to story-telling in order to promote certain course of actions.

Narratives thus "tell us a lot about the limits and possibilities of political life" (Moulin 2016:138). The way stories and discourses about places, peoples and historical and political developments are consistently arranged in narratives has repercussions on decisions about intervening or not in situations of conflict, in the establishment of patterns of humanitarian and development aid, in conditioning encounters with others, and in they ways relationships might evolve. In this sense, stories not only help us to make sense of the world. Stories essentially make, shape and transform the world. Narratives therefore construct realities and set boundaries on individuals' perceptions and actions upon these realities. They influence how peoples imagine themselves in the world of global affairs – if ever –, how we, as students and scholars, view the political processes and changing power relations in IR, and select what are the best theories, conceptualizations, and forms to present data and knowledge to the academic community, political leaders, interest groups, and the public in general.

As discipline, IR is built upon on a set of narratives about the formation and expansion of the international system/society and how international actors perform their roles and actions within it. As Bartelson (1995), Inayatullah & Blaney (2004), Walker (1993), and Weber (1995), to name a few, highlighted in their works, it seems only fair to suggest that IR is "product of competing and contesting narratives, some of which have become so dominant that they have (...) been taken to represent the sole explanation for the realities and nature of international political life" (Moulin 2016:139). An emblematic example in this sense can be found in the historical narrative around the Peace of Westphalia [1648]. In a number of historical accounts embraced in the field of IR, the Peace of Westphalia appears as the main source of explanation for the emergence of the nation-state as the main actor in modern world politics and, together with it, the crystallization of the concepts of sovereignty and self-determination. It is from this point, for example, that Sanjay Seth (2013) builds his critique against the indulgence of "the Westphalian myth" in historical and theoretical accounts in IR. According to him, these traditional, dominant accounts tend to opt for sanitized versions of the expansion of the international system from the West – 17th century Europe, to be more specific – to "the rest", occluding the persisting violence and silencing stemming from such a narrow view of international and global history (Seth 2013). This narrative may be convincing in certain aspects of what it claims to explain, but is also undoubtedly exclusive in what it expunges. The political discourse here fixates collective identity through the nation-state and its modularity, and turns it into a supposedly replicating historical process while silencing everything it is unable to cope with. The expansion of the modern international (inter-national) becomes a teleology, a natural condition. And this, together with various other aspects of the discourse of the international (see Darby 2006), is broadly naturalized by politicians, academics and social actors in general as the sole reality of what we came to know as world politics. Quoting Benedict Anderson, Seth problematizes, for instance, how we, in a significant degree, "have lost our capacity to imagine political community other than the form of the nation and the state" (Seth 2013:25) despite the inaccuracy of both tropes in dealing with any aspect of difference beyond their own grammar.

When reflecting upon such constraints to "our capacity to imagine" and speak of the world of international and global affairs – or upon what Roxanne Lynn Doty

has called "the discipline of the discipline" (2010:380 quoted in Vrasti, 2017:273) – and the sort of reactions they have generated in a certain corner of the discipline, Wanda Vrasti recently summarized:

> At its core, International Relations is a discipline concerned with the study of interstate patterns of competition and cooperation. The stories IR likes to tell are often the same ones that we encounter in foreign affairs reporting and policy-making. They deal with balance of powers, security alliances, and geopolitical calculations in a world of limited resources and thin sociality. These are simple stories with heroes and villains drawn from a predictable cast of national actors, regional alliances, and international organizations. With no possibility for progress or global conciliation, the "international" can easily appear as a separate sphere of action and experience governed by stasis and repetition. International Relations writing, of this sort, can be as soporific as having to read the same newspaper headlines day after day. When injected with the methods of scientific objectivity and the language of authority, the tedious can suddenly become tyrannical (2017:273)

Thus, this aspect of IR as a field of knowledge and of IR theory itself as a "ensemble of stories" we tell about the world (Weber 2001:129-30) appears as the fundamental assumption for those engaged with the discursive aspects of world politics and with narrative approaches in IR[35]. In this sense, as Michael Shapiro argued almost three decades ago, what seems to be at stake in the narrative turn is "a change in the self-understanding that constitutes the field of social and political analysis", in which "[p]art of what must be rejected is that aspect of the terrain predicated on a radical distinction between what is thought of as fictional and scientific genres of writing" (1988:7 quoted in Wibben 2011:46). The attention to how narratives make the world of international relations and, relatedly, the more emphatic turn to narrative approaches in IR thus address the politics of representation in the field in more than one dimension: i.e., what/who we understand to be within the realm of international and global studies (what is the world of international affairs); the terms under which episodes, voices and practices are deemed relevant in different world-framings within the discipline; and, more generally, how rethinking all these aspects in terms of representation reorients and complicates not only the way we understand global politics but also the very practice of narrating the international and the global (i.e. "representational practices", see Blaney & Tickner 2017) as politically relevant.

[35] See Moulin 2016.

## 2.2 **The Turn to Narrative Approaches in IR**

The politicization of language and textual practices is by no means new in the study of international and global politics[36]. Neither is the problematization of the interpretive categories that are key to social thought in general, including the study of international and global affairs, such as gender, class, race, power, state, ideology, to name a few[37]. In this sense, feminists, postcolonial and postmodern approaches have been pioneers in the deployment of a discursive approach and the articulation of alternative methodological strategies in their critiques of science, including, of course, Political Science and International Relations. Speaking from, and usually combining insights emerging at the intersections of the fields of Literature, Philosophy, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, to name a few, these critical voices problematize International Relations as a field of inquiry that "erase the political status of women, colonized and indigenous people, and racialized objects as being secondary, 'before' or 'outside' of normative state politics" (Vrasti 2017:273)[38]. The strategies and more particular aims of those approaches are manifold and as broad as the definitions one can provide for the term 'narrative' itself. However, a major point of connection among them seems evident in their attempts at articulating epistemologies and methodologies that acknowledge the complexity, contingency, multiplicity and ambiguity of political realities.

In a brief mapping of the engagements with "critical methodological and narrative developments in IR" as resulting from the discussions during a workshop held in 2012 at the York University's Centre of International and Security Studies (Canada), Elizabeth Dauphinee (2013a) recalls how the sort of reflexive narrative approach inaugurated in feminist theorist Carol Cohn's 1987 article stood quite forgotten by IR scholarship for at least two decades. As Dauphinee observes, Cohn's narrative approach was widely acclaimed and cited, but "recognized mainly as a commentary on the limits of scholarship rather than as a legitimate scholarly

[36] In what concerns critical engagements with a discursive approach in IR, see, for example: Campbell (1992); Der Derian and Shapiro (1989); Enloe (2004); Hansen (2006); Milliken (1999).
[37] In what concerns critical engagements with the tropes of class, gender and race in the study of international and global politics, for example, see: Enloe 2000, 2004; Henderson 2013; Krishna 2009, 2015; Vitalis 2005; Wibben 2011;
[38] See also: Moulin 2016:138-139; Vrasti 2010.

contribution in its own right". I think Dauphinee was referring to Cohn's more radical reflexive attitude when adopting an autoethnographic stance – an innovative writing strategy in the field of IR in the late 1980s – and to how she manages to expose aspects of her own position as researcher, drawing the reader's attention to the perks and pitfalls of her process of discovery rather than opting for a one-way road toward a conclusion that simply stresses the limits of academic enquiry.

Annick T.R. Wibben's 2011 book, *Feminist Security Studies – a narrative approach*, appears as a remarkable in-depth engagement with narrative theory as a mode of thinking IR and international security from a feminist perspective. Perhaps a pioneer in its more focused discussion about how narratological tools can be used to gain insight into the production of meaning in narrative, Wibben explores how "narratives are inherently political as they create particular versions of normality" (Wibben 2011:8). Similar to other feminist scholars, Wibben takes the notion that "the personal is political"[39] seriously and draws on personal narratives to address how common individuals (women, more specifically) frame politically relevant events within their everyday lives. She opens her introductory chapter making reference to a study by Mattingly et al., in which the authors have collected the accounts of African American women/mothers regarding the September 11, 2001 attacks and subsequent security related events in the United States. Wibben highlights how their narrated life experiences related to that specific context tend to contrast and counterpose with official discourses and the collective US narrative, illustrating how meanings of (in)security are contextual and reflect the interplays of identities, power relations, and intersecting oppressions. Among other things, Wibben's attention to voices and accounts that are often obliterated by high authorities in international politics showcase how state security practices tend to produce insecurity for marginalized populations, as well as perpetuate a relationship based on silencing and indifference in the name of great collective narratives. Thus, according to Wibben, personal accounts help to understand how narratives can be

[39] The expression "the personal is political" became popular following the publication of an homonymous essay in 1970 by American feminist Carol Hanisch. It has been constantly mobilized as a political slogan expressing feminists' common belief that the personal experiences of women are rooted in their unprivileged political situation due to gender inequality. See: Hanisch, Carol (1970/2006). The Personal is Political – The Women's Liberation Movement Classic with a New Explanatory Introduction. Online Source. Available at: http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html , Accessed in: May, 2017.

both "sites of the exercise of power" in the way they provide "an order for the world" and "disruptive when they do not 'fit' into a particular social, political, or symbolic order" (Wibben, p. 2).

In one recent piece, Wanda Vrasti (2017) highlighted the role of the triad – or, in her words, "[broad] hyphenated rubric of" – ethnography-autoethnography-autobiography in a number of interventions attempting "to come to terms with difference, subjectivity, and the desire of language" in engaging and writing IR. They are all examples of narrative approaches in IR and, though there are considerable differences among them – including how each of them is understood in the scope of particular research designs where they are employed[40] –, sometimes they may overlap as academic writing genres in their attempts at "textual translation" of fieldwork and personal experience. Vrasti herself has been an advocate of ethnography as a participatory and dialogical mode of writing rather than mere methodology – specially in the more traditional meaning of the word – to be applied during fieldwork. In this perspective, although ethnography surely appears as a "process for organizing knowledge and communicating experience" whose methods can sometimes "look in places and pick up on details other methods would not register" – the reason why it became a darling among feminist, postcolonial and indigenous studies, to name a few –, it may also encourage "an extractive relation to the surrounding world" – as Vrasti cautions us. That is to say, it might fall into the same "documentalist" and truth-seeking "temptations" already present in realist anthropology and in conventional approaches to political science and IR (Vrasti 2017:275). In her provocative rejoinder article entitled *'Dr Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying about Methodology and Love Writing'*, she writes:

> I do, however, believe that ethnography, in its *effort to recreate the dramatic milieu of everyday experience, can do much to correct the dehumanised (i.e., people-less, story-less and emotionless) face of social science research.* From the very beginning of our training as professional political scientists we are taught how to remove

[40] In what concerns ethnography, for example, Vrasti draws our attention to the variety of approaches and usages of what is usually understood as a set of research methods to be applied during fieldwork and, according to her, and even more importantly, beyond it. In her 2010 article, she manages to stand for an interdisciplinary view of ethnography while keeping in mind its historical umbilical connection with its "home field" of Anthropology, as well as with the colonial roots of earlier approaches to ethnography as a methodology for "data collection" when "in the field" – a reading that, according to her, relates to "IR ethnographies" the most. See Vrasti 2010; 2017.

> individuals, stories, events and above all ourselves from scholarship, through research design as well as through academic writing […]. *It is in writing that the fantasy of valid truth is produced*, by taking ourselves out of our projects, treating the world around us as evidence and subsuming social reality to explanatory methods and theories […].While ethnography is not a magical solution for telling 'really real' stories in a way that even our parents can understand, it is a genre that, in its ambition to offer a dynamic and dramatised representation of the world, *can 'satisfy us as scholars and also produce work that communicates the essence of our ideas in a more democratic and distilled form'* (Vrasti 2010:86-87, my emphasis).

Thus, ethnography is one among several "ways of seeing" (Vrasti 2017:276) and "telling 'really real' stories" (Vrasti 2010:87) ranked under a wider concern with how knowledge is produced and communicated in the field of IR. An ethnological stance fosters research that reorients the questions of authority and subjectivity in international and global affairs through efforts that may start from questions as simple (and simultaneously ground-breaking) as "where are the women?" – as Cynthia Enloe emblematically did in *Banana, Beaches and Bases* (2000). In this sense, it may help to open up the field to "the multiplicity of unauthorized narrators and voices – collective, singular, fragmented and unsigned – that continue to creep in the cracks of the interstate relations" (Moulin 2016:142), as Wibben and others managed to show in their work. In addition, and importantly enough – especially to our discussion here –, it also opens the ground to questions related to "narrative conventions" and to the "explanatory authority" of the researcher (Vrasti 2010:87). In other words, if we draw our attention to the politics of writing as Vrasti suggests, it becomes possible to address the relations between researcher and researched, narrator and narrative, and the ways they are linked to issues of power and authority. Interestingly enough, in doing so, it also brings the possibility to address the realms of restlessness, guilt, and/or even anger that may have led some critics towards a search for alternative truths, i.e. a truth of a very different nature than scientific truth; and which seems to nurture a great part of the efforts at what Dauphinee (2013a) has called "Narrative IR". I will return to this point later.

Perhaps now one of the most militant voices among those advocating autoethnographic writing as one way to come to terms with the questions of power and authority between researcher and researched, as well as with the fictitious absence of the researcher's "I" in the academic text, Roxanne Lynn Doty alerts that "we lose our humanity when we write for the 'discipline'" (2004:383). The questions that haunts Doty, as she tells us, are: "Where is the soul in our academic

writing? Where is the humanity in our prose? Where are we as writers?" (Doty 2004:378). As she further problematizes, "[t]he voice that echoes from our journals is all too often cold, detached, devoid of soul and human identity. As academic writers we have no personality on the page, no connection to the world of human beings. Our writing alienates us from everyone except ourselves" (Doty 2004:381).

The absence of the self/ "I" she mentions in academic writing is thus deeply political, for, as Doty highlights, the series of exclusions and sanitizations occurring in this mode of detached, objective style of narration is nothing less than an unsuccessful attempt to conceal "the elusive thing called desire[41] that lurks within all of us" (2004:379). In a nutshell, by calling attention to the artificiality and violence inherent to traditional academic writing in its efforts to erase emotions and the inevitable connections between the writer and the world she desires to reach/speak of/write about, Doty is making the case of the inherent political value of a movement towards "insurrectional textuality" instead (Shapiro 1989). That is to say, to a "writing practice that is resistant to familiar modes of representation, one that is self-reflective enough to show how meaning and writing practices are radically entangled" (Shapiro 1989:13). As she moves forward with her argument,



[41] Doty draws on poststructuralist authors such as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida to make her approach to language, voice, and the politics of writing in both traditional academic writing and the sort of autoethnographic, radical reflexivist, alternative mode of writing she purports to sketch through the problematizations she raises in her article. In one crucial part of her text, when making the connections between Kristeva's notion of "writing subject" and the "I" in academic writing, for instance, she touches the issue of the inescapability of desire: "Within the texture of writing, the subject is caught between instinctual drives and social practices within language. What emerges is a subject that is not one of cognition or of language in a Saussurian sense but a subject of a text, both shattered and coherent, that comes into being within the context of writing practices. In contrast to the concept of an 'author', the 'writing subject' does not emphasize the conscious intent of a writer who has authority over the meaning of his or her work. At the same time, however, it is not meant to deny all intentionality or refuse recognition of a role for the sentient human being who puts pen to paper. Rather it is to suggest that consciousness and intentionality do not dominate the process and that the writing subject is a 'complex, heterogeneous force' that includes consciousness, unconsciousness, and non-consciousness (Kristeva 1984). Writing is the product of a divided, pluralized subject, a place both of 'naming' in accordance with phonetic, semantic, and syntactic laws and a shattering of this naming. It is practiced by a subject of understanding and meaning, but inherent in this practice is a shattering and pluralization of meaning attributable to what Barthes calls 'style', the 'sublanguage elaborated where flesh and external reality come together' (Kristeva 1980a, 111–12; Barthes 1967, 11–12). *The voice of the writing subject, the 'I' if we dare use this personal pronoun in academic writing, then is the product of all the complex forces that go into producing a text that does not exclude an element of intentionality and choice on the part of the writer who has chosen to become a writer and to do so in a particular manner. Thus, while not denying individual creativity and responsibility on the part of writers, Kristeva suggests that there is more going on in the writing process, which includes unconscious drives and desires*" (Doty 2004:384, my emphasis).

she then resorts to Roland Barthes's terminology to suggest that most academic writing performs a "zero degree writing". In Doty's words – after Barthes' – in this style of writing there is a constant struggle to "appear innocent" that ultimately and paradoxically "calls attention to itself as not so much a neutral style but rather a style of neutrality showing that style dominates all writing" (Doty 2004:386). In this sense, academic writing can only be, at most, "a style desirous of the absence of style", for the desire to suppress desire in writing is itself a desire (Doty, p. 386). Thus, the absence of the academic's "I" is (and can only be) fictitious, for "[t]here is always voice in writing even if the voice is one of absence" (Doty, p. 383).

Doty then highlights the potential of autoethnographic writing to shed light on the "other voices" in a text[42]. Doty's understanding of "other voices" relates to the possibility of writing in other ways that disrupt and differ from the emotionless "zero degree" style that prevails in academic writing. Doty's urge undoubtedly comprises, as the author herself declares, "the need to transform academic international relations in a more inclusive intercultural dialogue that would [...] include voices from below, and ask[s] what such an inclusion could mean" (Doty, p. 381). Nonetheless, disappointing enough, what seems to concern the author the most is the "other voices" of her own. That is to say, the voices that scholars are often encouraged to bury beneath the authority of the academic voice and "the sterility of the stories" they tell. More to the point, even though Doty states that opening the discipline to "other" voices in the sense of the numerous human beings who are excluded from is one step towards the more complicated path of "making connections in our writings" (Doty 2010:1050), the movement she proposes may indeed sound as a search for the cure of "the maladies of our [academic] souls". However, another possible reading of Doty's plea is that the healing process of the "maladies of our souls" must include the exposure of academic writing, theories and "scholarly identities" – which are largely defined by the absence of these "other

[42] It is important to note here that what Doty understands by "voice" does not necessarily refer only to an individual author, but rather to the text itself. As a scholar with a considerable poststructuralist background in most of her works, it seems quite unlikely that Doty would bring up the issue of voice as a feature of an individual author, for, as she herself points out, that would "pressupos[e] the individual author/subject", which seems far from her intentions. On this specific matter, see, for example: Foucault, Michel. What is an Author? In: Rabinow, Paul (ed.) The Foucault Reader. New York: Pantheon Books, (1969)1984, p. 101-120.

voices" – to a continuous commitment to "real people". "Real people" here would include not only our-selves, "who 'we' are and what 'we' are about as 'we' engage in 'our' scholarship" (Doty 2004:381), but also those others who are subjects of representational practices within academic discourse. Doty seems to be much more focused on the "academic we/us" than on anything else, though.

The impetus in Elizabeth Dauphinee's approach to autoethnography is slightly different. Hers sounds as a more openly stated attempt to cope with the guilt and anger of having advanced her career, like many others also did, on the backs of the Yugoslavian war. Dauphinee's now acclaimed *The Politics of Exile* [2013b] comes across as a hybrid between a novel and an academic autoethnographic account wherein she traces her own encounter with her research subject – the Bosnian War and its aftermath. There, she narrates in an affective tone the impossible conundrums encircling and connecting the life of a young and insecure scholar (in the book, the unnamed professor of International Relations, probably Dauphinee's avatar)[43] and the lives of the soldiers and civils involved in the bloody conflict she struggles to make sense of. The opening paragraphs of Dauphinee's beautiful narrative gives us a glimpse of the impossible choices one has to face when in a researcher's position – one of the key subjects in a book that also reads as a story about the complexities of people's lives and the pains and hopes that both (and simultaneously) differentiate and connect us as human beings. I find them worthy of the long quote:

> I built my career on the life of a man called Stojan Sokolović. And I would like to explain myself to him. I would like to ask him to forgive me before I leave this life, but I don't know how to begin […]. The distance between us was immeasurable.
> We talked about things, struggling to accommodate and understand one another […]. I was still young and arrogant enough to believe that I could make sense of that from within the narrow contours of my own life. I wanted to understand how it was so that some people wear their souls on the surface of their skins, and why. I believed in my ability to order and classify my world. But later, as the weeks and months slipped by, I grew to be plagued more and more by impassable silences, and I found myself sinking deeper into a mire of terminal uncertainty. Later, I stayed with him for other reasons that I could not understand. He began to intersect me in some way that I could not grasp, and even though I could see it was destroying me, I stayed anyway […]. [H]e told me stories that ruined my research agenda and destroyed the life that I had spent so many years carefully building. He made me see the high ancestral hills of his home with other eyes – with eyes that were not mine – in a fleeting moment of madness whose shadow stayed with me afterward always (Dauphinee 2013b:1-2).

[43] See Naeem Inayatullah's foreword to *The Politics of Exile* (Dauphinee 2013b:viii-x).

If one considers Dauphinee's early works, the change in the narrative form appears as an intervention with clear ethical-political aims. The author herself would later describe her move from the argumentative approach that predominates in her previous book *The Ethics of Researching War* [2007] to a narrative constructed at the border of what could be defined as either novel, memoir, or even an autobiographical account[44] as coming out of "a politics of hope" (Dauphine 2013c). In this sense, Dauphinee's approach to autoethnography seems to go further with Doty's initial urge for an intellectual ethics of encounter, that is to say, from a commitment to writing as an exercise at connecting with the "real" world. If the "world" to which Doty was referring is still confined to the multiple voices of ourselves as scholars in practices of academic writing, Dauphinee's approach signals more towards "a deep and abiding awareness of the real difficulty of what that ethics attempted to do, which was to expose the researcher to the accusation of the researched in a way that recognized trauma while still resisting the meaning...[the researcher] hoped to find" (Dauphinee 2013c:350).

Autoethnographic exercises in writing IR have shown that there is a great challenge in attempting to make sense of "all the many layers of reasons and motives" why we act or write. In later reflections on her 2013 book, Dauphinee seems to alert us that "prioritiz[ing] them in any fixed or trans-historical way" is also dangerous (2013c:349). This is just another way of saying that "the "I" always risks to stand for self-'I' indulgence" that may terminate in replications of the distance between researcher and researched (Vrasti 2017:278); the "critic", her critique, and "the world". As Roland Bleiker and Morgan Brigg (2010) pointed out, autoethnographic writing bears the risk of being unassailable. However, as the authors have also acknowledged, it is one starting point for a deep analysis of the relationship between scholar-writers and the worlds they encounter and help to create. With the risk of becoming a matter of "self-indulgent purification" (Bleiker & Brigg 2010:276), the hope that this sort of reflexivity awakes is that it can eventually "break the barrier and flatten the power relations that separates the academy from the people, communities and places it studies" (Vrasti 2017:277).

[44]See Naeem Inayatullah's foreword to *The Politics of Exile* (Dauphinee 2013bc:viii-x).

Even though hope alone is not enough in the struggle to bring significant political change – as the explorations in the following chapters of this PhD thesis will show –, "all of these gestures contained a grain of hope that could lead one out of the false solitude of one's own alienation and into the social world" (Dauphinee 2013c:350).

Similar motivations and setbacks seem to haunt those few who dared to resort to autobiography as an alternative form of writing and means to face the erasure of the scholar-writer's personal voice and other complex aspects of people's stories in IR. Although both autoethnographic writing and autobiographical writing are deeply concerned with the self, there is a slight difference with regard to the aspect of selfhood each approach often brings into focus[45]. As a matter of fact, they are both politically and emotionally engaged modes of writing operating in the interface between personal components and research expertise. In autoethnographic accounts, however, the commitment "to make connections with others and the world" (Park-Kang 2015:365) is often more explicit and demanding, especially in what touches the particular realm of the encounter between researcher and researched in the field, specially when the first starts writing the field (See Vrasti 2010; 2017).

The collective project *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR* [2011] edited by Naeem Inayatullah is exemplary of such movement. In the introduction of the volume, Naeem starts by telling us his own trajectory "towards the cliff of autobiography" (2011:1) and how other IR scholars' individual wanderings met one another in the collection of fifteen essays (See Inayatuallah 2011:2-3). As Inayatullah remarks, "[a]cademic writing supposes a precarious fiction", that is, that the author's absence is prerequisite for objective and scientific forms. The exposure of this "fictive distance" then becomes the string connecting the essays in the ways they demonstrate how personal narratives influence theoretical articulations, and

[45] In one footnote to his 2015 article *Fictional IR and Imagination: Advancing Narrative Approaches,* Sungju Park-Kang brings an insightful observation on how the issue of the "self" has frequently haunted academic publications across disciplines, and importantly enough, even those which are not even close to a conscious engagement with autoethnography and autobiography as scholarship. He writes: "Consider acknowledgements or prefaces of books (and sometimes articles). They usually reveal authors' struggles to publish, 'personal' stories, research networks/interlocutors, families and even lovers, all of which could constitute the above auto-scholarship to some extent" (Park-Kang 2015:366, footnote 42).

how authors' "theoretical/practical engagements" are not apart from "their needs and wounds" as human beings and political subjects (Inayatullah 2011:5-6). The project thus sought to retrieve the 'I' and expose its presence both within the world and within academic writing.

The fifteen contributors to *I, IR* engaged in this invitation in their own ways. However, one of the most striking things is "the extent to which the contributors express their tensions about this unconventional autobiographical form of writing" (Park-Kang 2015:366) – a tension the reader may notice from Inayatullah's introductory pages to Peter Mandaville's epilogue. In the latter's case, the author confesses his own experience of anguish when trying to cope with his original task of writing an autobiographical chapter of his own. The fact that he turned down to assume "a more familiar role as a commentator" allowed him "to speak in a safer, secondary voice", he confesses (Mandaville 2011:196). As Inayatullah pointed out elsewhere, although "surprises emerge when we strike the balance between control and letting go"[46], this does not come across as an easy task when it comes to this unconventional autobiographical form of writing in IR. "Still, fear of falling and fear of flying abounded" (Inayatullah 2011:3).

More recently, Naeem Inayatullah and Elizabeth Dauphinee co-edited a collection of essays following a similar line to the one taken in Inayatullah's first edited volume on autobiography and IR. In the short introductory chapter to *Narrative Global Politics – Theory, History and the Personal in International Relations* [2016], the editors reinforce the "urgency" to put the "narrative question" at centre stage in its quality as a theoretical problem to academic writing and being in the world. Autobiography is just one among the narratological conundrums to be taken seriously when writing the political from a global perspective. The lines between autobiography, autoethnography, or the more general notion of narrative itself are blurred and regarded as less important than the politics of writing IR itself. In this sense, the essays composing the book are gathered around a non-indifferent attitude towards their aesthetics decisions; meaning that the contributors operated around the recognition that "form also delivers content" and that "it matters how

[46] See Naeem Inayatullah's foreword to *The Politics of Exile*, p. x.

they tell their story – it matters to the reader, to the writer, and especially to the innermost needs of the story" (Inayatullah & Dauphinee 2016:1). In the introductory pages, the editors summarized the overall effort tackled by each contributor to the volume: "[t]hey do not allow either the easy jettisoning of a fictive world, nor the distance-induce catatonia of our usual academic prose. [...] [It] overlaps with both: academic probing with the storytelling's tangencial arcs" (Inayatullah & Dauphinee 2016:2).

The use of literary texts with an attention to the politics of narrative has also been explored by scholars in attempts at unpacking the complexity of international and global political realities. In his 2007 book *Literature and International Relations* Paul Sheeran, for instance, stands for the use of literature as "a theoretical vehicle to discern and reveal the meaning of preferences, misconceptions and interpretations that populate [*the*] stories" usually told in order to make sense of "the complex process of decision-making in world politics" (Sheeran 2007: xv, xxii). In what starts as a promising work in the interface of literature and international politics, Sheeran makes the point that literature directly overlaps with reality as contextually situated cultural artifacts, but also as vehicles of fiction that influence subject's imagination about the world and what is possible or impossible, acceptable, or abnormal. According to the author, the connections between literature and IR becomes clear when we explore how fiction settles limits in the imaginary of those involved in international relations, thus influencing in complex processes of decision-making by triggering certain practices while rendering others morally despicable. However, what seems to set Sheeran's work apart from what has been called "Narrative IR" is its approach to storytelling as simply the *object* of scholarly inquiry rather than as appropriate knowledge. Moreover, if the author starts by attesting the need to open up the space of the discipline of IR for the variety of worldviews and politically relevant actors, his explorations remain confined to the role of "stories in the Art of Diplomacy" (as the book's title tells the reader right away). The traditional linear historical account of world politics as patterned by North American and European war and peace and state-centered narratives, and the common places and language of the discipline – something that the narrative approaches in IR I described so far try to expose and combat in the first place – also stay untouched in Sheeran's work.

More recently, Alina Sajed's book *Postcolonial Encounters in International Relations – the politics of transgression in the Maghreb* [2013] makes a more contextually-sensitive and imaginative incursion into the role of literary strategies in shaping political imaginaries and subjectivities in international and global affairs. Differently from Dauphinee in *The Politics of Exile*, for example, Alina does not make use of the "narrative 'I'" herself, but manages to critically address how the literary strategies – including autobiographical and semiautobiographical accounts – deployed by postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian writers were very much entrenched in the context of political turmoil and violence experienced in the Maghreb. More especifically, she addresses how (post)colonial violence, censorship, displacement and exile have inspired a whole generation of diasporic intellectuals who were writing the Maghreb mostly from the other shore of the Mediterranean, the former metropole France, in a common "attempt to retrieve colonial memory" (Sajed 2013:11), as well as commitment (and impulse) to narrate experiences of the postcolonial present. When explaining the reasons behind her turn to literary narratives, she writes:

> […] I read literary and visual narratives with an eye both to their ability to summon complex political worlds in their everyday-ness, but also to the implicit political relations of power they invoke between the writer and the subjects of the narrative, and between the world instantiated and the one implicitly desired. […] I am attempting to carve out a legitimate space within IR theory for literary strategies as alternative methodologies. Or to use Michael Shapiro's methodology, I am interested in literary strategies as methodologies that allow me to pay heed to 'complicated loci of enunciation' – those politically charged assumptions and grounding into which any project is embedded (Shapiro 2004:vii) (Sajed 2013:10-11).

As Sungju Park-Kang recently highlighted, "writing fiction is not the same as writing about fiction" (2015:362) – the latter being the case of both Sheeran's and Sajed's explorations just mentioned above. In his own contribution to this turn to narrative strategies and alternative methodologies in IR, the author makes the case for the epistemological value of fiction and imagination to IR scholarship. By blurring the line between fact and fiction – or at least by recognizing that "fact (reality) and fiction (imagination) are interrelated" (Park-Kang, p.363) – fictional IR, according to Park-Kang, aims to disclose a space for the possibility of creative practice in a way that is not limited to alternative forms of writing. He calls our attention to the role of imagination as methodological tool to deal with "an ongoing

process" of exploration, discovery, data gathering, lack of information, and dealing with other people's stories and emotions. The point in using imagination and assuming the fictional aspect of every narrative in the face of "the impossibility or incompleteness of knowing" relates with something beyond exposing the politics of narrative, writing, and academic truth. It aims to reconceptualise both data itself and the researcher's relationship with data (and importantly, the lack of data and evidence) in practices of theorization. More to the point, Park-Kang defends that IR researchers – who frequently has to face the fact that international and human affairs are often "riddled with wars, financial crises, natural disasters, and mysterious losses" – must assume the role of an "empathetic detective". That is, someone who is up to the daunting task of dealing with people's emotions, worldviews, stories and silences, and of making sense of all as subject of analysis to understand political realities (Park-Kang 2015:379-380).

According to this author, employing fiction writing and imagination as methodological devices differs from giving up the pursuit of empirical evidence or fact. Nonetheless, as Park-Kang highlights in response to critiques in this direction, fiction writing and imagination are parts of the very pursuit for evidence and the making of accurate, empathetic narratives about gathered data. Once again, the politics of narrative in academic writing is brought to the fore as a key dimension of the task of rethinking IR, its methodologies, and the role of the IR researcher. In fact, if one assumes that "fact (reality) and fiction (imagination) are interrelated" and not opposites[47], there is nothing anew going on here except for the making of the relationship between "[e]xperience, empathic projection, inner travel, and research" evident and desirable rather than something to be avoided in scholarly practices and academic writing. The author's own words seem to corroborate this

[47] In what concerns the boundary between scientific and literary writings, Roxanne L. Doty, for instance, has drawn on Clifford and Marcus (*Writing Culture – The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) to remind us that this dichotomy is a historical construction. She writes: "As Clifford notes, since the 17th century Western science has excluded certain modes of expression from what is deemed legitimate writing. This exclusion was (is) based on a series of oppositions including rhetoric versus transparent signification, fiction versus fact, and subjectivity versus objectivity. The first terms in this series were assigned to the category of literature, where the emotions, passions, desires of writers were considered legitimate (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 5–6). The instability and plurality of meaning inherent in literary writing were scientifically condemned as an obstacle to the neutral, objective stance deemed necessary for getting closer to the truth". She then continues: "[Edward] Said reminds us that all writing styles have to be demystified of their complicity with the power that allows them to be there" (Doty 2004:386).

general conclusion: "one of the benefits could be to articulate sensitive and complicated problems in a more flexible and imaginative way, making the most of the power of story and imagination in methodological terms" (Park-Kang 2015:362).

Moreover, this instigation around narratives as not only means of communication but also as appropriate material for academic knowledge in IR has been theme of recent academic forums and journals. To name a few, and as mentioned above, in 2012 the York Centre for International and Security Studies (Canada) held a workshop on "Critical Methodologies, Narrative Voice and the Writing of the Political: The Limits of Language". The reflections by some of the attendees was published in a mini-forum on critical methodologies and narrative IR at the webpage *The Disorder of Things*[48]. In 2010, *Review of International Studies* published a number of forum articles on the subject[49]; and the same path was followed in 2016 by *Crítica Contemporánea – Revista de Teoría Política* in the launching of a dossier on "Narrative (and) Politics" containing pieces in English, Portuguese and Spanish[50]. New IR journals, such as *Critical Studies on Security* (2013)[51] and *Critical Military Studies* (2015)[52], for example, have maintained submission policies that accept fiction and poetry in their special sections. A space was also recently formalized in the *Journal of Narrative Politics*, an interdisciplinary publication sponsored by York University and edited by Elizabeth Dauphinee, Jenny Edkins, Naeem Inayatullah, Narendra Kumarakulasingam, Dan Öberg, and Paulo Ravecca. Since 2014, the journal has published texts exploring narrative methods in research, writing, and pedagogy relevant to the study of global politics. The publication's home page describes the JNP as being "committed to exploring the overlaps between aesthetics, politics, theory, and ethics" and, unlike other scholarly publications devoted to narrative, "less concerned with the objectivist academic analysis of narrative, and more with the expression of narrative itself as a mode of knowing and a form of scholarship". In this context, storytelling

[48]See:https://thedisorderofthings.com/2013/03/12/critical-methodological-and-narrative-developments-in-ir-a-forum/

[49]See:https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/review-of-international-studies/issue/CEAFDC4C4EF6992A16472C45A2E5A3F1

[50] See: http://www.criticacontemporanea.org/p/sexto-numero.html

[51] See: http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcss20/current

[52] http://explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/pgas/rcms-cfp

appears as "knowledge appropriate to the academy, rather than as merely the objects of scholarly inquiry" [53].

Thus, conceiving IR accounts as political narratives rather than scientific and uncontested explanations allows one to not only expose aspects of what Weber (2001), paraphrasing Clifford Geertz, has called "the myth function in IR theory"[54]. As advocates of such positioning have pointed out, by doing so, one is indeed allowed to improve scholarly research less in terms of achieving *the* truth about a world "out there" waiting to be impartially observed and assessed than in terms of the explanations and understandings aimed (see Suganami 2008). Through this brief review of works that have remarkably adopted a narrative approach in IR, it is possible to infer that they share the belief (or at least the hope) that narrative methodologies allow IR researchers: to rethink the "fictions" of academic truth, technical-prone writing, and language in a broad sense; to reconsider the place of the political in IR, acknowledging the multiverse of *loci* of enunciation and action shaping global politics both from its centres of power and from its margins; and, in a similar fashion, it may encourage the adoption of a more reflexive and ethically-bound stance towards the research subject, as well as towards the scholar's own position as researcher and political subject herself. In these terms, there seems to be a double-edged movement of, on the one hand, a symptomatic disenchantment with the persisting shortcomings in the practices of knowledge production in IR as a field of inquiry; and, on the other hand, of a number of attempts at coming to terms with such discontent, in "a sort of re-enchantment of the world of global politics with a greater diversity of voices, characters and stories" (Vrasti 2017:273). In my view, it is in this double movement of scholarly disenchantment and re-enchantment that one may trace the growing interest in narrative approaches and alternative ways of writing in the field of IR.



[53] See: http://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/index

[54] Cynthia Weber writes: "If IR theory narrates a particular view of the world from the perspective of various IR traditions, an IR myth is what helps make a particular view of the world appear to be true. The myth function in IR theory is the transformation of what is particular, cultural, and ideological (like a story told by an IR tradition) into what appears to be universal, natural, and purely empirical. It is naturalizing meanings – making them into common sense – that are the products of cultural practices" (Weber 2001:7).

## 2.3 Worldliness and Intellectual (Dis)Engagement

What Dauphinee (2013a) calls 'narrative IR' is offspring of the critical engagements and fierce criticism of how the discipline has been dealing with its "objects" of knowledge, its linkages with strongly oppressive and state-oriented projects and world views, and its "provincial imagination" undeniably rooted in a history of global hierarchies (Muppidi 2013). From this perspective, narratives are not only ontologically defining in the ways we perceive and act onto the world. Narratives also appear as productive strategies, a mode of knowing and questioning the prevalent dynamics and inherent violent traits of knowledge production and transmission within academia, and a non-indifferent attitude towards the audiences IR researchers are trying to reach. At stake here is not only an epistemological rupture with traditional positivist criteria of knowledge production[55], but the articulation of an ethical-political commitment to shortening the distance between the institutionalized space of knowledge production that is academia and the *world* it tries to understand and "reach", between scholarly abstract language and the world it tries to speak of/to. The related issues of voice and academic writing, once only "ghost" matters, are then moved to the forefront of a debate in which academic subjectivity – one of the dimensions of the "I" in "IR" – is questioned (Dauphine 2013a; 2013c; Doty 2004; Inayatullah 2011). As Dauphinee summarizes:

> In recent years, these dilemmas have led to a new line of academic inquiry that may be fundamentally altering the landscape of IR. These approaches are based in autoethnography and narrative writing, and involve storytelling, explicit use of the 'I' as a narrating subject, and deep exploration of the interface between writers and their subject matter. Scholars who work with these approaches are showing that the form writing taken shapes its content, plots its own boundaries, and pre-determines who can comprise its audience. They are showing that researchers are always personally present in their writing, that narratives – both written and oral – are knowledge-producing activities, and that the claim to scientific objectivity is not only impossible but also, critically, undesirable. They are also showing that critical theory written in scholarly language alienates and excludes the very communities that many IR scholars are trying to reach: students, policymakers and practitioners, institutions of governance, international organizations, the reading public, to name just a few (Dauphinee 2013a:n/p).

Therefore, it has been broadly recognized by many critical theorists that IR and related scholarship is limited by the sanitized and exclusionary language of

[55] See: Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. London/New York: Routledge, 2011 (especially Chapter 6).

academic writing and by "narrow intellectual coda" that alienates and excludes the very communities they purport to reach (Dauphinee 2013a; Doty 2004). Nonetheless, Narrative IR starts from the assumption that narratives provide ways of contributing to critical engagements and movements of re-reading IR's common places and authoritative voices, since it highlights important aspects of power-knowledge conundrums and allows room for (re)imagination.

The theme of (symptomatic) scholarly isolationism – or, in some cases, simply indifference – had been thoroughly explored by Edward Said in his writings, especially in his later works addressing literary criticism from a perspective that highlights the connections between texts and the world they purport to represent[56]. As a scholar, literary critic, cultural theorist and publicly engaged intellectual himself, Said's work is exemplary in the uses of critical vocabulary for extending the meaning of politics and critical awareness. His notion of "worldliness"; his related discussion on what means to link text to context, knowledge to (the hope) of social change; and his plea for intellectual "wakefulness" – translated in the concept of "secular critical consciousness" or simply secular criticism – as an ethical-political stance that is opposite to disembodied scholarly criticism are all particularly relevant here. Of course, Said's insights should be taken up critically as well as situated. My only suggestion here is that some of his interventions may help us to better situate the motivations and operating forces – of either/both complicity and/or resistance – that have led to the movement towards narrative approaches in IR literature, as I have described so far.

In his attempts to understand how the current elements of hegemonic cultural forms and authoritarianism could be addressed and resisted, the author draws

[56] According to Giroux, Edward Said is one of "the founding of such academic genres as postcolonial studies and colonial discourse analysis", what is true at least to his contemporaneous in North-American academia. I borrow Giroux's words in his description of Said's interventions and intellectual legacy: "Although known primarily as a critic of Western imperialism and a fierce advocate of the liberation of the Palestinian people, he is also widely recognized for his important contributions as a scholar whose work has had an enormous impact on a variety of individuals, groups, and social movements" (Giroux 2004:340). Said's well-known *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) "probed deeply into questions concerning who controls the conditions for telling historical narratives, which agents produce such stories, how such stories become part of the fabric of common sense, and what it might mean for scholars and activists to seriously engage the fact that struggles over culture are also struggles over meaning, identity, power, inclusion, and the future. Of course, such interventions reap no rewards from established powers, and his own work was constantly policed and dismissed as either anti-American or anti-Semitic" (p.341).

attention to the ways "Western knowledge" – to use Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) terminology – have constructed historical narratives that manage to establish limits to what is knowable, speakable, and desirable as such. Naturally, these limits also demarcate who is entitled to know and speak in the name of valuable knowledge. In *The World, the Text and the Critic* [1983], for example, the author addresses some examples of "the canon" of modern European thought as "textual instances" of the ethnocentrism that had been complicit and continually reinforced the hegemonic culture behind European imperial and colonial enterprises – an effort that is analogous to the discussions he had inaugurated in *Orientalism* [1978], and continued in latter explorations. He writes:

> not only the entire history of 19th century European thought is filled with […] discriminations […] made between what is fitting for us and what is fitting for them, the former designated as inside, in place, common, belonging, in a word above, the latter, who are designated as outside, excluded, aberrant, inferior, in a word below. From these distinctions, which were given their hegemony be the culture, no one could be free […] *The large cultural-national designation of European culture as the privileged norm carried with it a formidable battery of other distinctions between ours and theirs, between proper and improper, European and non-European, higher and lower: they are to be found everywhere in such subjects and quasi-subjects as linguistics, history, race theory, philosophy, anthropology, and even biology*. […] [I]n the transmission and persistence of culture there is a continual process of reinforcement, by which hegemony culture will add to itself the prerogatives given it by its sense of national identity, its power as an implement, ally, or branch of the state, its rightness, its exterior forms of assertions of itself: and most important, by its vindicated power as a victor over everything not itself (Said 1983:13-14).

In the realms of the Eurocentric, hegemonic instance that Said identifies as "traditional Western university" the picture is not different. The excluding process of scholarly affiliation that Said describes has its historical basis in the 19th century "Eurocentric model for the humanities", its "orthodox canon of literary monuments handed down through generations", and the limits set for what is knowable as well as for most of what can be tackled by criticism. Thus, an important point to be noted here is that Eurocentric sciences and traditional academia establishes and constantly reinforces the circumstances and jargons under what critique must come into surface as the legitimate contradiction that is eligible to becoming valuable knowledge. In this sense, according to Said, the authority of this cultural system comes not only from its canons, its appearance of political neutrality – for it deals with the pursuit of objective, uncontested and detached "truth" –, its "camouflaging jargons" and institution of criticism, but also, and importantly, "from the way this

continuity reproduces the filial continuity of the chain of biological procreation" (Said 1993:22). This is how Said describes the very "unconsciously held ideological assumption that the Eurocentric model for the humanities represents a *natural* and *proper* subject matter"; in other words, the process through which a sort of umbilical filiation is constituted, indulging complicit behaviour – even in the (limited) realm of critique – while avoiding all social density that is beyond established scholarly language and practice.

Considering the Eurocentrism of the Western sciences and scholarly language, criticism is an academic institution that can easily fall into "out-worldly" contemplative exercises, formalism, and professional opportunism encouraged by the very interpretive community where it belongs. According to him, the problem lies not in exercises on high theorization and abstraction themselves, which are indeed parts of the "academic thing", but in the unsurmountable disconnection that "camouflaging jargons" and "hermetic systems" tend to generate (Said 1983:25-26). Said then suggests two set of opposites to make his case for the adoption of a what he calls a "secular critical consciousness" as means to (re)connect scholarship to the world, and to conceive texts as significant political forms; in other words, to rethink texts – what, of course, includes academic writing – in their worldliness. The relationship between the tropes of "criticism" and "critical consciousness", as well as between the figures of the "scholar critic" and the "oppositional public intellectual" or simply "public intellectual" discussed by Said are, therefore, key to understand how this author envisions the ethical-political role that must be performed by intellectuals.

The notion of "secular critical consciousness", as the term already suggests, brings to the fore Said's emphasis on secularism or, in other words, to the "worldliness" of cultural and social forms. It relates with the mindset that "human beings make their own history" (Said 2001:501 quoted in Giroux 2004:345) and, for that very reason, that one must "recognize the multiple sites in which a mindless appeal to scripture, divine authority, and other extrasocial forms of dogmatism [...] undermine the possibility of human agency" (Giroux 2004:345). Evidently, one may also include amidst "extrasocial forms of dogmatism" all those complex theoretical discourses that drain out the worldliness of texts, language, and public

life. In this sense, Said's notion of secular critical consciousness cannot but be intimately connected to a "politics of crisis", as Henry A. Giroux (after Sheldon Wolin) suggests. The urgency that the notion of crisis brings to surface implies a call to "connect matters of knowledge and scholarship to the worldly space of politics" as means to oppose "a concept of criticism among many academics, which implies a narrowing of the definition of politics and an inattentiveness to the public space of struggle, politics, and power" (Giroux 2004:339). Put differently, secular criticism here refers to a particular notion of worldliness in which politics and practices of theorization are never separated. The politics of crisis in the context of knowledge production thus refers to how knowledge narratives incorporate rather than simply describe the connections and disconnections between theory and public life, linking

> knowledge and learning to the performative and worldly space of action and engagement, energizing people to not only think critically about the world around them but also to use their capacities as social agents to intervene in public life and confront the myriad of symbolic, institutional, and material relations of power that shape their lives (Giroux 2004:340).

In connection with this, I tend to believe that if one was to provide a definition for the idea of the "political" in this juncture of the intellectual´s role as a commitment to both secular criticism and activism as suggested by Said, it would perhaps stand close to Reiko Shindo's framing. Shindo's approach to politics borrows from the "acts of citizenship" literature and corresponds, at least to a certain extent, to that of Jacque Rancière in the sense that "being political provokes *acts of speaking [and acting] against injustice and vocalizing grievances as equal beings*" (Shindo 2012: fn 3). In both Said and Shindo, these "acts" are conceived as the moments in which political subjectivity is constituted and performed – by the "public intellectual's" worldly interventions in Said's case; and by immigrant activists and other diasporic individuals performing "acts of citizenship" in Shindo. It is also in this sense that Said equals the notion of mobile subjectivity with that of the "traveler intellectual", that is to say, a subject who crosses territories and modes of thought, but who also empathizes with others without fearing the controversies of taking "worldly" positions when recognizing human injury in the middle of political battles – narrative battles among them. In Said's specific case, it is a gesture toward the political necessity of taking a stand of "strategically essentializing", to

resort to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous terminology, that is to say, a position from the perspective of those who were and are victimized and continue to suffer in various ways.

More than the narcotic performance of a supplier to a language of critique, the role of the public intellectual – as opposed to the traditional "academic" or "critic" –, at least as Said purports to reimagine, is to connect knowledge to politics, text to context, critique to social change. In connection with this, Said's understanding of "individual consciousness" and its proneness to bringing about change seems to be less about individual subjects than a social force in itself. It is invariably embedded in the cultural system where the dynamics of affiliation takes place. Therefore, agency here may tend toward either resistance or complacency. The terms of resistance, in turn, may operate either from within the limits of the established language and its replication – which can often disguise as deep critique and significant change of order whereas it is actually none – or from attempts to carving out a language of itself[57]. This is where Said discusses the differences between "the critic" and "the public intellectual". Ultimately, the role of the public intellectual is not to consolidate authority of any kind but to understand, interpret and question it in meaningful, worldly ways. In this sense, Said's notion of public



[57] Some aspects of Said's argumentation regarding the different forms that criticism can assume resembles the differentiation that Walter Mignolo's suggests between critical approaches articulated from inside Eurocentrism – what Enrique Dussel characterized as a "Eurocentric critique of modernity" – and the critique articulated from the interstices of colonial difference, i.e. "decolonial" approaches. The latter can be more closely related to what Dussel and others have pursued, that is, a project of intellectual liberation from Eurocentric social sciences which does not emerge from inside Eurocentrism and modernity, but from tensions that the Eurocentric border is not able to capture within its logic to either incorporate or simply exclude; that is to say, they point towards the critique that emerges from its exteriority and that does not presuppose Eurocentrism as totality. As Mignolo (2008) explains (borrowing insights from Dussel's works more specifically, but also from Aníbal Quijano's, Orlando Fals-Borda's, and Abdelkebir Khatibi's works, to name a few), this philosophy of liberation stemming from colonial difference stands for a delinking from the tendency toward Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism (e.g. poststructuralism, world-systems analysis) while taking coloniality and colonial difference into serious account both as constitutive components of modernity and (importantly) as loci of enunciation. It is aimed at not only turning visible the "variety of local histories that Western thought, from the Right and the Left, hid and suppressed" – a move that can turn out to "reproduce the blind epistemic ethnocentrism that makes difficult, if not impossible, any political philosophy of inclusion" beyond Eurocentrism –, but also at contributing to the reinscription of experience and "the making of diversality" (as opposed to "a new abstract universal project") (Mignolo 2008:234, 256-257). According to Mignolo, it is an effort that includes discontinuity, crisis and (colonial) difference as key in the pursuit of "a network of planetary confrontations with globalization in the name of justice, equity, human rights, and epistemic diversality" (Mignolo 2008:256). See also: Mignolo 2009.

intellectual and of secular criticism informs one another in a deep ethical-political sense:

> even in the very midst of a battle in which one is unmistakably on one side against another, there should be criticism, because there must be critical consciousness if there are to be issues, problems, values, even lives to fought for (Said 1983:28)

This intimate connection between the role and responsibility of the public intellectual and secular criticism in Said appears even more clearly, for instance, in his engagements with the work of Frantz Fanon, the Martinique-born leading theorist of the Algerian revolution. In *Les Damnés de La Terre* [*The Wretched of the Earth*], Fanon's now classic statement against colonial domination and its capillarities, anticolonial resistance concerns not only with the immediate need for independence from the foreign colonial occupier, but also, and importantly, with liberation from a nationalist bourgeoisie[58] that perpetuates the subjugation of subaltern groups within the former colony. According to Fanon, without a transition from an undiscriminating nationalist consciousness to a deeper social and economic awareness, the oppressive nationalist elite remains entrenched and the postcolonial society stays permanently trapped in a peripheral position in the world system. In that matter, it is worth noticing that Fanon understands this revolutionary, deeper awareness, in terms of a universal humanist socioeconomic consciousness that stands in clear opposition to, and as a reaction against, the contradictions in European universalist discourse. And that´s precisely why, according to Fanon,



[58] In what might be understood as an anti- or decolonial re-reading of Marxism and Marxian thought, Fanon described the postcolonial nationalist bourgeoisie as too weak to perform the historical role of a traditional bourgeoisie as Marx had posited it (i.e. one that brings about the conditions for the formation of an industrial proletariat) due to its strong dependence on the metropolitan bourgeoisie, but also as too strong to be easily extricated. In his murky depiction of the postcolonial society – which, notably, at the time Fanon was writing, in the middle of the Algerian War, was still a society yet to come –, revolutionary leaders and the revolutionary party are congealed into instruments of control and pacification who, by the use of political, moral, and cultural capital derived from their participation in the liberation war, prevent challenges from below as well as true revolution. From Fanon's perspective, a people who remains entrapped by a nationalist mindset will perpetually lack the necessary consciousness with which to challenge their own domestic colonizers (See Fanon 1963/2004). Interestingly enough, as Rahul Rao has more recently pointed out, one recent biography addressing Fanon's involvement in the Algerian War of liberation and, notably, with the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) highlights that "although he was extremely critical in private of elements of the […] FLN elite […] on account of their failure to develop a vision for Algeria beyond independence […]", Fanon also managed to remain "a loyal and disciplined militant of the organization in his public statements and writings, reluctant to distance himself from these men before the Algerian struggle had been won" (Rao 2010:133).

resistance must be a bifocal enterprise: a nationalist struggle against the colonial invader *and* an universal struggle against the bourgeoisie (see Fanon 1963/2004).

Although the bifocal aspect of decolonization highlighted by Fanon is usually seen as sequential stages, Said seems to read Fanon as arguing that these two dimensions of the struggle must be synchronous in the path towards true revolution (see Rao 2010). In this aspect, he seems to take Jean-Paul Sartre's reading of Fanon in the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* into serious account. There, Sartre wrote that, from a Fanonian perspective, "the only true culture is that of revolution; that is to say, it is *constantly in the making*"[59] (Sartre 1963/2004:12, my emphasis). Once again, the politics of crisis is brought to the front line, since crisis here could read as another description for being "constantly in the making", and thus attentive to the public space of struggle, politics, and power. In what concerns the space of knowledge production and knowledge narratives (which are Said's main focus), feelings of unease and uncertainty in the face of the worldliness of human relations and aspirations thus appear as a productive force, nurturing critical consciousness while preventing closure. Said then writes:

> According to Fanon, the goal of the native intellectual cannot simply be to replace a white policeman with his native counterpart, but rather what he called, borrowing from Aimé Césaire, *the invention of new souls*. In other words, although there is inestimable value to what an intellectual does to ensure the community's survival during periods of extreme national emergency, *loyalty to the group's fight for survival cannot draw in the intellectual so far as to narcotize the critical sense, or reduce its imperatives, which are always to go beyond survival to questions of political liberation, to critiques of the leadership, to presenting alternatives that are too often marginalized or pushed aside as irrelevant* to the main battle at hand (Said 1994:41, my emphasis).

While Said is undoubtedly inspired by Fanon's account on the connection between the need for a critical consciousness and decolonization, the latter brings an important counterpoint to Said's depiction of the postcolonial/diasporic/public intellectual as the main mediator, or perhaps the incarnation, of this revolutionary culture in the making (see Sajed 2013). In fact, in "On Violence" Fanon is deeply

[59] The passage is quoted as it appears in the 1963 translation of *Les Damnés de la Terre [1961]*, by Constance Farrington. My choice for maintaining the words as they appear in that previous edition was simply to remain faithful to Said's engagement with Fanon's work, in which the idea of revolution as something "constantly in the making" is crucial. In the 2004 translation by Richard Philcox, which is the one I use in other parts of this thesis, the same passage from Sartre's preface to Fanon's book reads: "The true culture is the revolution, meaning it is forged while the iron is hot" (Fanon 1963/2004:xlvii).

critical of the ambivalent position of the colonized intellectual who is caught between the experience of colonization and he called "the famous dialogue on [Western] value" to which he/she is inevitably attached due to his/her education (Fanon 1963/2004:9). Thus, there would be a significant distance between Said's and Fanon's ultimate answer to the question: if the only true culture is a revolution always in the making, who are the true revolutionaries?[60]

Although I do not wholly share neither Fanon's obstinate judgement of the colonized intellectual nor Said's almost uncontested faith in the figure postcolonial (diasporic) public intellectual, I find Fanon's suspicion regarding the proximity to Western values is worthy of bearing in mind. It signals towards an important dimension in grasping the unequal relationship between the intellectual and the others he/she claims to represent – i.e. the "masses" of subaltern subjects such as migrant workers, women (especially non-Western women), peasants, etc. However, I do find Said's point regarding the importance of thinking beyond matters of "survival" in contexts of political unrest and struggles for liberation compelling. If, on one hand, it draws attention to the dimension I have been problematizing so far, that is, of the problem of intellectual disengagement towards grass-roots emancipatory projects and viewpoints, specifically, and towards the world he/she claims to engage in knowledge narratives, in general. On the other hand, and importantly, there is a value in Said's perception that the intellectual must have in mind the ethical-political implications of his/her positioning towards social movements and struggles, which, of course, must *also* include committed meditations on the forms of domination and tyranny that might emerge out of alternative, once marginal sites and world-framings. The passage in Said's on the importance of being "ironic" is worthy of the long quote:

> Were I to use one word consistently along with criticism (not as a modification but as an emphatic) it would be oppositional. If *criticism is reducible neither to a doctrine nor to a political position on a particular question, and if it is to be in the world and self-aware simultaneously, then its identity is its difference from other cultural activities and from systems of thought or of method*. In its suspicion of totalizing concepts, in its discontent with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialized fiefdoms, and orthodox habits of mind, criticism is most itself and, if the paradox can be tolerated, most unlike itself at the

[60] If in Said there is a certain ambivalence towards this answer, and intellectual critical imagination often seems to somehow precede or at least walk side by side with grass-roots political struggles, for Fanon, the answer is straightforward: the peasantry (which appears as the ultimate consciousness of the colonized intellectual). See: Fanon 2004.

> moment it starts turning into organized dogma. *"Ironic" is not a bad word to use along with "oppositional." For in the main – and here I shall be explicit – criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse* […] (Said 1983:29-30, my emphasis).

Thus, another key dimension of the "worldliness" of critique that Said emphasizes translates as nothing less than an ethical-political stance (by the public intellectual) that manages to put knowledge, first and foremost, into the service of humanity beyond privileged spaces – such as Western knowledge, academia, and institutional politics. In this sense, in spite of the limits imposed by hegemonic cultural systems (in which one may want to include academia, for example) and the violences and inequality they help to perpetuate, in Said's view, it is sometimes possible to somehow refrain from such constraints and "have a transformational impact on the field" (Rao 2010:128). In this matter, if on the one hand Said's approach towards culture may sometimes makes hegemonic discourse and systems appear disabling in their endurance and replication – take, for instance, his emblematic but indeed disputable overall approach in *Orientalism* [1978] –; on the other hand, if one takes into account his understanding of dominant cultural systems as intrinsically limited when facing the complexity of social experience, hegemonic culture contains (while trying to suppress) the seeds of intentions, irony, and modes of thought that can be alternative to itself. Thus, hegemonic culture ends up by helping to create the space for imagining orders that are alternative and often directly opposite to itself.

Here, the connections one may find with Sankaran Krishna's 1993 review essay goes beyond Krishna's choice for the title *'The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View on Critical International Relations Theory'*. In that article, the author acknowledges and reflects upon the contributions of postmodern and poststructuralist approaches[61] to IR in their efforts at "denaturalizing of what is

[61] Entering into a deep reflection upon postmodern´s and poststructuralist´s critiques in IR is certainly beyond the scope of this work. I therefore resort to Krishna's own articulations in the referred essay in an attempt that is less focused in providing a one size fits all definition of "Postmodernism" and/or "Poststructuralism" than of bringing a succinct depiction of what is at stake in the work of poststructural and postmodernist writers in their adoption of a similar line of critique and vocabulary. As the author summarizes: "[The] never-ending search for a pure origin, for a pristine state in which everything was just so, marks the Edenic narrative script of much of Western thought […]. [P]oststructural and postmodernist writers describe themselves precisely in the liberatory giving up of this eternal quest for a return to Eden. They begin from the position that reality, whatever that may be, is not complicitous with our efforts to theorize about it. What we have

taken for granted" and, consequently, helping to create "the space for imagining alternative order" (Krishna 1993:396). Drawing on the nexus between committed political engagement (meaning "worldly interventions" of political movements and views) and intellectual commitment as suggested in Said's more recent writings, however, Krishna manages to expose how critical approaches in IR tend to "sometimes replicate the winnowing of complex philosophical and political questions into reductionist and dichotomous choices that they so acutely critique in much of modernist writing" (1993:397). The author mentions, for instance, an exacerbated fascination with discursive violence, which tends to gloss over the "physicalist sense of [the] violence" experienced by peoples as a result of war or situations of extreme poverty and inequality. Importantly, Krishna highlights the tendency in these approaches to rely on total critiques of subjectivity and on the anxiety to condemn *all* truth as "sovereign truths" remaining insensitive to others' (hi)stories and "inadequately sensitive to the necessity to retain a notion of subjectivity in political praxis" (Krishna 1993: 400; 397). Thus, once again, one sees oneself in front of a dichotomous choice, which reads as follows: "one either indulges in total critique [...], or one is committed to 'nostalgic', essentialist unities that have become obsolete and have been the grounds for all our oppressions" (Krishna, p. 400). There is no in-between.

More to the point, what Krishna seems to pinpoint in his review is that criticism "all the way down" can also be disempowering and easily prone to the sort of "out-worldly" criticism that Said alerted us against. Thus, his plea for the importance of being ironic in relation to totalizing narratives and closure, but also, and importantly, in relation to a "totalizing critique that delegitimizes all narratives" and, by doing so, remains trapped in a hierarchized world wherein "some discourses dominate others who are condemned to remain [that of] a people without history" (Krishna 1993:400). This all speaks to the understanding that, when difference becomes undistinguished and an excuse for solipsist and synoptic exercises of

then are representations as endless power plays, arbitrarily seeking to impose a decipherable code on a reality that can never be apprehended with finality. […] The quest for transcendence – the overcoming of difference – contained in all emancipatory narratives is regarded as one more in a series of endless efforts to corral the future and subject populaces to arbitrary disciplines […]. All discourses are thus essentially contestable and these works proceed with invocations of a deep respect for ambiguity" (Krishna 1993:386-387). See also: Sajed, *Late Modernity/Postmodernity*.

criticism, political acts envisioning change can be easily dismissed or condemned as proceeded from tragedy to farce.

The point here is not that all intellectuals must embrace the role of political activists in the traditional sense of the term, altogether. It relates more to the ethical-political value behind a constant exercise of critique that includes self-criticism as one of its key dimensions, yes, but remains vigilant against solipsism and "synoptic knowledge" – which, as Krishna came to alert us, are both symptoms of the ethics of otherness adopted by critical approaches too focused on textuality, on practices of representation and signification, while remaining inattentive to the "physicalistic sense of violence" that accompanies contexts of material and epistemic inequality. Ultimately, it connects the cognitive-political craft that academia must be/become, with an open attitude toward the multiverse of worldviews and modes of political action acting upon the world.

Here, one can find elements of the politics of hope that Dauphinee (2013c) talks about and which is embedded in her attempts to come to terms with her research and privileged position as an intellectual and IR scholar. Hope towards change – and toward the possibility of playing a meaningful role, at least in the process of envisioning change – is an important feature in what I understand as a trendy "re-enchantment" with the multiple worlds of international and global politics in current critical approaches to IR (narrative approaches among them). Nonetheless, the remaining question (and difficulty) is always whether these high hopes can translate into concrete platforms and "resources to people in and out of the academy who struggle on multiple fronts against the rising forces of authoritarianism both at home and abroad", or somewhere in between (Giroux 2004:345).

If in *The World, the Text and the Critic* Said is explicitly concerned with literary language and literary texts, some of his insights are also punctual to the questions of academic writing and intellectual (dis)engagement that have been too of central concern to narrative approaches in IR. Relatedly, and as remarked before, it seems that Said tried to provide a model for what it means to combine scholarship and commitment, texts with their contexts, by means to attenuate the academic tradition of "out-worldly" criticism. There, Said resorts once again to Fanon – this time to the latter's brilliant description of how the colonial discourse re-enacts the

violent geography of the colonial city and vice-versa[62] – and sustains that not only "discourse often puts one interlocutor above another", what makes "untenable the opposition between texts and the world, or between texts and speech", but also that colonialism and other forms of physical and epistemic violence also sustain themselves on effective narratives and not just brute force (Said 1983:48-49).

Thus, Said's notion of worldliness speaks to the relatively recent turn to narratives in IR in meaningful ways. It showcases the long way this now common critique of the politics of representation in Eurocentric sciences and academia has been through, and some of the potential accomplishments and pitfalls one has to come to terms when drawing serious attention to the matter. As scholars who are already exploring and working with these novel methods have been pointing out, with the promise of a more inclusive IR, there also come the dangers of turning the "narrative turn in IR" into a romanticizing gesture toward marginal voices that stem more out of intellectual guilt than from the desire (and courage) to open genuine spaces for dialogue and dissimilar or opposite world views (Muppidi 2013). Relatedly, it can also be turned into "an exercise in self-indulgence" focused on "the personal and confessional without a sustained political motif" (Dauphinee 2013a).

Take Roxanne Lynn Doty in her own turn to a narrative approach, for instance. She brilliantly tells us how IR scholars learn how "to squeeze the life out of things" by resorting to bloodless abstractions and disembodied, dehumanized

[62] "The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession-all manner of possession: to set at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible.The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive "They want to take our place." It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place" (Fanon 1963/2004:38-39).

terms in their desire to understand and to describe the world (Doty 2004:380). As the discussion in the previous pages shows, the effects of such politics of academic disengaged narrative and writing are tremendous. Nonetheless, if, on the one hand, Doty (quoting Edward Said) rightfully regrets the ethical poverty of a persisting "scholastic hermeticism where 'the issues of greatest importance will be what one critic says about another'" (Doty, p. 389)[63]; on the other hand, her solution to the question, that is to say, her plea for bringing the *world* back into IR through an exclusive attention to the "other voices" of the academic text can be as prone to closure and to the replication of global hierarchies as the reality of the problem she is criticizing and trying to resist. The "other voices" in Doty's text happen to be no other than the researcher's own voice, albeit in a worldlier situated fashion in which the concern with scientific truths and jargon are of less importance than one's own experience while playing the role of the IR scholar towards her research subjects and her anxieties when writing the political. The solipsist trap here is thus exemplary of the sort of intellectual exile that is still strongly encouraged by academia and academic discourse in general, as Dauphinee's young professor seemed to realize at some point of her journey in *The Politics of Exile* (See Dauphinee 2013b).

Put differently, the narrative turn can be another turn aiming towards "the diverse worlds of the human international" but that once again ends in Europe, or the West, as a referent for the epistemic privilege that scholars have cherished and been complicit in many ways (Muppidi 2013). As usual, the greatest difficulty here has been changing the terms rather than simply the content of the conversation (see Mignolo 2012). That is to say, going beyond a mere acknowledgement of the existence of a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints and trying to see/understand and meaningfully engage these views beyond the comfortable (because neatly dichotomous) "out-worldly" paradigms of either the total critique or the fetishization of the other. The old Indian story (and Muppidi's reflections upon it) once again speaks to us: "How should he [the warrior] translate his conversations with Truth? Is it the King, the Palace and the Princess that [the warrior] should keep

[63] The passage quoted in Doty (2004) can be found in: Said (2001), Beginnings, p.3-38.

uppermost in his mind since it was their interests that he set out to please and win over initially?" (Muppidi 2012:7).

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As outlined in the introductory chapter to this thesis, I focus on postcolonial and decolonial approaches from the Maghreb, more specifically, in order to make the case for the epistemological (and ethical) value of these specific narratives in their attempts to (re)articulate political subjectivities and conceptual formations, and to intervene "worldly" in contexts of political and social unrest. In a way, the anxiety, hope and disenchantment/-re-enchantment movements towards truth (both in the singular and in the plural sense of the word) that animate the works examined along this chapter under the "Narrative IR" rubric seem to also animate the works of the intellectuals I engage in the following chapters. Therefore, I attempt to look at their narratives – which are mostly literary, autobiographical or semi-autobiographical texts – not (only) as anecdotal stories but as expressions of a mode of knowing in their own. Despite their differences, they are united by a common attempt at speaking about the(ir) world(s) – both "real" and envisioned ones – in worldly, politically and ethically meaningful ways. Said seems to remind us that all writing styles are complicit with the power that allows them to *be there* (Said 1983). Texts are always "worldly" situated. Thus, when reading these specific stories and simultaneously looking at the contexts from where they stem, as well as the audiences they aim to reach, I am caught by the impetus of understanding narratives as not only stories we tell about ourselves and the world, be them fictitious or not. Narratives can be (and not rarely are, indeed) political acts.

## 2.4 **A Late Prologue:**

Back to the cave with the warrior from the Indian ancient story opening this chapter, one might be wondering now what tasks and "what responsibility befalls the warrior" after having found Truth as an "ugly hag" and an occasional liar – but who also happens to be a natural conversationalist. Considering the broad picture and problematization of IR narratives, as well as some of the potentialities and limits of Narrative IR that I explored in this chapter, my initial feeling on this aspect

is: having found that our Truth may not always be truthful, there is enough evidence to believe that what we – the ones who claim authority to analyse and speak of *world* politics – need is to acknowledge and engage with other perspectives and voices. If we want to be truly able to fancy ourselves as international/world/global analysts in the first place, it requires us an effort in the direction of bringing the *world* in its diversity and inequities back in. It is a daunting but necessary task. But the remaining questions are: how would that be? How can we meaningfully engage with the difference and alterity for whose voice we claim to be creating space? And, importantly, would that be enough after all?

In connection with this, there is more for us to meditate on the warrior's encounter with Truth. First, if one reads the anecdote carefully, the old woman the warrior happened to encounter inside the cave had never affirmed herself as Truth. After having wandered for so long, the warrior finally found someone who could resemble – even though in a very awkward and unexpected way – and who perhaps spoke as if she were the Truth he was looking for. But the warrior ended up getting to that conclusion by himself. Chances are that there is something important to be considered here, since, as we have seen, there are many reasons for one to believe that one has encountered truth (or, by contrast, for one to believe one may never find it whatsoever): a limited view of what the world looks like; a predisposition to claim truth and objectivity onto the world; the weariness caused by a daunting and unsuccessful search; or even, a refusal to believe in the narratives of truth available and accepted in a given context and, thus, the desire for something else – perhaps for a truth of a whole different nature. As it should be evident, all these possibilities come out of the warrior's own standpoint, his own perceptions regarding that specific encounter with an unexpected – and very talkative – interlocutor.

Second, after concluding that he was talking with Truth, the warrior asked the old hag what he should tell others of that night-long conversation. But why would the warrior bother to know Truth's opinion on what version of herself, as well as what aspects of that episode he would be allowed to spread around? Would that be the case of an attribution of authority by the warrior on his interlocutor *just* because he thought he was talking to *the* Truth (although of a very different sort from what he was expecting at the beginning of his journey)? Had he known beforehand that besides an amusing conversationalist Truth was also a smiling liar, would he bother

to ask her such question (or to continue their conversation at all)? And importantly, after finding out that the old woman's request might have some influence on the appearance of truthfulness of his own narrative of that episode (and thus on the prize he expects to receive at home), would the warrior tell others the truth about his encounter with Truth?[64]

We can only imagine the warrior`s reaction after the old woman's awkward request ("tell them that I am young and beautiful"). Maybe he turned suspicious of his interlocutor, and decided to continue his search, or even gave up on it once and for all. I personally like to believe that, in his way back home, the warrior had plenty of time to reflect on his journey and the episode in the cave, as well as on the possible consequences of the story he decides to tell – in case he does. And all just to realize by himself that the point was not the search, nor the fact that he had (or hadn't) found Truth in the first place, but the motivations behind that journey – the King's, the old hag's, and his own. If we are to believe that the warrior had indeed encountered Truth in that dark cave, we have that Truth is a story-teller herself – and a very talented one, for not only had she kept the young uppish man entertained the whole night but also convinced him of her identity despite her unpleasant appearance. In fact, if we go deeper in that perception, what is at stake is not the veracity of the old hag's claim to be Truth, but that truth is a matter of story-telling, of how narratives both make and unmake worlds, and the ways they both/either connect and/or disconnect narrator and listener/speaker in many ways. If that is the case, then we have that truth's truthfulness comes out of narratives, and the ways narratives are told, received and then retold, all the way through their worldliness.



*Silence means death*
*Stand on your feet*
*Inner fear*
*Your worst enemy*
*Refuse, Resist*
*Refuse, Resist*

-excerpt from "Refuse/Resist", song by Sepultura

[64] I owe some of these insights to Paulo Chamon (personal correspondence).

## 3. (Hi)story and Narration as Weapons of Decolonization in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*

*We had prepared two glasses of blood*
*Nedjma opened her eyes amid the trees*
*A lute was making much of the plains transforming them into gardens*
*As black as sun-soaked blood*
*Nedjma lay beneath my soothed heart I breathed shoals of precious flesh*
*-Nedjma the stars have followed us while we have been dreaming ...*
*I had imagined you as timeless as space and the unknown*
*And now you are dying and I falter and you cannot ask me to cry […]*
*I throw your beautiful heart away it comes back decomposed.*
*Yet we had names in the epopee we traveled the land of lamentation*
*we followed the mourners when they laughed behind the Nile...*
*Now Algiers separates us a siren has made us deaf a sneaky winch uproots your beauty.*
*Maybe Nedjma the spell is over but your water spurts under my submissive eyes;*
*And the mosques were crumbling under the spears of the sun*
*As if Constantine had arisen from the flames by more subtle fires*
*[…] I know Nedjma the sand is full of our fingerprints soaked with gold;*
*The nomads watch for their cries burst our words […]*
*But Nedjma was sleeping she remained immortal*
*and I could touch her disconcerting breasts...*
*It was in Bone in the light time of the jujubes Nedjma had opened me immense palm groves*
*Nedjma slept like a vessel, love bleeding under her still heart.*
*Nedjma open your famous eyes the time passes I will die in seven years and seven years are not even inhuman […]*

(Kateb Yacine, *Nejma Ou Le Poème Ou Le Couteau,* my translation)[65]

[65] Kateb's poem, *Nedjma ou le poème ou le couteau* was originally published in *Mercure de France*, January 1rst, 1948, Paris – eight years before the publication of *Nedjma* [1956] Kateb's most famous piece. The original in French reads: "Nous avions préparé deux verres de sang Nedjma ouvrait ses yeux parmi les arbres./Un luth faisait mousser les plaines et les transformait en jardins/Noirs comme du sang qui aurait absorber le soleil/J'avais Nedjma sous le cœur frais fumais des bancs de chair précieuse/-Nedjma depuis que nous rêvons bien des astres nous ont suivis…/Je t'avais prévue immortelle ainsi que l'air et l'inconnu/Et voilà que tu meurs et que je me perds et que tu ne peux me demander de pleurer…/ Nedjma je t'ai appris un diwan tout-puissant mais ma voix s'éboule je suis dans une musique déserte j'ai beau jeter ton cœur il me revient décomposé./Pourtant nous avions nom dans l'épopée nous avons parcouru le pays de complainte nous avons suivi les/ pleureuses quand elles riaient derrière le Nil…/Maintenant Alger nous sépare une sirène nous a rendus sourds un treuil sournois déracine ta beauté./Peut-être Nedjma que le charme est passé mais ton eau gicle sous mes yeux déférents ; /Et les mosquées croulaient sous les lances du soleil/Comme si Constantine avait surgi du feu par de plus subtils incendies (...)/Je dis Nedjma le sable est plein de nos empreintes gorgées d'or ;/Les nomades nous guettent leurs cris crèvent nos mots ainsi que des bulles/Nous ne verrons plus les palmiers poussés vers la grêle tendre des étoiles/Nedjma les chameliers sont loin et la dernière étape est au Nord ; /Nedjma tira sur la bride je sellai un dromadaire musclé comme un ancêtre./Lorsque je perdis l'andalouse je ne pus rien dire j'agonisais sous son souffle il me fallut le temps de la nommer/Les palmiers pleuraient sur ma tête j'aurais pu oublier l'enfant pour le feuillage/Mais Nedjma dormait restait immortelle et je pouvais toucher ses seins déconcertants…/C'était à Bône au temps léger des jujubes Nedjma m'avait ouvert d'immenses palmeraies /Nedjma dormait comme un navire l'amour saignait sous son cœur immobile./Nedjma ouvre tes yeux fameux le temps passe je mourrai dans sept et sept ans ne sois pas inhumaine (…).

In 1948, *Le Mercure de France*, a prominent French literary magazine at that time, published a love poem curiously entitled "*Nedjma ou le poème ou le couteau*" (Nedjma or the poem or the knife) by a young Algerian writer, Kateb Yacine [1929-1989][66]. Tragedy, death and feelings of delusion steam from the poem, a text "suffused with spectacular imagery and lyrical density" (Aresu 1991:xxxiii) – and, I would add, the kind of aggressive tone that haunts most of Kateb's written texts, including his masterpiece *Nedjma,* a novel first published in 1956, also in France, by Éditions du Seuil[67]. The year before, on 24 May 1947, that same young and promising Algerian intellectual – Kateb was just eighteen years old by then – offered a lecture at the *Salle des Sociétés Savantes* in Paris on the life and contributions of Abd el-Kader, considered the first organizer of substantial resistance against French colonial expansion and usually referred as the father of Algerian nationalism. These two events happened very early in Kateb Yacine's public life, not only inaugurating his career outside his home country, but also turning a common feature of all his writings already visible, that is, his dialectic commitment with literary creativity and political awareness, with "poetry and revolution" (Aresu 1991:xvi).

His first visit to Paris in 1947 also inaugurated the sort of nomadic life marked both by periodic exile from Algeria and by times when he could be better framed as a "internal exile" in his own country, who saw his dream of participation in the intellectual and artistic scene in post-independence Algeria constantly sabotaged by



(My Translation). Available at: http://www.lemidi-dz.com/index.php?operation=voir_article&id_article=culture%40art3%402007-09-30 Accessed on: Jan 10, 2018.

[66] Coming from an Arab-educated and artistically gifted family, Kateb's political activism started very early in his life during French colonial rule in Algeria – he was barely sixteen when he was arrested and tortured due to his participation in the uprising of 8 May of 1945, in Sétif, where he was attending secondary school. After being finally released, he joined in the militant activities of the short-lived organizations that preceded the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale [National Liberation Front]). In that context of surveillance and violence by the colonial police in Algeria, Kateb seemed to realize that there were other things preventing mass mobilization and the cause of Algerian independence, namely illiteracy and political disfranchisement. Back in Constantine, the Mediterranean city where he was born – and a constant historical and legendary referent in his book Nedjma –, he then "brought together literature and politics in clandestine speeches tailored to illiterate audiences" (Aresu 1991:xvii). When in France, Kateb joined fellow North African and French intellectuals in public debates. He also got involved in Maghrebian immigrant workers cause when the Algerian revolution was in its early moments (Aresu 1991:xvii).

[67] The original version in French was published in 1956 by Éditions du Seuil. Although Kateb's text will eventually be quoted in the original in French, in this chapter I work mostly with the 1991 English translation by Richard Howard published by CARAF books and The University of Virginia Press, with eventual modifications (to be notified whenever they appear).

the harsh realities of political dissensions, by ideological and religious intolerance and the related complexities of official censorship in the context of the so-called "cultural revolution"[68] (Gafaiti 1997; Toumi 2002). The lack of freedom of expression and the cultural policies that favored the use of classical Arabic ("the language of the Book") not only over French but over popular colloquial Arabic and Berber dialects in postcolonial Algeria prevented both literary and theatrical production in those considered "subversive languages" (Toumi 2002:57). Thus, if in his constant and profound dilemma concerning language and culture Kateb felt the necessity of returning "to Algeria in order to attempt writing in languages that the Algerian people could understand, without giving up French entirely"[69] (Kateb 1988 in Aresu 1991:xxiv), he soon ended up by taking the road of exile from his home country again. Later on, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, due to his prominence in foreign intellectual circles and, importantly, thanks to the local



[68] On 1976 "the government of Boumedienne decided to publish a draft of "national charter", which was to define Algerian politics from then on, especially in what concerned the cultural field. I was stated, and even "guaranteed", that the debates should be democratic and that citizens were to be allowed to express themselves freely. It was an open forum for intellectuals [sic], who found it a rare opportunity to question the official thesis of uniqueness. …" Later on, "[a] confidential circular from the Ministry of the Interior to the *walis* (city mayors) of Algeria instructs them not to let Kateb Yacine speak in public. A second circular stated that he could be even detained". In the official national press, in (classical) Arabic, "he is accused of being a *berbériste*, communist and of other degrading qualifications. He is accused of atheism, and of not understanding Islam properly…" (Toumi 2002:50, my translation). Kateb, in turn, provocatively returned to the episode in an interview, published more than one decade later, in *Jeune Afrique* under the headline "The Return of Kateb Yacine" *[Le retour de Kateb Yacine]*: "As I am insurgent against French Algeria, I protest against Arab-Muslim Algeria. A people is tied up through a language and a religion. I am neither an Arab nor a Muslim. I am Algerian" *[*'*comme je suis insurgé contre l'Algérie française, je m'insurge contre l'Algérie arabo-musulmane. On ligote un peuple à travers une langue et une religion. Je ne suis ni arabe, ni musulman. Je suis Algérien*'] (Jeune Afrique. 'Le Retour de Kateb Yacine', 1987, p.51, my translation).

[69] According to Alek Toumi and as highlighted by Kateb himself, he wrote his novels in French but later decided to write and present his plays in Arabic – in its popular form, as spoken in Algeria – in order to approximate himself and his art of the people, and not because of nationalism – as it was the case of many Maghrebian authors in the postcolonial context in their attempt to write an Algerian (or Moroccan, or Tunisian) identity that is closer to the figure of the "Arab World" and supposedly free of any ties with the "West". In what touches the debate over the politics of language and the multifarious linguistic landscape in the Maghreb region (i.e. "multiglossic"), Toumi points out that the "dominant pole" in the linguistic debate – which is related not only to the specific domain of literature and artistic production, but also to the cultural politics emanated from post-independence national institutions in Algeria – was the one defending Algerian unicity through its Arab and Muslim heritage, that is, Algeria as well as the Maghreb as homogeneous entities historically and culturally inseparable from the Arab World. The "dominated" or "minority pole", on the other hand, defended that Maghrebian literature, whether written in French or Classic Arabic, has its dialectal languages as main source of imagination and expression, thus it is a multiglossic and dynamic discourse per se. Toumi thus mentions Kateb Yacine as one exponent of the dominated pole in that multidirectional debate. See Toumi (2002); Chapter 4 in this Thesis.

popularity of his plays written and performed in popular Arabic he then founded his own theatre company and started a tour throughout Algeria with a successful repertoire of plays with a clear political content (See Aresu 1991; Casas 1998; Gafait 1997; Toumi 2002).

Considered a masterpiece of Algerian modern literature, Kateb's *Nedjma* (1956) was written a few years after the May 8th 1945[70] uprisings, usually depicted as the first expressive anticolonial uprising in Algeria under French colonization. Due to his participation in the uprisings, Kateb was expelled from higher education and detained as political prisoner in Algeria. Many of those arrested with him were summarily executed at the time (Aresu 1991: xvi-xviii; Gafait 1997). If Kateb's life experience is taken into account, the novel can be thus described as an interwoven of the author's memories with those of the uprisings against French colonial rule (Aresu 1991; Bonn 1990). The plot is constructed around four young friends – Rachid, Lakhdar, Mourad, and Mustapha – living in the city of Bône and who are caught in a cycle of violence in the period between the Sétif uprisings and the eve of anticolonial revolution. Their common obsession with Nedjma, a beautiful married woman, is what both unites and divides the four men's trajectories, sparking violence between them, but also personal memories and reflections regarding the cycle of violence in their own society.



[70] "In May 8th 1945, a crowd, that we will estimate to 10 000 people, was formed in Sétif, in eastern Algeria. Messali Hadj's Algerian People's Party (PPP) [Parti Populaire Algérien] maintained the unrest in an undernourished country, and such mobilization emptied part of the Europeans there. In addition, the riflemen units had suffered heavy losses in Italy and France, something that happened without the grant of equal rights to Muslims. A ruthless repression. The procession, preceded by Muslims patrols, and followed by women shouting "you-you", is bristling with placards: "Free Messali", "We want to be your equals", "Istiqlal!" [Independence]. Excited, the crowd clashes with the police – around twenty gendarmes – and is unleashed" (Jean Planchais. En Algérie, l'émeute de Sétif. Le Monde archives. France: May 9 1985. Available in: http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1985/05/09/en-algerie-l-emeute-de-Sétif_2744515_1819218.html?xtmc=8_mai_1945&xtcr=61. My translation). This massacre also drove Ben Bella into politics. After an attempt in the narrow electoral sphere, he took the armed road. Enthused by the nationalism of Messali Hadj (who had been at the 1 927 Brussels meetings), Ben Bella joined Hadj' s Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD). But impatient with its moderate tone, Ben Bella created the Organisation Spéciale, the armed wing of the MTLD. A few hasty actions led to Ben Bella's imprisonment. When he was released, he joined eight other hardened revolutionaries (at the average age of thirty-two) to create the FLN" (Prashad, Vijay. Algiers. In: The Darker Nations – A People's History of the Third World. New York/London: The New Press, 2007, p.119). See also: Harbi, Mohammed; Stora, Benjamin (2010). La Guerre d'Algérie: de la mémoire à l'Histoire. In: Harbi, M.; Stora, B.(eds.). La Guerre d'Algérie. Pluriel, 2010, p.9-16.

In the author's own words: "I intended it to be a novel that would show French people, in their language, that Algeria was not French. I wanted to give French people an idea of what Algeria was really all about" (Kateb 1988 quoted in Aresu 1991:xxxi). Thus, it is possible to read Kateb's Nedjma as an effort of rethinking Algerian's relationship to history at a time when (colonial) violence and uncertainty prevail. Because the novel was partially written and published during the years of the anticolonial war in Algeria [1954-1962], it is usually acclaimed as a nationalist novel (See Bonn 1990; Bensmaïa 2003; Toumi 2002). In Charles Bonn's interpretation, for example, Nedjma (the character) stands as an allegory for the nation yet-to-come. In my reading, however, I will not focus on what can be assumed as the nationalist aspect of a piece written during anticolonial turmoil. To paraphrase Winnifred Woodhull (1993), I see *Nedjma* as a powerful articulation of the promise and the perils of narrating a society's history in its complexity – which necessarily involves disparate viewpoints and the exposure of the violent traits within different dimensions (although Kateb's narrative considerably focuses on Maghrebian landscapes and working class male subjects' individual and collective trajectories). Thus, I argue that different than articulating the elements of an imagined nation in terms of a single, coherent "modern" Algerian identity, Kateb's narrative encourages a multidirectional and constant movement of interrogation of identity, belonging, and order. At the same time, he does that while exposing the wounded dimension of such interrogation considering the specific context he was writing. I my view, this critical movement against totalizing narratives of Algerian history and society, and the anxiety that haunts such critique are what give Kateb's text its political meaning (both in the context of its publishing and, perhaps, also beyond it).

This chapter operates within the connection between narrative and history, truth and fiction, popular myths and collective memory, and practices of narrating (post)colonial Maghreb. Thus, I purport to read Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* in terms of how it performs the connection between past and present as two interrelated *living forces* that are constantly mobilized in narratives of collective identity and political transformation. In his novel, Kateb addresses such forces in terms that speak to the (anti-/de-colonial) political revolution he is envisioning in 1950s Algeria. In this aspect, I am indebted to Seth Graebner's (2007) suggestion of taking the representations of Algerian landscape in *Nedjma* as interpretive device to

understand the particular approach to history and historical narrative that Kateb is articulating. In my reading, I suggest that the narration of the relationship between the protagonists in the novel and the country's landscape is not a random story-telling strategy adopted by the author, but a constitutive element of Kateb's narrative. There is an implicit conception of history in the novel as a dynamic, multidirectional (i.e. neither linear nor circular) force that can only concretize itself in a provisional way, and in the enmeshment of popular myth and collective memory informing discourses and actions. In this framework, Algeria's cityscapes, historical sites, and ruins function as "chronoscapes" (see Graebner 2007) connecting subjects with an imagined past, a living present, as well as envisioned futures. This, among other things, makes Kateb`s text – in spite of its status as fiction – especially insightful to understand the socio-political atmosphere and some of the historically competing forces at play in a country diving into a bloody anticolonial war.

In the first part, I bring an overview of *Nedjma* focusing on how it has been interpreted by critics and, relatedly, on its explicit connections with the context when it was written by Kateb Yacine and first published – i.e. the eve of Algerian anticolonial war. The second part of the chapter brings a brief incursion into a now classical debate in historiography addressing the question of fact and fiction in historical narration. I highlight the relation between this debate and an apparently alien discussion about the "triumphalist" discourses informing totalizing narratives on political modernity. Addressing this connection allows me to not only locate Kateb's novel among those attempts at offering a counter-narrative of modernity, but also to address his contributions in ways that highlight their political relevance beyond the captivity of modernity as world-framing. Finally, in the third part, I refer to Kateb's narration of Algerian landscapes as a methodology for reimagining and writing the history of postcolonial Maghreb. By focusing on the trope of wandering in space and time, the author privileges a historical stance in which popular myths intermingle with collective memory and, by wittingly doing so, allows "the colonized to become actors in it, in their own right" (Graebner 2007:140) – thus, resisting the imagery encouraged by French colonial historiography on the Maghreb.

My argument is that the implicit theory of history based on multiple temporalities in *Nedjma* can assist us in addressing "forms of representing history,

time, and difference as situated, historical ways of treating time and space" (Riecken 2015:6). If read in these terms, Kateb's approach contributes with important reflections on the connections between historical narrative and the production of collective identities that do not necessarily culminate in the imagery of a "nation". The gloomy atmosphere of his novel also discourages his reader to envision the nation through triumphalist lenses. In contrast, it offers a glimpse of the contradictory historical forces that are transforming Algeria in the mid-twentieth century, and which are indications of the future heterogeneous nation.

## 3.1 Imagining Revolution in 1950s Algeria: Kateb Yacine's Nedjma (1956)

Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* came out in a very specific moment of Maghreb's contemporary history. The year of 1956 is when both Algeria's neighbours, Tunisia and Morocco, had officially acquired their independence from French colonial rule. It is also the year when the French joined the attack on the Suez Canal against Nasser's Egypt, an event not altogether related to the Algerian insurgency, but that ultimately brought on inspiration to the cause of Algerian nationalism[71]. The context of Kateb's novel publication was also marked by the break out of the bloody war of independence (the Battle of Algiers was to take place the following year)[72], the tragic scenario that the writer himself recognizes as key to his strong will and efforts to anticipate the book's release. Decades later, in a forum on African literatures[73], Kateb returned to the episode bringing a critical eye onto the relationship both between publishers and writers (Third World writers in general, and Maghrebian writers in France in particular) and between writer and audience in colonial and postcolonial contexts:

> I know that I kept on submitting my manuscript to the publisher for seven years, while he kept on telling me: But since you have such beautiful sheep in Algeria, why don't you write about them? … There was radical ignorance, and such ignorance disappeared as if miraculously with the war … With the first ambushes and France starting to lose her children, Algeria became commercialized, turned into something

[71] See, for example: Prashad 2007; Gallissot, René. La décolonisation du Maghreb: de l'Afrique du Nord Française au Maghreb suspens. In: Harbi, Mohammed; Stora, Benjamin (eds). La Guerre d'Algérie. Pluriel, 2010, p. 63-106.

[72] See: Harbi, Mohammed; Stora, Benjamin (eds). La Guerre d'Algérie. Pluriel, 2010.

[73] I am referring to the Sixth Forum on North African Literature and Culture held at Temple University, on 21 March 1988. See Aresu 1991.

> in which publishers were interested… And the book was a success to the extent that I intended it to be a novel that would show French people, in their language, that Algeria was not French. I wanted to give French people an idea of what Algeria was really all about. And the goal was basically achieved, but… the book's reception was after all marred by paternalism (Kateb 1988 quoted in Aresu 1991:xxxi)

Relatedly, Charles Bonn (1990) characterizes Kateb's *Nedjma* as an important rupture with the former tendency of refusal in exposing the "self" in the first Algerian novels, as well as with the conventional structure of the realist ethnographical novel. It was a time when, in France, Maghrebian literature – or at least Algerian literature – meant mainly Albert Camus and his avoidance of politics when he chose to remain silent with regard to the necessity of radical change in Algeria (to paraphrase Kateb's own words in an interview delivered in 1975) (see Aresu 1991; Sajed 2013:121-154). If we take Kateb's own words into consideration, it seems reasonable to affirm that one of his aims in the novel was to rethink Algerians relationship to history. According to some of the critics of his work, Kateb was successful in his ambitious though more than justifiable task, since his novel ended up by breaking up with the former colonial discourse and reshaping future representations of Algeria and of the Maghreb in fiction (see Bensmaïa 2003; Bonn 1990). In fact, in Kateb's work, it goes without saying that literature is not only a poetic invention but also a standard of ideology[74]. As many other Francophone Maghrebian writers after him, he seeks to subvert the relationship with the colonizer by using the French language in such a way as to allow the Western reader to acquaint herself/himself with the culture of the colonized society; that is, in ways that expose the political necessity of the colonized subject to appropriate the language of the colonizer in order to not only answer back but also to write their own narratives. In a sense, the writers "say" in French what cannot be anything but "not French". In *Nedjma*, Kateb brings a writing form aimed at depicting the indignation, bitterness, and the misery of the Algerian peoples caused by colonial exploitation, but also, and importantly, the cultural and historical density that the colonial discourse tried to efface.

The novel brings the story of a group of four Algerians in the context that followed the May 8, 1945 demonstrations against French colonial rule in Algeria.

[74] Stuart Hall & Donald James (1985) define ideology as "concepts, ideas, and images which provide framework of interpretation and meaning and political thought" (p.36).

The protagonists are Lakhdar, Rachid, Mustapha and Mourad, all students and laborers at a construction site, who became curiously linked by their varied relationships to a mysterious young woman, Nedjma. The story begins with the escape of one of the characters after they were all imprisoned by the French police during the protests. The plot develops in dizzying circles and is constructed around seemingly disconnected fragments from the lives of the four male characters and how they all eventually end up by encountering Nedjma and fighting for her love (Kateb 1991). Nedjma has uncertain origins: she was born of a French Jewish woman and an Algerian Muslim whose identity is a mystery, raised by an Algerian woman from a middle class urban family, and, at one crucial moment of the story, she was claimed and kept captive by the ancestor of the Keblout tribe. Nedjma therefore "embodies a syncretic vision of Algeria, represented through its colonial present and its Andalusian past, a space in the main of multiple and conflicting cultural components" (Gueydan 2008 n/p quoted in Igoudjil 2014:169). The plot unfolds with other arrests, torture, betrayals, and often unexpected flashbacks into childhood, love affairs, family quarrels and tribal incidents.

The genealogical anxiety personified in Nedjma's female figure – who is simultaneously mother, daughter, wife, lover, captive, obsession, but also warrior, "star of blood", ogress and wanderer, to name a few features of her identity and representations throughout the narrative –, at least to my perception, does not make her into a mere passive receptacle of the male characters' imaginary as suggested in some interpretations of the novel[75]. In fact, the character's uncertain origins and puzzling personality encourages us to cast Nedjma "as a productive force in, rather than the static ground for emergent […] affirmation[s] of the cultural heritage" (Woodhull 1993: 27). Nonetheless, Nedjma seems to stand less as heroine – around whom the narrative finds an orderly disposition or a climax[76] – than as the force that puts the narrative into motion – i.e. the characters' wanderings on Algerian

[75] See, for example, Bonn 1990.

[76] According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, narrative climax is "the point at which the highest level of interest and emotional response is achieved. In rhetoric, climax is achieved by the arrangement of units of meaning (words, phrases, clauses, or sentences) in an ascending order of importance. (…) In the structure of a play, the climax, or crisis, is the decisive moment, or turning point, at which the rising action of the play is reversed to falling action. It may or may not coincide with the highest point of interest in the drama. (…) By the end of the 19th century, when the traditional five-act drama was abandoned in favour of the three-act, both the crisis and the emotional climax were placed close to the end of the play". Available at: https://www.britannica.com/art/climax-literature Accessed on: Jan 10, 2018.

landscapes and their often-unexpected encounters with Nedjma, which result in overlapping memories and multiple and conflicting cultural components.

Due to this "genealogical anxiety", plus the context in which Kateb's novel is published, that *Nedjma* is usually depicted as a "nationalist novel" (as in Charles Bonn's and Rèda Bensmaia's readings, for example). Nedjma means "star" in Arabic. In the Algerian context, the star (which is in itself a widespread symbol for a nation) can be interpreted as an allusion to *L'étoile Nord-Africaine* (North African Star), one of the first Algerian secular anticolonial-nationalist groups[77] (Bonn 1990:48). According to Bonn, Nedjma (the character) can be interpreted as "a symbol of a country/nation yet to come" (Bonn 1990:11; see Bensmaïa 2003). In the novel, Nedjma is also associated with the figure of Kahina, the legendary Berber heroine of the Aures, what also evokes her connection with the "warriors" of anticolonial movement in Algeria (Woodhull 1993:27).

Thus, the figure of Nedjma embodies both a woman and the search for the nation. This same interpretation is echoed by Bernard Aresu (1991) in the introduction to the English edition of the book. Winifred Woodhull (1993) addresses the specificities of this aspect of the figure of Nedjma in the novel, and notably brings a critical eye on readings too much focused on the "woman as nation" trope and on the analysis of "woman" as first a textual marker – i.e. excluding the text's relation to women's historical and material reality. In her words, if on the one hand readers and critics are prone to recognize in Kateb's female character "an emblem of the contradictory forces at work in Algeria's search for national identity on the eve of the revolution", on the other hand, Nedjma's "significance for Algerian women's liberation" is rarely considered (Woodhull 1993:1). Thus, if Kateb's narrative has the merits for "successfully stag[ing] some of the process by which women are constituted as actors in history", including women's limited space for acting in "nationalism's confrontation with colonialism", it "nonetheless makes one woman, Nedjma (however fluid a figure she may be), stand in for women generally" (Woodhull 1993:3). Implicit here, as Woodhull is keen to demonstrate, is the colonial desire to depict women in Algeria as both a homogeneous, monolithic group, and the ultimate expression of

[77] The *Étoile Nord-Africaine* was transformed into PPA, *Parti du people algérien* (Algerian People's Party), then into MTLD, to be finally amalgamated into the FLN in 1954. See: Toumi 2002:127, fn. 54. See also: Merdaci 2004; Galissot 2004.

"intractable difference" – two interrelated movements that prevent one to see the materiality of political demands and subjectivities in ways that are crucial not only in the context of anticolonial revolution but also afterwards, from the constitution of the postcolonial society up to nowadays.

Rather than emphasizing the "female-procreative" or sensuous aspect of Nedjma's potency (in her aspect, both as character and as text, as an ever-renewable reserve of cultural images) and all the promising but mostly problematic avenues such reading may open[78], I want to draw attention to another effect of the "genealogical anxiety" incarnated in Nedjma's figure throughout the text. I am referring to a kind of silent impulse, one that comes out of feelings of obsession, fear, anger, and hope (or the mixing of them) and that leads the characters in the novel into journeys throughout Maghrebian historical sites in their search for meaning in life (not so much as individuals, but as political subjects in times of colonial oppression, depersonalization, but also of anticolonial struggle and the promises of a political revolution). At first, it comes across as mostly a textual effect, something that stands for the sake of the novel's plot and the ways it connects characters in order to give sense to the overall narrative; however, I see this anxiety as something that also lies beyond the textual borders of the novel in question, and as key to understand Kateb's (anticolonial) approach to Algerian history. As I will argue later in this chapter, Kateb's disruption of monological discourses regarding Algeria's and Maghreb's past breaks with the authority of both French colonial historiography and other triumphalist historical narratives (e.g. the Arab Maghreb) on that matter.

In the preface to the 1956 French edition by Éditions du Seuil one can read, for instance, what sounds as a sort of friendly warning to any "wary Western reader" who decides to engage with Kateb's complex "Arab"-informed narrative. The sort of narrative which can be, in the editors' own words, "occasionally disconcerting"

[78] This, especially in what touches the place(s) and roles of women in Algerian revolution and the potentialities and limits of the promises made during the years of anticolonial struggle by the revolutionary movement and its leaders when an investigation of the postcolonial socio-scape of Algeria is taken into account. For a deep and politically (and ethically)-informed analysis of the potentialities and limits of feminists' readings of Nedjma and the novel's connections with the reality of women in Algeria, see Woodhull 1993. See also: Ibrahimi, Khaoula T. (2010). Les Algériennes et la guerre de liberation nationale L'émergences des femmes dans l'espace public et politique au cours de la guerre et l'après-guerre. In: Harbi, Mohammed; Stora, Benjamin (eds). La Guerre d'Algérie. Pluriel, p.281-323.

to the "Western reader" (Les Éditeurs in Kateb 1956:6). The preface starts by offering an irreducible definition of "Arab" and by highlighting aspects of Algeria's intractability. In an overall description of the novel, Michel Chodkiewicz (the original author of the book's original preface, which was nevertheless signed by "les Éditeurs")[79] points out that notwithstanding *Nedjma* is an exemplar of the Francophone literature coming from Algeria, it remains "a profoundly *Arab* work". The sort of work, as the preface highlights, whose language the reader cannot understand if she fails to "distinguish it from *the tradition* to which, even in its repudiations, it still belongs" to (Les Éditeurs in Kateb 1956:6). Regarding the narrative's complex structure and rhythm, for instance, the editors caution their "Western" French-speaking audience:

> The narrative's rhythm and construction, if they indisputably owe something to certain Western experiments in fiction, result in chief from a purely Arab notion of *man in time*. Western thought moves in *linear* duration, *whereas Arab thought develops in a circular duration, each turn a return*, mingling future and past in the eternity of the moment. This *confusion of tenses*… corresponds to so constant *a feature of the Arab character*, so natural an orientation of Arab thought, that Arab grammar itself is marked by it. Hence we cannot follow Nedjma's plot development, but rather its *involution*: the passage from one level of consciousness to another is effected by a kind of intellectual slide down spirals of indefinite length. The reader is furnished landmarks which suffice, we believe, to keep him from getting dizzy (The Editors, quoted in Kateb [1956]1991:ix, my emphasis)[80].

Although it should be conceded that Kateb's text may indeed be hard to follow in certain aspects – e.g. its duodecimal clock-like numbering of chapters and its non-linear narrative –, the problem in the "warning" offered by Éditions du Seuil's editors lies in the fact that they claim to bring a genuinely Arab product to Parisian intellectual consumers in the most essentialized and exoticizing tone available at the time. The author of the "*Avertissement*" – not a "preface", a "notice", but a "warning" – in the French edition, Michel Chodkiewicz, himself a

[79] I found this information in Graebner 2007 (and nowhere else).

[80] The original in French reads: "Le rythme et la construction du récit, s'ils doivent quelque chose à certaines experiences romanesques occidentales, - ce que nous ne contestons pas – résultent surtout d'une attitude purement arabe de l'homme face au temps. La pensée européenne se meut dans une durée lineare; la pensée arabe évolue dans une durée circulaire ou chaque detour est un retour, confondant l'avenir et le passé dans l'éternité de l'instant. Cette confusion des temps, que les observateurs hâtifs imputent au gout de l'équivoque… correspond à un trait si constant du caractère, à une orientation si naturelle de la pensée que la grammaire arabe, elle-même, e nest marquée. On ne pourra donc suivre ici le déroulement de l'histoire mais son enroulement – le passage d'un plan de conscience à un autre s'opérant par une espèce de glissement de l'esprit au long de spirales indéfiniment continues. Des repères seront fournis au lecteur et suffiront, croyons-nous, à lui éviter de céder au vertige" (Les Éditeurs in Kateb 1956:6-7)

Muslim, insists upon the Algerian specificity of the novel, for "it contained something eternally Arab and Algerian, rather than anything contingent or historical" (Graebner 2007:141).

The *Avertissement* then draws a clear distinction between "European" and "Arab" thought". In doing so, the book's editors find difficulty in defining Algeria's – and "Arabs'" – relationship to time, partly because they have trouble in admitting the historicity of that relationship, claiming that it is fixed in time, such as the Arab subject. Put differently, this misconception about Arab thought and its relationship to time – in which the notion of "circularity" is understood as an infinity of circles that can only lead to a sort of stasis and, by consequence, the "backwardness" of those regions and peoples captured within the signifier "Arab"[81] – "leads European

[81] In the last part of his *Maghreb Divers*, Alek Baylee Toumi brings an insightful discussion on the roles of the signifier "Arab" in representations of North Africans. Before being rearticulated during anticolonial struggle and later on by postcolonial governing elites in the Maghreb through appropriations of the "Arab-Islamic slogan" at the expenses of an "Arab-Kabyle" division. The manifold uses of the signifier 'Arab' in relation to North Africa are considerably distant from the literal sense of the term, as "Arab" refers "to anyone who is originally from or inhabits Arabia, which is precisely not the case of the majority of Maghrebian individuals" (2002:117). Intimately connected to the history of invasions and colonizations in the region (whose inhabitants were first baptized "Berber" by the Romans in reference to their "barbarian" nature, that is, their foreignness in relation to the Roman civilization), "[f]ollowing the Muslim invasion of the 8th century, the Maghrebians who conquered Spain were called the Arabo-Berbers, or the Moors. Colonized by the Turks until 1830s, this same population suddenly became "the Arabs" from the beginning of the French colonization" (Id., 118). In fact, 14th century historian Ibn Khaldūn already highlights in the foreword to The *Muqaddimah*, originally from 1382, that his work is based "on the history of the two races that constitute the population of the Maghrib at this time and people its various regions and cities…the Arabs and the Berbers. They are the two races known to have resided in the Maghrib for such a long time that one can hardly imagine they ever lived elsewhere" (Khaldūn [1958]2005:8). In its project of dehumanization, French colonialism will designate all indigenous without distinction by the significant "Arab" – basically and problematically lumping Berber, Arab and even Jew together under the same label, "*l'indigène colonisé*" (Toumi 2002:118). In spite of such an all-encompassing view of the Maghrebian colonized, the very foundation of psychological, moral, material, and even spatial divisions between European colonizer and "*indigène colonisés*" – "The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. …It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs" writes Fanon (1963/2004:39) about the two-zone division operating in colonial Algeria – there were, in fact, differences in the status of the colonized during French colonial rule. One should note, for example, that the Crémieux decree of 1870 granted to all Maghrebian Jewish population; and also, the division between "Arab" and "Berber" locals encouraged by the French first during invasion and then during colonial rule – thus the particularities of the Maghrebian case (Toumi 2002; Laroui 1977). The instability of and the ahistorical and pejorative appropriations of the signified "Arab" in the France-Maghreb (dis)connection is also evidenced in the different status of Maghrebian immigrants in France. Although the larger portray of the "Maghrebian/Arab" in France is that of "colonized" and a "foreigner", North African migrants are also caught in the ambivalence and asymmetries of social positionings, such as that of *immigré(e)* (i.e. the migrant worker) and *exilé(e)* (i.e. the North African diasporic intellectual) both in the colonial and in the postcolonial context, as acknowledged by Alina

readers to the conclusion that Arabs cannot conceive of history as Europeans do: *They* do not think like *Us*"[82] (Graebner 2007:143, emphasis in the original).

It should be noted that the contact zone created by European imperialism in North Africa in the 19th and early 20th century was followed by a renewed interest in the differences between European and Arab thought, specially in what regards the "Arab conception" of cyclical time and its supposed connections with the historical-political patterns of the region. In connection with that, the work of the 14th century Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldūn [1332-1406], the *Muqaddimah* [1382][83] – the "Introduction" or "Prolegomena of Universal History" – had figured

Sajed (2013) in her engagements with "various experiences of mobility, hybridity and citizenship" (Sajed 2013:43). Toumi also undertakes the representations of the "Arab" in French literature (of the "French-Maghrebian borderland") and in English literature (from both England and the United States), tracing the differences between them and managing to show the mobile and unstable character of the imaginary surrounding the "Arab", be it connected to the Maghreb or the Middle East regions (See Toumi 2002:117-132). In reference to Kateb Yacine's own protests against colonial and postcolonial depersonalization of Maghrebian peoples and how this writer's concerns also resonate in Maghrebian literature and in intellectual and political circles both before and after independence, Toumi then insightfully writes: "Kateb was right to warn against these "false distinctions and verbal traps". The attempt to demystify the contradictory dignified of the "Arab and Muslim" signifiers in which lied the problem of the authenticity of the culture and of the "Arab-Muslim" and Algerian personality. If the literary movement first experienced, through the Algerianists, an authentic attempt to affirm the various dimensions of Algerian culture, the Algerian nationalist movement was torn in the 1940s by the very definition of "*l'algérianité*" and of an Algerian identity. Is Algeria an integral part of the Arab world, existing only in an Arab and Muslim world? Or is it Algerian, an independent, multicultural and multi-ethnic nation? Should it be defined only by the Arab-Islamism or Islam-Baathism of the FLN party, or by its four millennia of history and civilization in North Africa and the Mediterranean? The Berber question dates not from the black spring of 2001, nor from April 1980, but goes back to the so-called "Berber crisis" and the ousting of "dominated" Algerian intellectuals between 1945 and 1949 and even before, in the very origin of the Algerian nationalist movement" (p.126). For an overview of the religious criteria in the Maghreb (in another attempt at demystifying the "Arab-Islamic unicity"), see also table in Toumi 2002:129.

[82] See also: Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1978 (specially p.12). In an evident parallel with the discussion here, as part of his now classical discussion on what Orientalism consists of, Edward Said writes: "it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (*as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do*)" (Ibid., my emphasis).

[83] Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* had its original Arabic version published in 1370 in Cairo. It was reprinted in 1951 and translated to French by Abdesselam Cheddadi as Le Voyage d'Occident et d'Orient. In 1958 it was translated to English by Franz Rosenthal and published in three volumes for the Bollingen Foundation. As noted by the Rosenthal, the French translation had omitted almost all of the poetry that Ibn Khaldūn quoted in the original. See: Lawrence, Bruce B. Introduction to the 2005 Edition. In: Khaldūn, Ibn; Rosenthal, Franz (transl.). The *Muqaddimah* – An Introduction

highly in colonial historiography. Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah* (1382) is considered by many the first account of the history of Amazigh (or Berber) peoples in particular, and of how human civilizations evolve in space and time in general. One of the most emblematic examples of Khaldūn's "rediscovery" by colonial-era orientalists can be found in geographer E.-F. Gautier's work. In his *Les Siècles obscurs du Maghreb* (1927)[84], Gautier tried to answer two general questions (the first being highly problematic and based on a false premise about the region and its history): "why had the Maghrebians never ruled themselves, and why had none of the region's outsider rulers managed to hold it permanently?" (Graebner 2007: 144). Through an extensive recasting of Khaldūnian theory of cyclic dynastic patterns in

to History. New York: Bollingen Foundation/Princeton University Press, 1958/2005. As Beatriz Bissio notes, Khaldun's narrative contains a mélange of his diplomatic records, for he held high posts in government, law, and education in the courts of Morocco, Ifriqiya, Al-Andalus, Algeria and Egypt, and his travel records. His writing is thus characterized as something between autobiography, travel report, and dispassionate accounts on politics and history. To this point, Bissio also reminds us that the oeuvre in its whole is originally called "Universal History", in Arabic *Kitab al-'ibar*, "the book of all experiences or examples" (See Bissio 2012). Regarding the division of the work into an introduction and three books, Khaldūn himself brings a useful description of the structure of what actually appears as a life-long work: "The Introduction deals with the great merit of historiography, offers an appreciation of its various methods, and cites errors of the historians. The First Book deals with civilization and its essential characteristics, namely, royal authority, government, gainful occupations, ways of making a living, crafts, and sciences, as well as with the causes and reasons thereof. The Second Book deals with the history, races, and dynasties of the Arabs, from the beginning of creation down to this time. This will include references to such famous nations and dynasties - contemporaneous with them, as the Nabataeans, the Syrians, the Persians, the Israelites, the Copts, the Greeks, the Byzantines, and the Turks. The Third Book deals with the history of the Berbers and of the Zanâtah who are part of them; with their origins and races; and, in particular, with the royal authority and dynasties in the Maghrib" (Khaldūn 1958/2005:8). It should be noticed that here I use the abridged 465 pages version (published in 2005 with a new introduction by Bruce B. Lawrence) of the complete English translation by Franz Rosenthal published in 1958.

[84] The complete reference as quoted in Khatibi, *Double critique* ([1970]1983), p. 81, reads: E. -F. Gautier. Les Siècles obscurs du Maghreb, Paris, 1927. It should be noted that in this essay, Abdelkebir Khatibi brings a cautious but at the same time condescending view toward this constant return to Ibn Khaldūn also among Arab or Arab-influenced thinkers and their critics (including Khatibi himself): "[I]t will be necessary to return for a moment to the inevitable Ibn Khaldūn, because this thinker - so original in his time - constructed a theory of the social system [...]. And because a certain movement of revisiting his ideas lives intensely in Arab consciousness and ideology. One can rightly ask whether this return to Ibn Khaldūn was not turn into a mere ritual, and whether this spurious paternity that Arab thinkers claim would not suggest a certain theoretical insufficiency. Are the parasitic discourses that we have developed on him only a savage assertion of identity? Undoubtedly, history, as praxis and knowledge, does not escape from such fetishization in our countries. Moreover, we also know that history cannot pretend to be detached from ideology, nor to be the uncontested foundation of a formalized knowledge. [...] In any case, it happens that the Khaldūnian system is at the heart of our debate. It is precisely in this that this thinker considers his fundamental project as a discourse on history - hence, in our opinion, its current value. And also […] the epistemological break introduced by Ibn Khaldūn into Arabic historiography [...]" (op. cit. p. 64, my translation).

the Maghreb[85] – in which, in a nutshell, dynasties originated in the desert conquer the city and, after ruling period, they invariably find degradation in and end up being replaced by another desert dynasty –, Gautier then concludes that North Africa experiences nothing more than stasis, they are "condemned to spin its historical wheel in place without progressing or presenting truly new elements" (Graebner 2007:144).

In her study on desertification narratives in French colonial environmental history of the Maghreb, geographer Diana K. Davis highlights, for example, that particularly after the translation of Khaldūn's *Prolégomènes* and *Histoire des Berbères* into French by Baron de Slane in the ninetheenth century, "it became commonplace in French writing on North Africa for authors to include lengthy descriptions of the destruction caused by the Arab invasion from the East" (Davis

[85] Brazilian historian Beatriz Bissio brings an insightful description of the Maghreb in the 14th century, Ibn Khaldūn's Maghreb: "[It] was characterized by wars and uprisings. Neighboring and witnessing the retrocession of Islamism in favor of Christian expansionism in the Iberian Peninsula and its surroundings, the Maghreb region also experienced considerable changes. Since the fall of the Almohads (12th and 13th centuries), three dynasties divided the territory, involved in wars and internal disputes. The extreme complex regional scenario of that time was addressed by Khaldūn – who was both an actor and privileged observer - and used by this historian as a basis for his reflection on the rise, evolution and fall of the empires. It was one of his "case studies" for the formulation of the theory about the importance of 'açabiyya, the body spirit, in the process of conquest and maintenance of power. In the territories located towards the West coast of North Africa, where today is Morocco, the kingdom of the Marinid appeared (1248-1465), with capital in Fez; The Zayyanies or Abd-al-Wadies (1235-1554) established their caliphate in the central region, with Tlemcen as capital; whereas the Hafsies (1228-1574) settled in the east, in the territory near Egypt, known at the time as Ifriqiya, with capital was Tunis (city where Ibn Khaldūn was born). In no more than half a century, the Marinidian – Berber nomads - organized a centralized state, controlled the tribes that inhabited the territory and, having maintained their language during the period of the Almoravids and the Almohads, were completely Arabized. The sultanates of Abu-l-Hasan (1331-1348) and Abu Inan (1348-1358) marked the period of maximum Marinidian power in the Maghreb, a time that coincides with the last heavy intervention in the Iberian Peninsula. When the Marinid failed to consolidate their influence on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar, where they suffered a severe defeat in 1340 in the battle of Salado (Tarifa, in Arab historiography), the Marinid sought to expand their dominion in North Africa, disputing Territories with the Zayyanies and Hafsies. In 1347, Abu-l-Hasan came to dominate almost all the Maghreb, for a short period. The relative economic prosperity based on the ivory trade and the control of the Mediterranean linkage in the route of the gold from the sub-Saharan territories ends in the second half of the 14th century, when the Marinid Empire declined. In 1472, they were defeated by a new dynasty, the Wattasid, that came to dominate Morocco by more than a century. Its decline was due to a sum of factors, among which the failures in the military field and the growing commercial influence of the Genoese and Portuguese (who conquered Ceuta in 1415 and installed the first European settlement outside Europe, a fact considered by several historians as the beginning of the colonial domination)…. In central Maghreb, a less important region in comparison to the neighboring territories in both economic and demographic terms, the small kingdom of the Zayyanies was subject to constant attacks from both East and West sides. Its internal unity, however, allowed it to resist for almost three hundred years, until the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century" (Bissio 2012:55-59, my translation). See also: Khatibi [1970]/1983; Laroui 1977.

2004:364). In a 1869 pamphlet entitled *La France en Algérie* one reads that "'when the Arabs invaded the North of Africa . . . cities were annihilated, fire destroyed the harvests, the plantations, the forests, and a society newly established on this land was devastated'" (Verne 1869:20 quoted in Davis 2004:364). For the rest of the nineteenth century and the first several decades of the twentieth, Ibn Khaldūn is cited repeatedly for his description of the Arab nomads as 'locusts' (*sauterelles*) that "ruined gardens and cut down all the trees" (Davis 2004:364). As Davis concludes, the portrayal of a Maghreb in ruins as consequence of "the Arab nomad 'invasion'" was one of the cornerstone justifications for French colonization:

> With the story of North Africa as the granary of Rome and the tale of subsequent ruin and environmental decline due to the Arab nomad 'invasion', the French in North Africa fashioned a justification and an imperative for their colonial projects. They told themselves, France and the world that they must save North Africa from the 'destructive natives' to restore the former glory and agricultural fertility of Rome" (Davis, p. 365).

History is, therefore, turned into a weapon for colonization. As the narrative goes, non-Europeans have no room for significant action nor any way to be put back on the track of (Eurocentric) history other than submitting to colonial rule. This is precisely the accusation of Abdelkebir Khatibi ([1970]1983) in a critical assessment that highlights how colonial historiography was mobilized to support a racist discourse differentiating "colonizable" and "non-colonizable" societies. According to Khatibi, "[b]y creating a compact ideological screen around its object of analysis (…) colonial historiography makes the history of Maghreb illegible", a "colonizable society" since it portrays Maghrebian locals as featured by an "endogenous crisis" that "prevents that society of resisting against imperial penetration" ([1970]1983:82, my translation; see Laroui 1977). The editor's "*Avertissement*" to Kateb's *Nedjma* only came to repeat this idea in their description of "Arab thought".

As Albert Memmi explains, "in the colonizer's supreme ambition, he [the colonized] should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e., be transformed into pure colonized" (Memmi 1974:130). And yet, Kateb's characters protest, brings multiple views on the same matter (albeit in ways that might put the reader into imagining a whole, perhaps symptomatic discourse of the popular, working class, urban Algerian male subject) and yet are caught in ambivalence in their own personal and collective expectations. Rather than a plastered reified subjectivity in space and time, Kateb's depiction of the colonized subject is the

expression of a historical condition, yes, but appears as only one among the manifold aspects structuring his characters' being in the world. By this same token, the possibility of imagining Algeria as one nation is only one aspect of the framing he advances in the novel, which, indeed "articulates the significance of the impact of the colonial experience on the Algerian people" but "ultimately offers an interpretation of a multicultural Algeria" (Igouldjil 2014:169) that stands as a syncretic historical and cultural entity regardless of French colonial discourse or any other total narrative that takes these multiple and sometimes conflicting cultural components for granted.

It is in this sense that Kateb's novel reads as an attempt to overcome a discourse that denies the colonized subjects the right to participate in defining the terms of their relationship with the colonizers. At the same time, the text also brings ambivalence and violence into the discourse of the colonized as well, "by putting words of savagery into the[ir] mouths" (Igoudjil 2014:169). In this vein, Kateb succeeds in presenting Algerians as historical subjects in ways that are divorced from both the captivity of colonial discourse and from a celebratory, perhaps sanctifying depiction of the colonized in times of anticolonial revolution. In spite of that, Kateb's *Nedjma* also conceives the colonial wound as one among many productive forces for the construction of postcolonial Algeria.



## 3.2 **Narrative and (Hi)story**

Narrative theorist Paul Ricoeur (1984) once wrote that "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal experience" (p.52). Narratives provides meaningful configurations of retained pasts (i.e. memories), present experiences and imagined futures (Carr 1986:179). They make intelligible what would otherwise be unconnected as simple moments, experiences, or events in this temporal reach of the fabric of life. Telling stories about our existence in the world and about the world itself thus helps us to mediate our experience of time. In this sense, it is particularly interesting to consider the work of history, both as a technique – i.e. History with a capital "H" – and a practice – i.e. "historying", meaning "the process through which… 'the past' [is turned] into 'a history narrative'" (Munslow 2015:31). This is also how history inscribes "'borders in

time' in order to separate the past from the present and the future" (Lundborg 2016:262-263).

In this section, I draw attention to what Alun Munslow (2015) has called – inspired by Hayden White's interventions – "the literary aesthetics of historying" in order to touch upon the relationship – and, notably, blur the limits – between fact and fiction in the production of historical narratives. For the purposes of our discussion, an attention to the narrative aspect of history(ing) allows us to critically engage the artificiality of narratives of "triumph" in the production of collective identities (e.g. the modern nation). At the same time, disrupting the hierarchical disposition between fact and fiction, history and literature, allows us to conceive the latter as legitimate space wherein alternative temporalities may be sometimes articulated in politically, *worldling* relevant ways (such as in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*).

### 3.2.1 History as Fiction

In the introduction to *The Fiction of History* [2015], Alexander Lyon Macfie remembers E.H. Carr description of history as "change, movement or (…) progress", an ever-lasting dialogue between the present and the past, and, importantly, "a process of selection in terms of historical significance, and a 'selective system' not only of cognitive, but also of causal, orientation to reality" (Carr 1961:24, 99, 126 quoted in Macfie 2015:3). In sharp contrast with the interpretation of history as causally related to reality (i.e. the factual), Roland Barthes, in *The Discourse of History*, called attention to how, in conventional history, the author/speaker characteristically "absents himself", leaving the reader/listener the impression that the historical account is somehow objective and that the past speaks for itself, whereas in fact the historical narrative is just a particular form of fiction, in which the authorial "I" is hidden by the artificiality of its suppression (Barthes 1989:131-132).

Hayden White (1973), considered by many to be one of the master critics of objective historical discourse, pointed out that history is primarily a literary artifact, bearing little if any resemblance to science[86]. According to him, the past has no

[86] I have no intention or competency to dive any deeper into such a complex debate. For a glimpse of some of the manifold directions of the debate and its relation to conceptions of History and the

narrative structure itself – such structures occur only in stories. As White explains, history's stories, just like their literary counterparts, embrace a beginning, a middle and an end; they are variously "emplotted" as romance, comedy, tragedy, romance, irony or even satire; in addition, they are shaped by ideological implication – White mentions the "tactics of Anarchism, Conservatism, Radicalism and Liberalism" (White 1973:x). As in the case of literary compositions, the historical form adopted is fundamentally metaphorical. In a 1984 essay called *The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory*, White explained his view on this complex relationship between historiography and literature:

> "[T]his is because historiography in the West arises against the background of a distinctively "literary" (or rather "fictional") discourse which itself had taken shape against the even more archaic discourse of "myth". In its origins, historical discourse differentiates itself from literary discourse by virtue of its subject-matter ("real" rather than "imaginary" events), rather than by its form… This affiliation of narrative historiography with literature and myth should provide no reason for embarrassment, however, because the systems of meaning-production shared by all three are distillates of the historical experience of a people, a group, a culture. And the knowledge provided by narrative history is that which results from the testing of the systems of meaning-production originally elaborated in myth and refined in the alembic of the hypothetical mode of fictional articulation. In the historical narrative, experiences distilled into fiction as typifications are subjected to the test of their capacity to endow "real" events with meaning… If in similar manner the content of narrative historiography is subjected to tests of adequacy to the representation and explanation of another order of "reality" than that presupposed by traditional historians, this should be seen less as an opposition of "science" to "ideology" … than as a continuation of the process of mapping the limit between the imaginary and the real which begins with the invention of "fiction" itself.
>
> The historical narrative does not, as narrative, dispel false beliefs about the past, human life, the nature of the community, and so on; what it does is test the capacity of a culture's fictions to endow real events with the kinds of meaning that literature displays to consciousness through its fashioning of patterns of "imaginary" events (1984: 21-22).

Of course, the point here is not to suggest that there is a complete conflation between history (i.e. the disciplinary field and its practices) and fiction. My aim is to simply highlight that history and fiction bear an intimate connection in the

historiographical discourse as either "fictional" or/and "realistic", either to the realm of "narrative" or of "pure science", see: WHITE, 1973; 1984. Some IR scholars have been trying to cope with the implications of this historiographical debate to the study of international politics. See, for example: VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS, Nick (2005). International Relations and the 'Problem of History'. Millennium: Journal of International Studies, vol.34 no.1, pp. 115-136; LAWSON, George and HOBSON, John M. (2008) What is History in International Relations? Millennium - journal of international studies, 37 (2). pp. 415-435. GLENCROSS, Andrew. Historical Consciousness in International Relations Theory: A Hidden Disciplinary Dialogue. Paper prepared for Millennium Conference 16-17 October, 2010.

particular realm of narration. Both are imagined and fictively constructed as narratives, although historical narratives (and the historians who write them) usually claim empirical truthfulness. In history accounts, "meaning and explanation are as much fictively constructed as discovered", what means, basically, that "what we have is the voice of the author-historian, never the voice of the past when it comes down to generating meaning" (Munslow 2015:31). What is the coherence between past, present and future claimed within most historical narratives if not, first and foremost, an imagined arrangement of facts, peoples, events and viewpoints? Therefore, the intersection between these two narrative modalities becomes clear when we look at how they both unavoidably mobilize imagination in their practice of narration, since they both purport to be "interpretation(s) of the world and of our place as human beings in it" (Macfie 2015:6). There is a very important implication in this unavoidable situation: "because every history is a fictive creation it is always a stretch too far to claim that any single history is an accurate message about the past. Data exists. Meanings do not" – at least not "objectively" speaking (Munslow 2015:33).



### 3.2.2 Triumphalism, Homogeneity and other Fictions of the Nation

As Aniruddha Chowdhury (2008) reminds us, philosopher of history Walter Benjamin asserts that the present is often seen from the viewpoint of one of two opposite perspectives: either as catastrophe or as triumph. If each of these two perspectives is conceived as a different mode of temporality, we have that in triumphant history the present can be "located in the duration of time that Benjamin famously calls 'homogeneous, empty time'", that is, in the repetitive movement of the same. In the history of the oppressed, in contrast, the location of the present appears as a "temporal disjuncture" in which time seems to stand still, for "[w]hat is progress for a triumphant history is catastrophe for the historian of the oppressed" (Benjamin 1999 quoted in Chowdhury 2008:22).

IR students learn right in their first classes at university that modernity is a history of triumphs and catastrophes: the European expansion and triumph over the darker, savage peoples of Latin America, Africa and Asia; the sovereign nation-state triumph over other forms of political community; hard security and war over people's lives and well-being; the Eurocentric international political order over any

other perhaps more inclusive form of political existence and participation in the international context, to name a few. Seen through these lenses, one is able to witness only little change in the spectrum of the hands carrying the trophy: they are usually white, male, from a privileged social class, and Western[87]. In this sense, either as triumph or catastrophe, modernity is experienced in the international context as a set of oppositions, such as domestic/international (and now, global), modern/backward; civilized/barbarian; friend/enemy; among others. These hierarchically arranged tropes mediate what and who is accepted, who is (supposed to be) "inside" and who is (supposed to be) "outside" the modern international, and set the terms of acceptation and inclusion (See Walker 1993). The terms of inclusion are both spatially (i.e. nation-states and state-led actors still are the main agents in international politics) and temporally defined (i.e. the ones considered "civilized" and willing to be compliant with the "theory of modernization"[88] and the "standards of civilization" of the international legal-political order[89]). This trope of the temporal limits of the modern world that characterize the historical-structural relationship between "civilized" and "barbarian" can thus "be applied to colonial or developing states who ought to be coming into the international" (Walker 2006:68).

Nation-states are expressions of modernity's "triumphalist geographies" (Shapiro 1999) and temporality[90] (Chatterjee 1993; 2001; Chakrabarty 2000). The



[87] See Muppidi, 2012.

[88] See: INAYATULLAH, Naeem and BLANEY, David L. **International Relations and the Problem of Difference**. New York and London, Routledge, 2004.

[89] See: KEENE, Edward. **Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[90] Although "time" and "temporality" are often taken as synonyms and used interchangeably, it is worth to briefly look up at these two intimately related words. As Richard McKeon usefully posits: ""Time and temporality" is a formula to designate time in its circumstances, substantive and cognitive, and it may be used as a device by which to develop and examine the variety of circumstances in which "time" acquires its variety of meanings in the context of a variety of problems, philosophical in nature but with consequences detectable and traceable in history, science, art, and social and cultural structures. It is a device which the ancients called a "commonplace" or "topic" and used to discover arguments and relations among ideas and arguments. It was the device used and developed both in the arts of invention and in the memory. Time and temporality, time and the circumstances in which time perceived as a problem or as a structure, is a formula which takes many and particularizations. They are easily recognized in the pairs of terms in the treatments of time by philosophers, past and present, Eastern Western-"time and eternity," "time and motion," "time and duration," "time and space" (McKeon, 1974:123-124). In the remaining pages of his short article, McKeon then briefly takes up on each of the particularizations he mentions: "time and eternity", "time and motion", "time and duration", "time and space" in order to give the reader a glimpse of such complexities.

nation-state is *historically* seen as the cornerstone of political modernity. In this sense, and in what touches the temporal dimension of modernity's triumphalist narrative more specifically, Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe – Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000) provides a critical stance on the assumption that modernity is "a *known* history, something which has *already happened elsewhere* [Western Europe], and which is to be reproduced, mechanically or otherwise, with a local content" (Morris 1999:10 quoted in Chakrabarty 2000:39, emphasis in the original). Here, it is important to notice that the Europe to which Chakrabarty is referring is both related and unrelated with the geographical region called Europe. More to the point, what mobilizes Chakrabarty in his political-ethical project of "provincializing Europe" is the known fact that, all over the world, historical narratives about what is politics, who is politically relevant, and where the political lies are constantly subsumed by the imaginary attached to a hyperreal and supposedly universal entity: Europe. However, this same author also cautions against the temptation to adopt other totalizing, ahistorical "centrism" in the pursuit of dismantling Eurocentrism. He writes:

> This Europe, like "the West," is demonstrably an imaginary entity, but the demonstration as such does not lessen its appeal or power. The project of provincializing Europe has to include certain additional moves: first, the recognition that Europe's acquisition of the adjective "modern" for itself is an integral part of the story of European imperialism within global history; and second, the understanding that this equating of a certain version of Europe with "modernity" is not the work of Europeans alone; third-world nationalisms, as modernizing ideologies par excellence, have been equal partners in the process. I do not mean to overlook the anti-imperial moments in the careers of these nationalisms; I only underscore the point that the project of provincializing Europe cannot be a nationalist, nativist, or atavistic project. In unraveling the necessary entanglement of history—a disciplined and institutionally regulated form of collective memory—with the grand narratives of rights, citizenship, the nation-state, and public and private spheres, one cannot but problematize "India" at the same time as one dismantles "Europe." (Chakrabarty, p. 43)

In this sense, Chakrabarty brings a perspective that stands both for and against the notion of alternative modernities as a sufficient basis for his ethical-political intellectual project of "provincializing" Europe's history within the broader context of global history. In a nutshell, the "alternative modernities" debate suggests that modernity is not intrinsically European and that various societies and locales in the

globe had their own varieties of modernity[91]. Another possible version states that the globalization of capitalism and the proliferation of the sovereign state have led not to the universalization of European modernity, that is, its first historical product, but to the proliferation of claims on modernity in the form of "multiple" and "alternative'" modernities (see Dirlik 2007). This means that the "traditions" which Eurocentric modernity once condemned to "the dustbin of history" (meaning a distant, dead past) have actually "enjoyed a resurrection in recent years, and now serve as the foundation for claims to alternative modernities" (Dirlik 2011: 153). In the passage reproduced above, Chakrabarty gives us a hint on the need to adopt a critical stance towards both Eurocentric and so-called "alternative modernities" (in his case, postcolonial India) since they both fail to account for political subjectivities and worldviews that are alternative to modernity's grammar altogether – even though most of his argumentation, in fact, gravitates around the notion of alternative modernities.

In *The Nation in Heterogeneous Time*, Partha Chatterjee (2001) also operates from within the notion of alternative modernities in order to launch his critique against the triumphalist narrative of Eurocentric modernity. More to the point, Chatterjee's critique focuses on how time is fictionalized as "empty, homogeneous time" within modern discourse – thus indulging linear notions such as progress and triumph, which are inherent to nationalist discourses and other analogous attempts to narrativize the nation. He takes issue with Benedict Anderson's (1983) now classical argument in *Imagined Communities*, where the latter manages to show how material instruments of literary and cultural production are part of the logics that made possible the imagining of modern political communities in basically every region of the world. According to Chatterjee, Anderson's approach has merits for showing "the material possibilities of large anonymous socialities being formed by the simultaneous experience of reading the daily newspaper of following the private life of popular fictional characters" (Chatterjee 2001:399). However, from his perspective, what Anderson was doing, in fact – albeit in a brilliant way as Chatterjee himself recognizes –, is following a dominant aspect of modern historical thinking that imagines the social space as disposed in homogeneous

[91] See, for example: Hobson, John. The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

empty time – for Chatterjee, "the time of capital". As he then elaborates, within the domain of empty homogeneous time, "capital allows for no resistance to its free movement", for every time it happens to encounter an impediment, it immediately "thinks it has encountered another time-something out of pre-capital, something that belongs to the pre-modern" (Chatterjee 2001:399). Resistances to capital – or to modernity – are thus conceived as belonging to the realm of the archaic and backward, things "coming out of humanity's past, something people should have left behind but somehow have not" (Chatterjee 2001:399).

Thus, by imagining and consigning difference as something from modernity's past, such rationale not only turns possible to *imagine* modernity "as an attribute of time itself", but also secures "for capital and modernity their ultimate triumph, regardless of what" (Chatterjee, p. 399). There is no space for difference to occupy the same time of the "modern" self. What modernity's other side – that is, its coloniality[92] – establishes is that self and other should be separated and opposed, and should never overlap or be conceived as synchronic existences subject to the same moment, and to the effects of encountering each other[93].

Thus, following Chatterjee's insights, if on one side Anderson's framing helps to historicize the material forces acting in the rising of modern forms in a planetary context, on the other side, it inevitably falls into the trap of depicting the modern nation (and nationalism) as an universal(izing) all-encompassing force rather than duly emphasizing its temporal, contested character. Chatterjee then expands his argument by looking into the contrasting definitions of equality and universal citizenship within two different nationalist discourses in postcolonial India (Ghandi's and B. R. Ambedkar's). According to him, there is a tension between the "utopian" or fictional dimension of the homogeneous time of modernity and the "real space constituted by the heterogeneous time of governmentality", as well as its effects on attempts to narrativize the nation (Chatterjee 2001:403). The author then succeeds in showing how people's (hi)stories evolve and constitute the moments of the political (which, of course, are never the same all the time or to everyone). Again, homogeneity can only be a fiction, something that, on the one hand, nationalist discourse and other various

[92] See, for example: Quijano 2008;
[93] See Nandy 1983; Inayatullah & Blaney 2004; Inayatullah & Blaney, 2016.

attempts to narrate the nation are constantly trying to historicize and, on the other hand, has been constantly disrupted by the heterogenous time of governmentality (Chatterjee's focus). The "real space of modern life", writes Chatterjee, consists of heterogeneous, unevenly dense time (Chatterjee 2001:402). Moreover, if we want to extrapolate the scope of his argument, the notion of heterotemporality also points towards other forms of being political which are located beyond the grammar of nation and modernity.

To what matters to our discussion, both Chakrabarty and Chatterjee are, to an extent, rethinking Eurocentric modernity and how it imposes itself upon the locality of people's experiences through its triumphant narrative of global history as the history of Europe and *its* others – or, as Hall (1992) would posit it, the West and *the rest*. And what both authors manage to demonstrate through their intellectual wanderings is that this Eurocentric version of global history is only one incomplete and inherently violent version of the numerous (hi)stories that have been created in the contact zone between cultures, societies, individuals, and, of course, the narratives of triumph and catastrophe they engender. Both Chakrabarty's and Chatterjee's worldviews are, thus, apt to criticize Eurocentrism, capitalism and nationalism due to their acknowledgement of the effects of contact zones between different cultures and societies. They also conceive history as narrative, since they both embrace the complex task of historicizing modernity and modern forms beyond their Eurocentric component, the fictional teleology implied, and the paradoxes of such fiction.

Relatedly, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha (1990a), their approaches are also examples of the shift in perspective that happens when one recognizes the ambivalence in "the nation's interrupted address". That is to say, in the nation's endless attempts to signify "*the people*" as an *original presence* (a pedagogical object within the homogeneous space-time of the nation) and, simultaneously, the inexorability of the process of signification that makes the people "its enunciatory 'present' marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign" (i.e. the performative dimension, in which the people is "subject", a living presence whose everyday practices *re*-produce the nation) (Bhabha 1990a:299). Thus, even though Chakrabarty's and Chatterjee's approaches are critical to Eurocentrism and Eurocentric modernity, they are still circumscribed by the notion of modernity (be it "multiple", "alternative" or "peripheral") and by an understanding of collective

identity and political subjectivity imprinted on notions of nationhood, citizenship and progress. They are undoubtedly rethinking modernity from the locality of their own experience as modern subjects, but they are still adopting modernity as paradigm (see Mendieta 2008; Mignolo 2008; Sajed 2017).

On the first page of Chatterjee's now classic *The Nation and its Fragments,* he brings a perception that I find especially insightful at this point:

> *The result is that autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state. Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out of new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state.* If the nation is an imagined community and if nations must also take the forms of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state as the same time. I do not think our present theoretical language allows us to do this (p.11 – emphasis added)

Thus, we are apparently talking not only about a replicating logic in itself – modernity, the nation-state, the international –, but first and foremost about a constant battle through which meanings acquire an appearance of stability and certain narratives triumph over others by either *assimilating* or *destroying* difference (Connolly 1989). Paradoxically, difference never ceases to exist as the very condition of possibility of triumphalist narratives such as modernity – as opposed to "archaic" "traditional" "barbarian/non-civilized". Difference exposes the precarious and contested nature of modernity itself (see Inayatullah & Blaney 2004). In this sense, Chatterjee's denunciation of "our surrender to the old forms of the modern state" even when trying to think beyond its logic speaks with the limits of his own critique in his latter engagements with the fiction of homogeneous time in narratives of the nation[94]. In the same vein, Bhabha goes a little further when naming the problem and some of its symptoms, since he manages to point, although

[94] According to Eduardo Mendieta (2008) this is precisely where the limit of the postcolonial critique lies, for: "the postcolonial critique is only able to criticize effects of colonialism once this mutates into the projects of nation building. It is for this reason that postcolonialism seems fastidiously obsessed with the question of nationalism and its alter ego, the nation, whether this be thought in terms of its fragments, its shadow, its agony, its absence, its failure, or its nonconvergence with the space of a people's culture. While postcolonialism continues focus on the nation, even in its absence, it also continues to be overdetermined by questions of class and the last instance of social relations as being epiphenomenal to a mode of production. And in this way it "narcotizes", to use Mignolo's expression, against the geopolitics of location and the localizing, or mapping, of the world-historical". He then continues: "[W]hat is needed is a political-economic critique of the sign, or the production of the symbolic that conditions what is desirable as commodity – that is, how the local of the nation is a metonym of the global and how the global is produced from and through the local" (p. 303-304).

tentatively, one possible direction to start engaging the persisting question of why we need modernity altogether:

> *To study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself.* If the problematic 'closure' of textuality questions the 'totalization' of national culture, then its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life […]. *These approaches are valuable in drawing our attention to those easily obscured, but highly significant, recesses of the national culture from which alternative constituencies of peoples and oppositional analytic capacities may emerge – youth, the everyday, nostalgia, new 'ethnicities', new social movements, 'the politics of difference'.* They assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change" (Bhabha 1990b:3, emphasis added).

Bhabha's claim that adopting a narrative perspective on the nation might help us to expose the fictions upon which historical narratives of the nation rely (e.g. triumphalism, homogeneous time, the people as point of origin etc) and, importantly, to uncovering the "recessive themes and voices" (see Inayatullah & Blaney 2004:15) of the national culture – and that's the reason why it is relevant at this point of the conversation. In this sense, it reads as a signal towards those subjectivities and worldviews which have been articulated from outside modernity and which are speaking languages that differ from that of the nation, statist borders and laws, capitalism, science, etc. Thus, in the realm of narratives, if, on the one hand, the hegemonic narrative about politics and political limits coincides with the limits (both physical – i.e. state borders – and imaginary – e.g. the imagery of *the* people) of the nation-state as the very spatiotemporal metaphor of political modernity; on the other hand, the very existence of those "margins" (Ashley & Walker 1990) – or recessive moments – and, concomitantly, of an outside to modernity, implies the heterogeneous and fragmented character of the various spatial and temporal articulations the narrative purports to either incorporate or conceal (see Sajed 2017).

In the next section, I suggest that the conception of history advanced by Kateb brings to surface some aspects of this complexity precisely because it is not centered in the nation or in a conception of time as linear and homogeneous. Although the vocabulary of the nation is indeed a presence in his narrative of 1950s Algeria, the main spatial-temporal referent for the mythology Kateb builds in *Nedjma* is not the nation, but Algerian cities and historical ruins, and how individuals move across them. The narrative strategies he uses come first to expose the artificiality of

"centrist" approaches and the "fiction" of the breaks and triumphs that usually mark the historiography about the Maghreb. If this sort of linear, progressive reasoning is not reverberating in *Nedjma* – the tribe, for instance, even though located in the distant mount Nadhor [a mountain in Eastern Algeria], still exists and influences in the plot as a whole –, it does not suggest a conception of history that is a signal of stasis, or that entraps Algeria's ruins of the present within signs of economic or cultural backwardness. I see Kateb's narrative as a devious and circuitous progression resisting totalizing interpretations all the time – what indeed turns the task of engaging it particularly challenging. Relatedly, I believe that Kateb implies a method to historical narrative that is aware of the dangers of closure and stasis, and thus remains open to heterogenous forms – an aspect that makes his novel a politically meaningful account of Algeria at the verge of anticolonial war.

## 3.3 Wandering in the Ruins of the Present: Maghrebian Landscapes as Chronoscapes in Kateb Yacine's novel

Much has been said about Kateb's fragmented narrative in *Nedjma* and how it can be connected to an specific conception of time. Perhaps in an attempt to compensate for the totally non-sequential nature of his narrative, Kateb divided the text into a system of chapters and sections: six chapters, each containing one or two sets of twelve sections, ranging in various lengths. Chapters III, IV, and VI contain double sets of sections numbered one to twelve. The novel thus presents one hundred and eight fragments in a complex economy of chapters disposition. In Charles Bonn's interpretation, the implicit and possibly ironic allusion to the Gregorian calendar in the disposition of the chapters in a novel which explicitly ignores this logic stands as a challenge to the artificiality of the notion of linear, progressive time (Bonn 1990:49). According to Bernard Aresu, in contrast, the chapters disposition and the novel's fragmentary and diffuse traces have been perhaps overstated by its critics[95]. From his perspective, "[p]olitical and poetic urgency may appear to have dictated the interlacing of as many as three narrative planes: fictional adventure, historical reality, and collective myth", and what should

[95] As Kateb himself once confessed, the structure of the novel was, at least in part, just a product of his attempt to provide some order as requested by Éditions du Seuil's editors at that time (See Aresu 1991:xliv).

actually draw the reader's attention is how "their associative overlapping – through interior monologues, dreams, or recollective sequences – displaces chronological and narrative univocity in favor of a vision that privileges poetic confluence" (Aresu 1991: xliii).

Nonetheless, if the reader cannot avoid trying to find structural elements when diving into Kateb's complex narrative, Graebner (2007) draws our attention to the fact that the novel gravitates around two connecting sources in the sections numbering: key events in Algeria's history and descriptions of the cities of Constantine and Bône. These two sources appear as fundamental to the narrative's texture as a whole and, as I want to suggest, to the conception of history implied in the novel. For Kateb, it seems that the imbrication of individual and collective mythology is what gives historical discourses their meaning, since myth and truth as well as fiction and facts are not totally separated in the realms of narration (See Bonn 1990, specially p. 21). In Kateb's text, as we shall see, mythology is performed in a constant movement of "revisiting" memories through the characters' individual or collective journeys to Algeria's historical places. There, the past only acquires meaning in the needs of the present and the envisioned futures – which, in turn, cannot but be subordinated to one's present conditions.

At this point, one might wonder why these two cities are so relevant in the plot and, importantly, why they are key to my interpretation of Kateb's representation of Maghrebian and Algerian landscapes as "chronoscapes" – in other words, spatiotemporal artifacts ("art-facts")[96] that connect subjects' personal experiences and memories with the collective aspects of communal life (see Graebner 2007). For this reason, our discussion of the reasons why they are particularly relevant to Kateb's historical discourse in *Nedjma* needs to be coordinated with descriptions of the contrasting historical and physical trajectories of the two mentioned cities.

[96] By using the term "artifact" to explain what I mean by "chronoscapes" – partially inspired by the discussion advanced by Seth Graebner (2007) – I am also drawing some inspiration from Brazilian geographer Rogério Haesbaert's definition of regions as artifacts. That is, in my own reading of Haesbaert's conceptualization, something that, in spite of the fixity suggested by its materiality as a local, a place, is always something in the making if one considers the realm of the connections between people's memories, narratives and agency and the institution of collective arrangements such as the "nation" (see Haesbaert 2010; Oliveira 2013).

Constantine's landscape embodies references to a history of colonization that turns the 110 years of French presence into a brief episode in a land where Romans and Turks, as well as other civilizations, uncountable tribes, and nomad caravans have also left their traces long before. In the novel, the city appears as subject of tremors and turmoil, always on the verge of decadence. The history narrated is thus a violent one, defeat after defeat culminating in the memories of a fictitious tragedy: the murder of one of the main characters' (Rachid) father, probably connected to that man's activities opposing the colonial regime, such as supporting student committees, clandestine Arabic teaching, and connections with the Muslim Congress[97] (Kateb 1991:206-208). Notably, Constantine (the city where Kateb Yacine was born), "constituted the stronghold of religious reform, the Salafiya[98]

[97] Alek B. Toumi and others have stressed Kateb Yacine's secularist, communist-prone, and activist attitude in the Amazigh cultural movement, traits that make unlikely any sympathy with a mostly Arabizing bourgeois movement as Ben Badis', whose political goals seemed considerably less radical by the 1950s then after Algerian independence (Toumi 2002:40, 48-49). Whatever Kateb's own political convictions, there is a clear connection of some of the novel's character with this movement (Kateb 208).

[98] Esposito offers a panoramic definition of Salafism that avoids some of the stereotypes with which the current use of the term is confronted and usually narrowed down, specially after the US and other Western countries' antiterrorist actions and Western media discourses from the late 1990s and early 2000s on – which have been predominantly based on misunderstandings regarding political Islam –, and, more recently, due to the uncertainty and volatility generated by the political uprisings in the Maghreb and Middle East regions from 2011 on: "Name (derived from salaf, "pious ancestors") given to a reform movement led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh at the turn of the twentieth century. Emphasized restoration of Islamic doctrines to pure form, adherence to the Quran and Sunnah, rejection of the authority of later interpretations, and maintenance of the unity of ummah. Prime objectives were to rid the Muslim ummah of the centuries-long mentality of taqlid (unquestioning imitation of precedent) and stagnation and to reform the moral, cultural, and political conditions of Muslims. Essentially intellectual and modernist in nature. Worked to assert the validity of Islam in modern times, prove its compatibility with reason and science, and legitimize the acquisition of Western scientific and technological achievements. Sought reforms of Islamic law, education, and Arabic language. Viewed political reform as an essential requirement for revitalization of the Muslim community. Its influence spread to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, India, Indonesia, and Egypt in particular. The most influential movements inspired by Salafi were the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Jamaat-i Islam of Pakistan. In the late twentieth century, the term came to refer to traditional reformers" (Esposito. Oxford Dictionary of Islam, 2004: 275). Although Esposito highlights the "moral, cultural, and political" dimensions of the sort of reform the Salafist movement proposes to all Muslims, his short definition (which actually is dictionary entry) gives short attention to the evolvement of the political dimension of what had began essentially as an intellectual and political project in the first place, let alone the particularities of its local manifestation. As Anouar Boukhars posits though: "Salafi ideology and activism have emerged as the locus of societal contention and political controversy. Scholars and pundits of this ultra-conservative brand of Sunni Islam continue to debate its complexity, contextual diversity and internal dynamics. The most reductive explanations associate Salafi activism with violent extremism or the austere expressions of Saudi Wahhabism. The most insightful ones are those that provide access into the diversity of the Salafi experience, uncovering the social forces and national political trajectories that power its surge in contexts where it was long

thought of as a parasitic fringe of contention" (Boukhars 2016:52-60). In an overview of the mostly diverse experience, the various social forces and also of the discrepant national political trajectories of the Salafi movement in the Maghreb, Boukhars argues that is nonetheless possible to find some common ground, at least regarding its roots and evolvement in the first half of the 20th century, and in its most trendy manifestations in this region: "North African Salafism bifurcates between an indigenous nationalist strand and imported strands that lay either inside or outside the realm of Islamic modernism and politics. The two strands have connected at different historical intervals, producing different approaches to political and social reform. Historically, the most dominant strand embraced Salafism as a theology of rational knowledge and national social reform. During the colonial era, North African Salafism took a distinctly intellectual reform shape than that advocated by the puritanical Islamic reform movement originating in Saudi Arabia" (p.60). For an overview of the different paths of the Salafi movements in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, including the its more recent dramatic upsurge – specially in what touches its Jihadist branches – in the ferment of the 2011 political uprisings in the region, see: Boukhars, 2016. In what touches the Algerian context, however, it is worth quoting his words on the main developments of Salafism: "Salafism was introduced to Algeria at the turn of the twentieth century. like in Morocco and Tunisia, this was essentially an intellectual and reformist movement that emphasised the compatibility of religious values, nationalism and progress. The chief standard bearer of mid-twentieth century Salafism was Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis (1889-1940), who founded the influential Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulama (AAMU) in 1931. This association contributed to the first religious metamorphosis of Algerian Islam in the modern era. The years between 1930 and 1950 saw a drift away from the legacy of marabūṭī (traditional North African scholars) influences towards more orthodox forms of Sunni Islam. The growing homogenisation of the interpretations of Islam and the centralisation of religious authority made religion the idiom of choice in resisting French colonialism. The National Liberation Front (FLN), which led the revolutionary war of independence against France (1954–62), courted the influential AAMU as an ally of convenience to help the movement brandish its religious credentials and mobilise popular support for the nationalist cause. Once those goals were achieved, the FLN sidelined the AAMU and became the torch bearer of Islamic nationalism and reformism. With independence, the ʿUlamā' and Salafi movement lost control of the direction of the new independent state. Algeria's new rulers made the ideological choice of imbuing nationalism and reformist Islam with socialist realism. This elicited strong opposition from religious groups, the most influential of which was Al-Qiyam al-Islamiyya (Islamic Values), which emerged in 1964. […]. [T]he group pressured Algeria's first post-independence president, Ahmed Ben Bella, to Arabicise the educational system and mandate religious education in public schools. Houari Boumediene, who overthrew Ben Bella in June 1965, outlawed the association in 1966 […]. Boumediene adopted a two-prong strategy to deal with the heirs of Ben Badis. The most dissident and politicised groups were harassed and hounded by the state security forces. The more docile and quiescent were allowed to preach, proselytise and integrate into state institutions, especially the Ministry of Education. Unlike their Francophone predecessors, most of the new neo-reformist Salafis were Arabophones […]. Under Chadli Bendjedid, who served as the third president of Algeria until ousted in a military coup in 1992, the new Salafis developed into an anti-intellectual populist bloc intent on Islamising state and society. The marginalised neighbourhoods of big cities provided fertile ground for the propagation of their increasingly austere interpretations of Islam. The most extreme interpretations were ensconced in Wahhabi creed, supported since the early 1960's by the Saudi establishment. Many Algerian Salafis had their formative years of Salafi Wahhabism in Saudi religious institutions, especially in the Islamic University in Medina […]. The radical strands of militancy first appeared in the mid-1970's and became institutionalised in 1982 with the creation of the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA) by Moustafa Bouyali, who rejected the gradualist approach to societal and political change. MIA launched a low-level underground insurgency for five years until the elimination of its founder in 1987. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provided a new outlet for Algerians willing to defend their Muslim Brethren […]. The return of these fighters in the late 1980's and early 1990's to an Algeria beset by a deep socio-economic crisis boosted the most radical factions in the Salafi and Islamist movements. After the military aborted the democratic process in 1992, the Algerian Afghans played a major role in organising the armed insurgency against the military regime" (Boukhars 2016:57-58). See also: Hafez, Farid. Salafism – a historical approach,

movement appearing in Algeria just after World War I" (Graebner 2007:146). During French colonial occupation, this city served as base for bourgeois Muslims' movements against French rule through the Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulama, headed by Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis [1889-1940](Graebner 2007:146; see Kateb 1991:202). When the anticolonial articulations (and demonstrations) that culminated in the Algerian War of Independence [1954-1962] vigorously took place in different parts of the country in the first half of the 1950s, however, Constantine, once "a recognized political and intellectual centre, distinguished itself from many of its neighbour districts – notably those of the Aurès – by remaining behind the outbreak of the insurrection" (Merdaci 2010:268). According to Mohamed Boudiaf[99] – who was a FLN's leader himself –, during the years of anticolonial revolution, Constantine was dominated by a "regionalist spirit" as opposed to a "national question" for Algeria (Merdaci 2010:267).

For Kateb, in contrast, the city of Constantine – once named Cirta, the historic haven of the Amazigh hero Jugurtha, leader of the insurgency against the Romans – seems ideally positioned to represent anticolonial resistance (Graebner 2007:146). Situated on a rock promontory, and surrounded by the gorges of the Rhummel, Constantine successfully deflected French attacks during their attempts of conquest in the 1830s, being the last among Algeria's major cities to surrender, in 1837, but only after a bloody assault (Canby & Lemberg 2007:319). The city's particular geographic and natural landscape thus brought real difficulties to French authorities to undertake the massive architectural reconfigurations they had implemented in other parts of Algeria (e.g. the city of Bône). French colonizers' interventions were then limited to the imposition of strong restrictions on real estate negotiations



2016:4-15; Meijer, Roel. Salafism and the challenge of modern politics, 2016:16-23. For a glimpse of the more philosophically-oriented intellectual debate regarding the forces of "traditionalism", "salafism" and "rationalism" going on in postcolonial Maghreb, see: Khatibi [1981]1983; Al-Jabri. Introdução à crítica da razão árabe [Introduction to the critique of Arab reason], 1999:38-40 (Note, however, that in Al-Jabri, "traditionalism" and "Salafism" appear as synonyms).

[99] Mohamed Boudiaf (1919-1992) was military in the PPA (*Parti du people algérien* [Algerian People's Party]) in 1945 and set up the Special Organization of the MTLD (*Mouvement pour le triumphe des libertés démocratiques* [Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedom) in the department of Constantine. Leading clandestine activities after becoming a permanent member of the party in France, he was the initiator of the "meeting of the twenty-one" who designated him as coordinator of the FLN. Arrested, along with other leaders of the insurgency, in October 1956, he later became Minister of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA). Opposing the regime in the context of the 1962 crisis, he lived in exile until his recall, in January 1992, as one of the heads of the Algerian State. On 29 June, 1992, he was assassinated in front of the cameras of Algerian television (Merdaci 2010:268-269).

("wishing to keep Europeans out, and Arabs and Jews in") and the creation of an esplanade (Graebner 2007:146). The esplanade was symbolically constructed on the spot where French forces had break in the city's historic fortifications, and arrogantly named *Place de la Brèche* ("Breach Square") (Graebner 2007:146).

Kateb's rich descriptions of Constantine's landscape (as well as its "social-scape") in the novel also suggest that the city was able to keep its "traditional" look until his days (which happen to be the novel's character's present days too), when urban degradation, lack of capital and job opportunities, and the indifference of the authorities began to cause visible deterioration in the once monumental site close to the country's East coast (see Kateb 1991). "*Ad'dahma* Constantine" ("Constantine, the crushing"), exclaims a random passenger boarding the same train Rachid takes in his journey back to his hometown (Kateb 191:200). In the chapter dedicated to Rachid's arrival in that city, as Graebner observes, "the novel seems at first to have sacrificed Rachid", for the character's voice is somehow "crushed by the stagnated and oppressing history of Constantine" (Id.,153). The city's ruins are familiar to him and hold a close connection with his memories, which notably overlap with the topography of the city in the narrative. Nonetheless, when facing in the maze of the visible references in Constantine and its ruins, Rachid – as well as the reader – has difficulties in situating himself historically, for no matter how he believes he knows the city – at least spatially-wise – "[e]verything in Constantine [seems to date]… back further than it first appears" (Graebner 2007:152).

If Constantine's landscape remained almost untouched by French-led architectural interventions, in Bône – Annaba before French colonization – the story was different. As one can grasp from Kateb's narrative, the French were obstinate in their attempts to make Bône into a prototype of what a settler's city must look like in Algeria. Perhaps due to its scarce occupation in terms of public-use constructions, and the lack of fixed settlements in the city's countryside, French liked to think they had built Bône from the ground up (see Prochaska 1990). Located at the very East coast of Algeria, facing right towards the Mediterranean Sea, the main interest for the French there was in the city's port and "the surrounding plain, propitious for colonization" (Graebner 2007:146). The refurbishment of Bône's cityscape during French colonial rule was, therefore, funded in industry and export, and the city was turned into the storehouse and the refinery of Algerian mining industry (See Prochaska 1990). If French colonial

archives described the city's urban area before occupation as "very narrow, filthy, muddy, unpaved, and always full of muck and cow dung" (Prochaska 1990: 40), Kateb's view of Bône after its "refurbishment" by the French is far from more optimistic:

> […] a burst of pavement shimmering grain by grain in the somber future of the city decomposing in architectural islands, in oubliettes of crystal, minarets of steel screwed into the heart of ships, in trucks loaded with phosphates and fertilizer, in regal shopwindows reflecting the unrealizable costumes of some century to come, in severe squares where human beings, makers of roads and trains, seem to be missing, glimpsed in the distance from the train's calm speed, glimpsed too behind the wheels of cars, masters of the road, adding to their speed the human weight ominously abdicated, at the mercy of a mechanical encounter with death, humming arrows following each other alongside the train, suggesting in a series of schedule ever more crowded, bringing closer to the passenger the moment of the naked, demanding city which lets every movement break up within it as the sea fawns at its feet, tightens its knots of rails as far as the platform where every track, whether from south or west, converges and already the Constantine-Bône express gives a centaur's start… . [T]he cars release the passengers: so many indecisive beasts, quickly restored to their somnolent watchfulness; […] noon, image of Africa seeking its shadow, unapproachable nakedness of the empire-eating continent, the plain swollen with wine and tobacco; noon subdues like any temple, immerses the traveler; noon! The clock adds in its sacerdotal roundness, and the hour seems retarded along with the machinery under the ventilation of the palms, and the empty train loses its charms… (Kateb 1991:92-93).

Differently from progress, development and opportunity, Kateb's disenchanted description of the city's industrial landscape suggests delusion, resignation and abandonment. The quote above is also the story of Lakhdar's arrival in Bône, after released from prison (where he was tortured for this participation in the riots in Sètif). Relatedly, it is the moment when the reader may sense a clear "historical disjunction between a politically active Algerian" (Graebner 2007: 148) – which is represented in Lakhdar's prior act of resistance – and the "somber future of [a] city decomposing in architectural islands" (Kateb 1991:92) and imposing "a timetable leading to a mechanized and dehumanizing existence" on its inhabitants (Kateb 1991:149). Bône, the symbol of the modern/modernized colonial city, offers no chance and no future to an individual like Lakhdar, who had consciously tried to disrupt the colonial order. As highlighted in different moments of the narrative, Lakhdar and the other main characters pay a high price for rebelling against colonial other. They were imprisoned and tortured, yes, but outside prison life is not very different, since freedom seems to be in many ways absent as well.

If one pays attention to Lakhdar's wanderings across the city's landscape, one immediately notices that the architecture, in fact, reflects the basic terms of colonial

confrontation. Nonetheless, if Bône's urban constructions make evident the contrasts between colonizer and colonized, this relationship is more complicated than the dualism colonizer *versus* colonized society would suggest. The Islamic details present in basically any public space in the city is not a product of the colonizer's intrusion alone, "but of the interactions between Algerians and French that made up colonial history and culture" (Graebner 2007:151. See Prochaska 1990). As Kateb vividly describes, the city's train station's clock sits not in any tower but on a replica of a minaret – that distinctive architectural structure akin to a tower, from which the faithful are called to prayer several times each day by a muezzin, or crier. In that same vein, in the subsequent scene, when Lakhdar enters the Sidi Boumerouene Mosque, what catches his attention is not the mosque's beautiful architecture, with its white majestic minaret, but the content of a mufti's sermon: "Meditation and wisdom are good for the brave who have already joined the battle. Rise! Return to your posts, pray on the job. Stop the world's machines if you fear an explosion…" (Kateb 1991:99). Here, religious faith and politics (in the form of resistance against colonial rule) intersect, in clear contrast with perspectives in which religious symbols and discourses, which are commonly depicted as belonging to the realm of the "traditional", are conceived as antagonistic to "modernity", "progress" and "change". Similarly, it challenges the view of "tradition" as something that can only be performed in the present when framed and enacted as pertaining exclusively to the realm of the past – which, in turn, tend to appear as a static, uncontested and unchangeable dimension disconnected from the present. In other words, the scene symbolizes the materiality of tradition in people's present and everyday lives.

At the other side of the Bône-Constantine express, Constantine terminal station, the picture is not necessarily less gloomy:

> Wrapped in fog, the locomotive seemed lost at each loop and curve, each escapade, each trick of the sudden, persistent city – "crushing" close up as far away – Constantine with its stubborn camouflages, now the crevices of a hidden river, now a solitary skyscraper with its black helmet raised toward the abyss: a rock surprised by the invasion of iron, asphalt and concrete, specters linked to the peaks of silence… esplanade where the High Plateau is outlined – citadel of expectation and threat, forever tempted by decadence, shaken by age-old seizures – a site of earthquake and discord, open to the four winds, where the ground shudders and shows itself the master, making its own resistance eternal: Lamoricière succeeding the Turks after ten years' siege, and the reprisals of May 8, ten years after Benbadis and the Moslem Congress, and Rachid finally, ten years after his father's recall and murder, breathing

> again the smell of the rock, the essence of the cedars which he sensed behind the glass even before glimpsing the mountain's first spur" (Kateb, p. 202).

Giving to a fictional character's life trajectory the same weight as to emblematic historical figures such as Lamoricière and Ben Badis, as well as to factual events such as the role of Constantine's Muslim Association seems to represent a juxtaposition rather than an hierarchical disposition between the historical, fictional and mythic registers in Kateb's narrative (see Bonn 1990). In fact, what is projected into Kateb's writing is not an attempt to narrate Algeria's history out of claims of coherence and accuracy, but an effort to highlight, instead, the perils of narrating a society's history without bringing a critical eye of the complexity of people's life trajectories, memories and worldviews. The wanderer in the novel (and the reader) "cannot easily grasp the city from any single perspective" (Graebner 2007:154). Moreover, if the history of Constantine in the novel do not signal toward a monumental or even coherent past, the city still survives. Contantine's "stubborn camouflage", its "loops and curves" (Kateb 1991:202-3) represent its resistance to penetration as well as to all-encompassing views. The juxtaposition of the historical and the mythical in that narrative, importantly enough, seems to be Kateb's methodology to make visible the necessity of a reconciliation of the country's past with its present in order to catch a glimpse of Algeria's possible futures. At the same time, he also warns against the various traps that inevitably mark such efforts. In this sense, Kateb's ruins of the present play the role of way-points through which new historical developments pass through as they set out along their curving paths. As such, they turn to be ideal grounds for reimagination and reterritorialization in ways that speak directly with the context of anticolonial resistance in which Kateb is *thinking and writing Algeria* (see Bensmaïa 2003). As Graebner posits:

> In Algeria, the reterritorialization of the colonized in the colonial city took place via a process of recreating or re-imagining ruins and overlaying them like a transparency on top of the French (re)constructions. Any historiography of the Maghreb must take into account this circuitous process. Kateb's work, as it participates in contemporary debates over the construction of postcolonial history, *implies learning to use such overlays to build a provisional historical account on shifting ground*, as a means of finding one's way among the ruins of the present (Graebner 2007:159, my emphasis).

If the imagery of ruins generally opposes notions of permanence and signals to intermittent destruction, Kateb brings a narrative that "neither laments past glory

nor condemns all present and future constructions (physical or political) to dust" (Graebner 2007:155-6). At some points of the text, it actually sounds as if there was a learning process going on in Maghrebian history, "[f]or cities besieged too often have no taste for sleep any more, still await defeat, can never be surprised, nor vanquished…" (Kateb 1991:231). For Kateb, this sort of historical awareness is something Maghrebians should grasp on to if they wish to build places in which "they can move in historically consequential ways" (Graebner 2007:159), rather than remaining trapped within the totalizing narratives of a foreign political elite who claims to have inherited power either from a civilizational right over the colonized society – i.e. the French colonizer – or of the so-called "fathers" of the nation (Kateb 1991:245) – i.e. leaderships whose authority is founded on myths of glorified past and/or on the myth of Arab and Islamic unity (problematic in Algeria and in the Maghreb region at large). To extrapolate Kateb's words in what touches the context when he was writing *Nedjma* (i.e. before the end of the Algerian war of independence), the same would stand for postcolonial nationalist elites in Algeria[100] – even though this connection between Kateb's critical stance on the "fathers" of the nation and the subsequent postcolonial nationalist elites in Algeria can only be, of course, in the realm of the interpretable in Kateb's text, for he is writing and publishing before Algerian independence.

*Nedjma* can thus be read as a narrative about the search for freedom from the colonial dominium and its capilarities, as well as about the (post)colonial subject's right to claim her own origins and trajectory. Importantly enough, it also acknowledges that the conquest of a postcolonial collective identity in Algeria is doomed to failure if dominated by monological discourses. At Kateb's time, as both Bonn (1990) and Toumi (2002) highlighted, these monological discourses were threefold: on one side, the depersonalizing and effacing colonial discourse regarding Maghrebian societies; and, on the other side, the two alternative discourses of collective identity opposing the colonizer's discourse, that is, the

[100] The mention in Kateb's novel reads: "[…] for this country has not yet to come into the world: too many fathers to be born by broad daylight, too many ambitious races disappointed, mingled, confused, constrained to creep upon the ruins…" (p.245). To be emphatic once again, this connection between Kateb's mention of the "fathers" of the nation and the subsequent postcolonial nationalist elites in Algeria can only be, of course, in the realm of the interpretable in Kateb's text, for he is writing and publishing before Algerian independence.

Islamic discourse and the tribal discourse, with their own fantasies of resistance and of a return to origins.

If the voice of the nation appears as an uncertain, ghostly presence – Nedjma, the woman who, according to a number of Kateb's critics, stands as symbol for the nation in gestation, barely speaks in the novel –, the voices of Islam and the tribe are strongly present. Nonetheless, one is required to undertake journeys to places other than 1950s Algeria in order to make sense of the role these voices perform within Kateb's narrative. As highlighted before, such journey can only occur within the interpellation of historical memory and myth; of fiction and fact, and through the ruins of past and present Algeria. It is known by now that in Kateb's narrative the ruins of the present can be found either in expected places (as in the architecture and social-scapes of colonial cities) or in the most unexpected ones (as in the emotional marks and ruptures caused by anticolonial resistance, which became as much part of the landscape as of people's individual and collective memories).

The ruins of the present are also unexpectedly represented in the figure of a decadent tribe, the Keblout – whose (hi)story is another important feature in Kateb's novel to which we shall now draw attention. A key moment in the plot is when Rachid and Sid Mokhtar (possibly Nedjma's father) take Nedjma off to the almost inaccessible mountains of Nadhor. In a repetition of what had happened to her mother, who was once ravished by four men – therefore the mystery surrounding Nedjma's paternity –, she is then delivered to the last descendants of the legendary Keblout tribe (which both Rachid and Sid Mokhtar believe to be their original ancestors) to be restored to her *true* destiny. Nedjma's ravishment then comes to be "the repetition of an event that figures in a founding myth of their tribe: a virgin's sacrifice to the ancestor Keblout in the name of tribal unity" (Woodhull 1993: 25).

The episode connects to the "violation model" prevailing in Maghreb's colonial historiography and to which Kateb is willing to offer a reinterpretation. A good explanation of the violation model can be found, for instance, in the introductory chapter of Abdallah Laroui's *The History of the Maghrib* [1977]. In a nutshell, it refers to the adoption of the waves of invasion and colonization in the Maghreb as the main driving force of the region's history. As Laroui explains, the model is highly problematic, since the history of the Maghreb becomes the history of foreign invaders, settlers and travelers, while "[t]he Maghribis themselves have no place in the discussion" (1977:42). Rather than a geohistorical location that is

marked by the violence, yes, but also the richness of cultural encounters, the Maghreb "is represented as an area of conflict between two entities, always present and never defined: the occident and the orient, of which Christianity and Islam and the Latin and the Arabic languages are merely reflections" (Laroui 1977:12). Along with narratives of colonial penetration, conquest, partial destruction and stagnation populating modern colonial historiography on the Maghreb, there also comes the reification of the region (which appears as a space "in-between" two discreet worlds) and of Maghrebian societies as well, who are turned into peoples with no other history than that recounted by the colonizers[101].

In this sense, if, on the one hand, the pitfalls of taking the city as symbol also become evident once one pays attention to the apparent ease with which a city's structure can be violated through colonial "penetration" (e.g. Bône, at different parts of the novel), as well as the "rapidity with which it may become unresponsive and sclerotic, literally clogged with ruins" (e.g. Constantine, at different parts of the novel) (Graebner 2007:156-157). On the other hand, as Kateb's narrative also makes clear, the violation model by itself is too simple to account for the presence of ruins in Algeria's colonial past, or for the construction of the monuments of the present. Even though Kateb tells to his reader how the cities' structure results from "an active, if unequal, exchange between colonized and colonizer" (Graebner 2007:157), the novel does not present colonized subjects or cities as passively taking abuse. The view encouraged by the violation model therefore does not give proper space for the sort of multidirectional approach to history Kateb seems to suggest, let alone the advent of historical consciousness he envisions and which is output of the imbrication of the ruins from past with those of present Algeria (in the context of his novel, French rule and *mission civilatrice*, and anticolonial struggle), and key to decolonization in the Maghreb.

On one side, young Rachid, is suspicious of grand projects and their connection with dreams of modernization and progress for the locals, for the city's construction sites themselves and his scarce opportunities in life soon become

[101] In his book, Laroui purports to challenge this discourse – prevailing even among Maghribi local historians – by "the viewpoint of a Maghribi concerning the history of his own country", even if, as he continues, this means "provid(ing) few new findings an differed from the colonial historians only in [his] way of interpreting certain facts" (Laroui 1977:4-5). See also the discussion on "Maghrebian in-betweenness" in Chapter 5 of this PhD thesis.

indistinguishable from ruins and ultimately lead only to stasis ("the architects have nothing left to do there"):

> "[t]he great yards that were supposed to be opened had always excited the inhabitants like an exotic dream, worthy of the nuclear age, and which most of them were waiting for in order to start a home or buy a shirt. A few gigantic apartments, a few anarchic factories, and the persistent unemployment in the richest of the three departments in the very city "where de Gaulle came to grant me citizenship" (p. 205)

On the other side, the "violation model" – and its connection to the situation portrayed in the text, in which Algerians are constantly obliged to postpone or give up on their own plans, in a circular movement inevitably leading to ruinous projects and stasis – is, in fact, put into movement and pushed forward by the novel "in its own circuitous motion" (Graebner 2007:157). One aspect representing this circuitous, multidirectional motion of history is the constant reference to the May 1945 uprisings, in different moments of the plot, from different perspectives, something that by itself signals towards an understanding of the past-present-future relationship as complex and enmeshed in disparate personal memories and narratives. Back to the grand building projects criticized by one of Kateb's protagonists, as quoted above, they also seem to fail in the attempt to symbolize Algerian identity as either a portion of the French empire or an independent proud nation able to catch up with France and other modern developed nations of the world. Such projects "prove irrelevant for national identification when history and identity remain as shifting and polyvalent as Rachid's 'inestimable ruins of the present'" (Graebner 2007:158).

In this same vein, the perspective of the old man, Si Mokhtar, it is nevertheless possible to understand – as Woodhull suggests –, that the journey to Nadhor – as much oriented towards a genealogical anxiety as it could be – has been undertaken in a historically progressive rather than a nostalgic spirit. As Si Mokhtar declares to his companion:

> You should remember the destiny of this country we come from; *it is not a French province, and has neither bey nor sultan*; perhaps you are thinking of Algeria, still invaded, of its inextricable past, for we are not a nation, not yet, you know that: we are only decimated tribes. It is not a step backward to honor our tribe, the only link that remains to us by which we can unite and restore our people, even if we hope for more than that… (Kateb 1991:170-1, emphasis added)

This quote above also brings a critical stance on two dominant representations of Algeria's present at the time of anticolonial resistance and the necessity of

inventing a "language of action and of identity" (Bonn 1990:47) against the "Great France" colonial project[102]. On one side, there is the Eurocentric modern conception of global history as intermingled with that of the modern nation-state. Whereas, on the other side, the Islamic conception of an all-encompassing religious, cultural and linguistic community centered on Islamic faith and Arab heritage as if they represent a unit, a whole, the *Umma*[103]. Nonetheless, there is no need of a too attentive reading of this emblematic Maghrebian novel to notice that it has nothing of an easy brandishing of the Algerian national flag or a militant attitude towards the Algerian nation as an uncontested one-way road. The plot finds its movement through a mythology built around "cityscapes" and the two cities' ruins rather than a "national" mythology, to begin with. In addition to that, the history of the Keblout tribe (a medley of myth and historical facts) haunts and constantly merges with Algeria's, and both are presented as inseparable of the region's complex and long-standing history, as Bonn (1990) suggests. In this sense, while Nedjma "whose beauty and 'family resemblance' had struck our relatives" (Kateb 1991:178) is hostage to the Keblout tribe, she seems to fulfill the double role of a "refuge of values" (Khatibi, *Le Roman Maghrébin*, 1979:104 quoted in Woodhull 1993:27) and guardian of Algeria's mixed cultural identity.

The Keblout clan's is presented as based on a male-line inheritance. Left with their rituals of sacrifice, their collapsing mosque, and their vultures hovering over above their heads (yet another aspect in the narrative symbolizing collapse and



[102] That is, the French enterprise of colonial settlement in Algeria, which included both assimilationist practices (e.g. imposition of a French educational system and the diffusion of the colonizer's language) and segregationist practices (e.g. the division of the urban landscape into French and non-French zones). See, for instance: Galissot 2004.

[103] Originally, the nation founded by Muhammad in the city of Medina in 622 A.D. As historian Beatriz Bissio explains: "The Umma was initially rooted in a relatively small territory, dominated by the steppes and the desert. As the Islamic Empire extended to the East and to the West, it took up heterogeneous spaces from the social, cultural and geographical point of view. Here, one must take into account Muslim's totalizing sense of life, which requires a global view of the universe in which man is inserted. As a consequence, community occupies a harmonious rather than necessarily continuous space. In Middle Ages context, it was necessary to add another factor of cohesion: the Arabic language. This cultural unity that contributed decisively to unify the Empire had also resulted from other factors. On the one hand, the rapid process of Islamization of a large number of conquered groups, whose conversion was facilitated by the simplicity of the process of assimilation. [...] The process of unification is consolidated, as it is observed, with the transformation of the Arabic language into the instrument of communication par excellence between the center and the most remote regions […]. Many authors […] refer to the culture constituted in this process as "Arab-Islamic", and affirm that its crystallization occurred around the 9th century" (Bissio 2012:31, my translation).

decomposition), the last Kebloutis of Nadhor also represent the "ruins of the present" in the novel. After the biological tribal fathers had been eliminated, and with the arrival of Nedjma as captive, but also an interfering presence, the ruins of the clan engender a historical record based not on male bloodline or the trajectory of mythical founding fathers, "but on detours and dodges among the ruins" in the landscape and how they connect with the historical record brought by those who wander over those ruins (Graebner 2007:159). Nedjma's presence in its virginal version, thus, does not come to strengthen myths of origins, but to destabilize them instead with her uncertain paternal bloodline. At the same time, Nedjma embodies another root that cannot be denied, for she is also a Frenchwoman's daughter. She is not *purely* Keblouti, nor Algerian, nor French, nor Arab, nor Muslim, nor Jewish, nor even a peaceful hybrid of all.

Thus, if on the one hand it is indeed possible to read Nedjma slippery symbolism as an embodiment of colonial Algeria's situation as placed between worlds, with "its traversal but irreconcilable modern and traditional currents", and between "two types of structures: the society of citizens and [the] tribal society" (Woodhull 1993:10). On the other hand, Kateb's narrative does not reify Algerian "in-betweenness" as timeless; it is an expression of the historicity of cultural encounters. In the context in light, it is entrenched in the colonial encounter between Europeans (French) and Maghreb's local population, and the economy of violence generated by such encounter.

As Woodhulll points out, if on the one hand highlighting Algeria's "in-betweenness" may help to avoid uncontested definitions regarding the regions' origins, its internal dynamics, and its position in the world (e.g. the definition of Algeria as a point of conflict between the Occident and the Orient); on the other hand, such understanding might also reify the region and its societies by unproblematically assuming its hybridity while silencing internal conflicts and differences. Put differently, readings that place too much attention to societies' or subjects' in-betweenness are always in danger of turning such "condition" into an empty signifier always available to make sense of the other's complexity without properly engaging the other. At this point, its interesting to notice how "Maghrebian in-betweenness" has being connected to portrayals of the region's "intractability", a notion which has paradoxically served as both fuel for intellectual engagements

and apology for avoiding serious dialogue[104] (see Khatibi [1970]1983). As Woodhulll (1993) suggests, in a critical reading of *Nedjma* as a portrayal of Algerian women during anticolonial struggle as well as a parallel to understand the challenges women had to face after decolonization, one should indeed assume a careful posture in front of the other's complexity. However, this differs significantly from avoiding or denying the possibility of a meaningful engagement with difference and of learning from others – or even, the possibility of finding sameness in others rather than radical difference altogether.

As highlighted before, revealing the archaeological vestiges of a supposedly glorious past followed by decadence and ruins, together with the "violation model", is a constant move in Maghrebian historiography. According to Laroui, the narrative has proved powerful in the hands of colonial historians, who often start with the premise of a "just French presence". However, as he also problematizes, it is also part of Maghrebian historiography after decolonization, since local ruling elites and intellectual circles, in their attempts to provide a coherent historical narrative to the new modern nations, also tend to resort to "the negative aspects of society in the past" in order to justify their authority over the locals' future (Laroui 1977:371-372). Not to mention the other problematic common premise, that is, that of a timeless Arab-Islamic heritage and how it has been simultaneously mobilized as both unitive and excluding principle by anticolonial – and then postcolonial – nationalist elites[105] and historians in the region.

In this sense, Kateb's rejection of the fiction of "just French presence" in the region and, at the same time, of the myth of Arab and Islamic unity, nevertheless, does not point towards a less conflicted construction of Algeria's past. Kateb's historical ruins are "Numidian", therefore Amazigh rather than Arab, but such Amazigh past seems to reveal just as difficult to build upon as the (now) triumphant narrative of Arab conquest and heritage in the Maghreb. That, together with the topography of ruins and historical cities that structures his novel, gives us a glimpse of how complex and slippery the task of trying to narrate a society's history by building on spatial-temporal symbols is. As Kateb's narrative manages to show, such symbols are heterogeneously disposed in subjects' collective imaginary and

[104] See also discussion in Chapter 5 of this Thesis.
[105] See, for example: PRASHAD, *The Darker Nations*, 2007; TOUMI, *Maghreb Divers*, 2002.

mobilized according to contingent circumstances; they are neither timeless, nor homogeneous and uncontested.

This way, through the narration of the characters' relationship with the country's landscape, and through the exposure of different historical discourses in this regard, it is thus possible to argue that Kateb is in place to suggest a conception of history as a dynamic, multidirectional force that can only provisory (and precariously) concretize itself. Kateb's cityscapes and ruins are "chronoscapes" connecting people's living present with imagined pasts and, thus, the most evident example in his novel of such precarious concretization. It is thus a *located view of time* – rather than a conception of time as an empty, homogeneous progression. By observing and wandering in the ruins, the protagonists of the story conceive their location in the present as intimately connected with the past they are able to imagine and identify with. Past and present become intermingled in people's life trajectories and anxieties towards the present and the future. At the same time, it is also a *temporal view of location*, since the available references for identification and estrangement or, in other words, for constructing a collective sense of belonging (e.g. Maghrebi, Amazigh, Numidian, Algerian, tribal, national) are numerous, contextual and susceptible. The present of a collectivity thus appears as a multiplicity of available frames due to its complex imbrication of temporalities, and not an empty mathematical point in time (see Riecken 2015). In this way, the approach offered by Kateb is in consonance with a relational (rather than self-contained, or "centrist") view of time and historical entanglements. Paraphrasing Nils Riecken (2015), it comes across as a conception of history – or a methodology for conceiving historical discourse – which reads "representations of singular time as moments within a wider dialect of multiple temporalities and the social production of unified time" (e.g. historical narratives) (Riecken 2015:8). Since it allows one to conceive multiple temporalities, it can be a useful tool "to call into question 'the totalizing' accounts of official (…) history, emphasising instead the importance of small, single histories that challenge the hegemonic account" (Macfie 2015:7).

The overlaying ruins of the two cityscapes and their juxtaposition with the characters' own life trajectories – and their own ways of narrating such trajectories – oppose the non-contextual, reified notion of "the Arab" *face au temps* – as the *Avertissement* opening that same novel would have it. In this sense, if we consider

the tumultuous time when Kateb was writing, what Nedjma best represents is a depiction of "the Algerian" facing time. If my perception is correct, the "Algerian facing time" works as an unifying but contextualized trope to describe the dissimilar but connected journeys of the characters in the novel towards the independent, "plural Algeria"[106] Kateb is trying to envision. Like the fictional protagonist he has created, Kateb "reterritorializes the language of spatial fiction and the day-to-day uses of space in the colonial order" in ways that certainly disrupt this same order[107] (Graebner 2007:151).

The ruins constitute a key feature of the cities of Constantine and Bône – the two *Algerian*, rather than "French" or "French-Algerian" cities narrated in the novel. For Kateb, the cities' ruins are not part of the past, but of the present, for "rather than leaving stable traces" they appear "watermarked into the surface […], a surface subject to rippling, folding, or distortion", forming an "overlay" rather than a "base for new construction" (Graebner 2007:156). The ruins are also Kateb's substrata for extrapolating myth from history. As previously discussed, the details in Bône's and Constantine's landscapes and social-scapes denoted the imbrication of fiction, myth and historical facts in the life trajectories of the protagonists in the novel. An attention to this juxtaposition of multiple temporalities also helps to uncouple time from culturalist oppositions as in affirmations that linear time conceptions are prevalent in the "West", whereas cyclical time conceptions are prevalent outside the West (see Les Éditeurs in Kateb 1956). Put differently, it helps to go beyond civilizational timeless containments and oppositions such as "Islamic" (or "Arab") time *versus* "Western" time; "traditional" and "mythic" *versus* "modern" etc, without necessarily turning our eyes blind to culture and difference.

Once, when commenting on his novel's structure, Kateb stated that he "could not write the novel of Algeria otherwise… [he had] to try all conceivable combinations to hold together the potential novel of a conceivable Algeria" (Kateb 1988 quoted in Aresu 1991:xlv). On the last pages of *Nedjma*, the four protagonists all met at a coffeehouse in Beauséjour (Nedjma's city) wherein they conclude that their beloved Nedjma cannot be "the living unity where… [they] could blend… [ themselves] without fear of dissolution" (Kateb 1991:331). The narrative then

[106] Here, I am paraphrasing Abdelkebir Khatibi, who speaks of a "Plural Maghreb" (Maghreb Pluriel). See Khatibi 1983.
[107] See also Bensmaïa 2003:27-46.

returns to the initial scene, in which the four friends appeared together working at Mr. Ernest's construction site. Interestingly enough, the reader can actually witness a new beginning coming out of what seemed to be mere repetition: while Rachid decides to go to Constantine and Lakhdar to Bône, Mustapha, in turn, declares "I'm going a different way" (Kateb 1991:344).

*Encumbered forever by desire and ambition*
*There's a hunger still unsatisfied*
*Our weary eyes still stray to the horizon*
*Though down this road we've been so many times*

(Pink Floyd, *High Hopes*)

# 4. Language and the (Im)possibilities of Translation: Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other* and Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Love in Two Languages*

> *Nous nous sommes rencontrés, Jacques Derrida et moi, en septembre 1974, à Paris, dans un café de la place Saint-Sulpice. Il m'offrit son livre « Glas » qui venait de paraitre. De mon côté, je lui avais envoyé avant notre rencontre, en service de presse, deux ouvrages édités en même temps, au début de la rentrée littéraire : « La blessure du nom propre » et « Vomito blanco ». Depuis cette date et jusqu'à son décès en octobre 2004, nous avions entretenu une relation plus ou moins continue, amicale et fidèle, comme un point de repère dans le temps à vivre. Nous étions des amis qui vivions à distance; lui, à côté de Paris; et moi, à côté de Rabat. Il voyageait et travaillait beaucoup à l'étranger. Son importance intellectuelle sur le plan international n'est plus à démontrer. Elle est même en devenir dan de nombreaux pays. Elle voyage dans le temps, grâce à la traduction; et pour ma part, j`ai initié sa traduction en langue arabe*
>
> (Khatibi, *Jacques Derrida En Effet*)

These are the opening words to Abdelkebir Khatibi's 2007 book *Jacques Derrida, en effect*, a collection of some of the author's writings dedicated to his intellectual exchanges with Jacques Derrida. As Khatibi tells us, during his early years as a young philosopher and writer in Morocco, Derrida was this distant intellectual inspiration speaking from the other side of the Mediterranean. By the time Khatibi studied and lived in Paris – the most common destination for Maghrebian young intellectuals searching for high education and career opportunities. Derrida and Khatibi then became close friends and important intellectual interlocutors to each other. The publication of *En effect* happened more than one decade after Derrida's *Le monolinguisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine* (1996) (referred as MA from now own)[108], which can be considered as a sort of indirect exchange with Khatibi regarding the question of language, translation and otherness. In fact, Derrida opens MA with a quote from Khatibi's novel *Amour bilingue* and engages with his friend`s approach in different parts of the book. Although questions around language and translation are a constant presence in Khatibi's oeuvre, *Amour bilingue* (1983) (referred as AB from now

[108] In this chapter I used both the 1996 original version in French and the translation to English by Patrick Mensah [as *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*] published in 1998 by Stanford University Press. All citations in this chapter are borrowed from this 1998 English version.

own)[109] is the text in which he emblematically narrates the ambivalence towards French language in postcolonial Maghreb.

In this chapter, I purport to read Khatibi's AB and Derrida's MA as well as the intellectual exchanges between these two Francophone Maghrebian writers focusing on how each of them addresses the relationship between language, translation and the (im)possibilities of dialoguing with others/otherness in their theoretical frameworks. My aim is to contextualize the centrality of the question of language in their respective intellectual projects – both focused on advancing a "deconstructionist agenda"[110] – within the history of the diverse and discrepant experiences of French colonialism in the Maghreb. In this sense, this chapter is also an exercise of "contrapuntal reading" of Khatibi against Derrida from the perspective of colonial difference. As Edward Said posits, contrapuntal readings can be understood as interpretive efforts substantiated in the intellectual/ethical commitment to understand the production of global hierarchies "as a violent enmeshment between 'metropolitan history' and other histories 'against which (and together with which) …[it] acts" (Said 1994:51). It thus refers to something more substantial than mere exercises of comparison, or creating oppositions such as in a "Khatibi versus Derrida" approach, since it situates "discrepant experiences" (Said 1994:32-33) of French colonialism. Seen through these lenses, their texts appear as narratives about the politics of language imposed upon Maghrebian societies during colonial rule and how it has influenced in literary production and other intellectual exercises by Francophone Maghrebian writers since then.



[109] In this chapter I used both the original version of 1983 in French and the translation to English by Richard Howard [as *Love in Two Languages*] published in 1990 by The University of Minnesota. All citations in this chapter are borrowed from this 1990 English version.

[110] In short, deconstruction, at least the kind associated with Derrida, gestures towards a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts. In a short interview published in June 30, 1992, Derrida offered a short response to the question "Qu'est-ce que la Déconstruction?" [What is Deconstruction?]: "a contestation of the linguistic reference, of the authority of language, of "logocentrism", it is "a thought of the origin and limits of the question 'what is it...?', a question which dominates philosophy's whole history. Eveytime we try to think of the possibility of the 'what is it?...', of posing a questioning regarding this question, or interrogating ourselves about the need of such language in a certain language, in a certain tradition, etc, what one does at that moment is only up to a certain point the question 'what is it?' [...] It is all about the question 'what is it...?' , [deconstruction] deals with all that this question has commanded in the history of the West and Western philosophy" (my translation). Derrida, Jacques; Roger-Pol Droit (1992) "Qu'est-ce que la Déconstruction?". In: Le Monde, Oct. 12, 2004. Available at: http://medias.lemonde.fr/medias/pdf_obj/sup_pdf_derrida_111004.pdf Access: 22 October 2016

Relatedly, my attention to colonial difference here refers back to the fact that colonialism is fundamentally based upon demarcating absolute difference between the colonizer and the colonized; but also, and importantly, to how a number of postcolonial writers aimed to recast the contact zone opened up by the violence of colonial encounters in order to subvert imperial categories and absolute discourses of sameness and difference[111]. My contrapuntal reading thus focuses on the realms of colonial difference in two different dimensions of Khatibi's and Derrida's narratives. One dimension refers to Khatibi's (an Arab of Islamic background who was born, raised, and who spent most of his life in Morocco) and Derrida's (a French-Algerian Jew) autobiographical voices when narrating their experiences as postcolonial Francophone Maghrebian subjects. In this sense, while the first speaks mainly from the African shore of the Mediterranean and, as Walter Mignolo (2012) highlights, from the border of two knowledge traditions, i.e. Islamic and Western/Occidental, the latter constructs his critique from within the Western canon and mode of thought, being recognized first and foremost as a "French" philosopher (Mignolo 2012:66-75). In spite of this difference regarding their respective *locus* of enunciation, both authors present themselves as Franco-Maghrebian writers and their approaches to deconstruction as an anti-/decolonial stance – although, as I will argue, "colonial violence" and, therefore, "anti-colonial" acquire a problematic all-encompassing meaning in Derrida –, that is, as "a project of displacement and subversion of the category of 'the West'" (Sajed 2013:29).

The second dimension of colonial difference I want to address focuses on how each author links language, translation and subversion in their respective texts with their own condition and experiences of marginality as Franco-Maghrebian subjects. Both Khatibi and Derrida tell to the reader how writing became an act of trespassing limits and performing the desire of "making something happen with this [French] language" (Derrida 1998:51). In this aspect, I argue that Khatibi's "bi-langue" not only challenges the very concept of Francophone literature and helps to dismantle the hegemony of French literature in relation to the literatures from the former

[111] It is impossible to offer an exhaustive list of references here. I want to highlight, however, Walter Mignolo's (2012) account in *Local Histories/Global Designs*, where the author offers a thoroughgoing analysis of subaltern knowledges and border thinking emerging out from these various efforts at recasting colonial difference from the perspective of the former colonized. Mignolo himself offers na exhaustive list of postcolonial thinkers pursuing this similar aim – Abdelkebir Khatibi among them. See Mignolo 2012.

colonies this concept implies, but also, and importantly, highlights the productivity of the contact zone – in Khatibi's own terms, the "third space" – opened by practices of translation. This "third-space" in-between languages, cultures and experiences of marginality that Khatibi touches upon creates room for self-reflection of one's position towards others. Derrida's "monolanguage of the other", by contrast, presupposes an insurmountable dimension of selfhood resistant to translation which can be both enabling and disabling in his critique against hegemonic forms. To put it in simple words, I argue that Derrida's denunciation of the violent traits *inherent to all* discourses and *every* practice of translation does bring the promise of a reflexivist stance towards the other, but one that comes with the price of a refusal of engaging the other beyond a simple and general recognition of the other's (intractable) otherness. In a nutshell, I try to keep in mind the contrapuntality of Derrida's and Khatibi's experiences in the context of the Franco-Maghrebian (dis)connection as well as their different gestures towards the specificities of colonial difference in their narrative accounts.

An attention to colonial difference – specially the second dimension highlighted above – in Khatibi's and Derrida's texts offers a parallel that assist us in the general discussion regarding the incorporation of narrative scholarship to IR. More specifically, it illuminates one aspect of the debate around Narrative IR that posits the question whether the adoption of the "I" voice may in fact create the conditions for reflexivity in writing practices, make the power relations – including the relationship between researcher and researched – more visible (see Chapter 2), and perhaps retrieve voices that would otherwise be lost to the sanitised disciplining of IR (Doty 2004). In this matter, I argue that although Khatibi and Derrida make use of the "I" voice in their respective narratives with the aim of transgressing the limits imposed by the categories of the "West" in general and by French language in specific, both authors fail to concretize the subversion they envisioned.

It should be noted that the "I" voice does not necessarily appear in a straightforward autobiographical voice neither in Khatibi's nor in Derrida's case. Both authors adopt narrative strategies that blur the frontiers between autobiography, autoethnography, fiction (in Khatibi's case) and theoretical reflection instead, but in ways that call attention to the subversive potential of the "I" voice in the text. In this sense, Derrida's "I" remains confined to the very realm of absolute violence (i.e. the monolanguage) he purports to criticize and to an

understanding of difference as inherently intractable. Whereas Khatibi's excessive hope in the subversive potential of "a philosophy or poetics" of the bi-langue remains confined to a conceptualization of otherness as "the feminine (or the maternal)" or as "intractable love" (Woodhull 1993:xii; see Khatibi 1990). With this in mind, I conclude that although narrative approaches in general tend to bring important questions to centre stage in IR scholarship – especially in what touches the relationship between the writer/researcher-subject and the world he/she purports to engage and represent through his/her text –, the adoption of the "I" voice is not a guarantee of subversion in what regards the practices of engaging and representing others. In fact, it can reinstate the writer's authority disguised as reflexivity towards otherness in ways that render other subjectivities insurmountable.

## 4.1 How Many Languages Can One *Have*? Linguistic Encounters in Franco-Maghrebian literature



This section situates the intellectual trajectories of Derrida and Khatibi – as well as the dialogue between the two of them – within the "multiglossic" context of the Maghreb, that is, the complex relationship between the linguistic and cultural diversity marking this region and how such complexity is performed in the everyday usage of language (in both oral and writing cultures). As Alek B. Toumi (2002) highlights, "multiglossia" exists and is constitutive of the Maghrebian region long before the interference of European (mostly French) colonizers, and the tensions that the introduction of French language added to this already complex picture can only be understood in light of the history of cultural encounters in the region. Whereas the mark of colonial difference is inseparable from this "multiglossia" in Khatibi's account, Derrida's case is confined to the dimension of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter.

If French colonization had a different tinge in each of its territories due to local particularities and to the specific interests of French colonizers in each context (see Amin 1970), the imposition of the colonizer's language, by contrast, was a unifying element of French colonial enterprise in the Maghreb. The pretense unity represented in the metropolitan language was then imposed on Maghrebian locals as one of the main features of the French *mission civilisatrice* in the region. As Toumi (2002) summarizes, French language functioned as a mechanism to

suffocate the plurality of local languages and to the instauration of divisions among the local population of the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia and of the settlement colony of Algeria. Nonetheless, it did not take long for Francophone Maghrebian writers to start making use of French language as means to articulate the terms of their own resistance against colonial rule[112]. The examples here are uncountable[113].

In his extensive study on the linguistic and cultural diversity in the Maghreb, *Maghreb Divers*, Alek B. Toumi (2002) calls attention to the violence of the imposition of one language was also experienced in these three countries after their formal independence, when the cultural politics of Arabicization – which in the Algerian context became known as "*la revolution culturelle*" – came with the stated purpose of "restoring" the cultural and linguistic roots of the local societies once vandalized by the foreign colonizer. Therefore, the postcolonial politics of language in Algeria in fact operated as another mechanism of homogenization imposed from above. Moreover, the persistence of a Maghrebian literature written in French four decades after the anticolonial struggles were replaced by postcolonial independent regimes in the region (considering the time Toumi was publishing) is another evidence that there is a much more complex picture than the dichotomy between



[112] "Comment expliquer que cet instrument de colonisation et d'oppression qu'était la langue française, se soit transformé en l'espace d'une generation en un veritable outil de liberation, indispensable au travail de tout intellectuel maghrébin?" (Toumi 2002:1-3). Relatedly, in a chapter dedicated to discuss "French language and identity", Jane Hiddleston also highlights the context of multilingualism in France, what urges for "a more fluid understanding of the relation between language and national or cultural identity" (Hiddlestone 2005:91). She calls attention to key moments in the latter part of the twentieth century in when the arguments of those still advocating the conception of the self-contained nature of French language – or its monolingual character – directly conflict with the linguistic diversity that is apparent in France and the struggles of speakers of different languages and dialects to set forth their cause. In 1951, for example, the Loi Deixonne authorized the study of regional languages of France in schools, although in still precarious ways and with a minor presence in the educational curriculum. After a few years, in the 1960s, and during the enduring atmosphere created by the revolution of May 1968, "many used [it] as a chance to express their refusal of what they perceived to be the dominant ideology. People started to use regional dialects in public, on the radio and in the newspapers, when those languages had until then been reserved for private use". Later on, in 1999, speakers of minority languages once again raised more eagerly the case of the necessity of official recognition, but Jacques Chirac's government refused so in the name of "the principle that these dialects threaten the unity of the Republic." Moreover, the languages of immigrant communities have also gathered increasing attention to themselves, and in 1984, the famous Berque report "revealed the need for the further recognition of diverse cultures, such as those of North Africa, in French schools" (Hiddlestone, p. 90-91). Nonetheless, as Hiddleston comes to highlight and problematize, "[b]eneath the rethoric promoting cultural difference, however, there lingered a drive to integrate particularities into a greater structure, so that the ultimate status of immigrant languages remained unclear".

[113] See discussion in Chapters 1 and 3 of this PhD Thesis.

French and Arabic suggests. According to Toumi, if one takes into account the overall local population access to education and literacy up to now and, in addition, the diversity of dialectal languages and oral culture in the three Maghrebian countries, both classical Arabic (the "original" language of "the Book") and French can be considered as foreign languages still mostly in power of the elite[114].

On pages 93 and 94 of this study, Toumi quotes Abdelkebir Khatibi's (1983) description of the linguistic landscape in the Maghreb and highlights that the idea of "diglossia" in the region should not be captured by an opposition between one national language (e.g. Arabic) and one foreign language (e.g. French). Following Khatibi's position in *Maghreb Pluriel*, Toumi then highlights that, when it comes to the Maghreb, one can only properly speak of "diglossies" in the plural, therefore, of a "multiglossic" context[115]. When offering a glimpse of the multiglossic linguistic context in Morocco, for example, Khatibi asserts: "The linguistic landscape in the Maghreb is already plurilingual: diglossia (between Arabic and the dialectal), Berber [Tamazigh], French, Spanish in the North and in the South of Morocco" (Khatibi 1983:179, my translation). In this way, neither the simplistic dichotomy "high" and "low" (meaning "popular") languages, nor the more specific dilemma of choosing between Arabic (meaning "classical Arabic") and French – or even bilingualism – help us to understand what is really going on there. As Toumi summarizes:



[114] In the context of linguistic diversity in the Maghreb, Alek B. Toumi (2002) also highlights the lack of – or the difficulties in set forth – official recognition and policies oriented to the integration of minority or marginalized languages into the educational system. In Algeria, for example, only forty years later the country's independence was achieved the government finally recognized Tamazigh – the Amazigh's language – as a "national language" (albeit not "official" language) (see Maddy-Weitzman 2015:2508). However, as Rim Hayat Chaif (2015) pointed out, "[t]he move fell short of putting Tamazight on par with Arabic but nonetheless recognized that 25 percent of Algerians speak the language" (See: https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2015/07/in-algeria-the-berber-language-cant-get-an-educational-foothold/). In 2015, the Algerian Ministry of National Education and the High Commission of Amazigh signed an agreement —timed to coincide with the UN's visit to study Algerian education—to promote teaching Tamazight throughout the country (op. cit.). In Morocco, Amazigh languages are spoken by around 35 to 40% of the population, and Tamazigh has been taught in schools since 2005. Nonetheless, only about 12% of Moroccan students have access to the language in schools. In the 2011 Constitution Tamazigh was recognized as one of Morocco's official languages, but this recognition did not necessarily translate into a more widespread access to the language in schools and other official bodies (See: https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2015/07/the-berber-language-officially-recognized-unofficially-marginalized/).
See also: http://www.amazighworldnews.com/tunisian-amazighs-push-to-institutionalize-language-and-culture-in-tunisia/

[115] See Toumi 2002, especially chapter 6.

> From a vernacular point of view, it is very difficult if not impossible for a Maghrebian intellectual to produce works in classical Arabic because classical Arabic is not one of his mother tongue. From a vehicular point of view, French still remains the language of economic exchanges and of literary and scientific production of the majority of local intellectuals. In addition, French remains both the language of "making a living" that gives children the chance to ascend economically out of misery. From a referential point of view, the strong presence of oral culture in Farabe and Berber, and even in French, leads the population to a muffled but real resistance against "Arabization". Finally, from a mythical point of view, considering that the majority of the people is illiterate, the use of a unique "Arabic" signifier makes the confusion between Farabe and classical Arabic useful for the authorities in a Machiavellian way, giving Farabophones the illusion that they speak classical "Arabic". This illusion of speaking "Arabic" (meaning classical Arabic) is masterfully maintained, while their vernacular "Arabic" (i.e. Farabe) does not encourage them to learn classical Arabic in the first place: Why would you learn to speak "in Arabic" if we have always spoken Arabic at home? (Toumi, p. 107, my translation)[116].

Thus, considering these constant "linguistic encounters" and their effects upon people's everyday lives, Maghrebi speakers and writers "must think first and foremost about languages rather than in a certain language or even two or three" (Rosello 2005:74). By this same token, the dynamics of such encounters shows that social, cultural and, similarly, linguistic landscapes are not only overlapped, but in movement. In Mustapha Hamil's words, "the partition of Maghrebian space and imagination, the disruption of local culture, and the imposition of an alien culture and language have all combined to create new forms of looking at the self and the other" (Hamil 2002:80) in most of the works of Maghrebian intellectuals who write in French.



## 4.2 Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Amour Bilingue*: Linguistic Confrontations of a Moroccan Bilingual Writer

Abdelkebir Khatibi [1938-2009] was born and raised in colonial Morocco. As a Moroccan with an Arab and Muslim background, Khatibi was educated partially at a Koranic and partially at a French-Moroccan school – an experience he narrates in details in his autobiography *La Memoire Tatouée* [1971]. His work can thus be read as a reflex of "this intercultural communication, informed at once by Islamic

[116] Rèda Bensmaia clarifies the meaning of vernacular, vehicular, referential, and mythical and it comes to the complexity of the linguistic question: "The vernacular is the here and now of the regional language or mother tongue; the vehicular is the everywhere and later of the language of the cities, both centralizing and prospective; the referential is the over there and before of national life; and finally, the mythical is the beyond and forever of the sacred" (Bensmaïa 2003:18).

culture and by the canons of Western philosophy and literature" (Hiddleston 2005:97). Trained as a sociologist, Khatibi wrote an extensive number of critical studies, sociological analyses, plays, poetry, and novels. Nonetheless, his notable work is barely known in France or other parts of the Francophone world, and even less beyond it. *Amour Bilingue*, originally published in 1983, in France, by Editions Fata Morgana, was one of his few writings that gained an English translation, *Love in Two Languages*, published in 1990 by University of Minnesota.

Although *La Memóire Tatouée* is the literary text in which the author allows himself to openly speak as Abdelkebir Khatibi, in *AB* the narrator's voice (which is also the main character's voice) unmistakably belongs to a Moroccan bilingual male subject, whose voices also seems to merge itself with the writer's voice – since many fragments of Khatibi's previous testimony in LMT are brought to the narrative (Gaertner 2002). In his *Lettre Ouverte à Jacques Derrida*, Khatibi asserts that "the autobiography, in its many different forms, is a gesture, it is more a calligraphy than a literary genre, a possibility of being welcomed as a guest in the language of the other" (2007:42, my translation). The interplay between writer/narrator/character can be noticed in many parts of AB, as in the one which follows the narrator's problematization of the notion of one's given name as point of origin, and of the religious truth as an absolute and original truth:

> In my country (?), there's a ceremony of the answer without a question: "I realize that I am saying 'I' in the present tense. He? He fell down. But where? In his strict anonymity? I don't dare draw the strict conclusion. He is, he is the teller and what I built he has already destroyed; that which I bring into being, he ceaselessly drives it away. I am he without being either him or me (Khatibi 1990:81).

AB is the novel in which Khatibi openly engages the issue of bilingualism and how it affects individuals' everyday lives in postcolonial Maghreb. It is a narrative about a love couple of different origins and languages (he is a North African Arab; she is a French woman), but deeply connected by something that is "beyond" any cultural, linguistic, or identity dualisms: their feelings toward each other. A couple separated and at the same time united by the gaps between languages, continents, and world views; two individuals, "two places, and two continents…in the territory between their two languages…" (Khatibi 1990:14). The narrator presents himself as a bilingual Maghrebian male subject who finds himself in a position of constant negotiation between his mother tongue (Arabic) and the language that is temporally the language of the other (French), the former

colonizers' language, but that also happens to be the language of his beloved one in the story. And also, a language that at some point turns to be his as well. However, this dynamic process of fusion and separation between languages and cultures that characterizes the relationship between French and Arabic lovers in the text is by no means peaceful in Khatibi's text. In this sense, if I dare to transcribe one of the questions that seems to be constantly haunting his hazy narrative in the novel, it would be: *what is the protocol of behavior to a relation of love and anger?* As Khatibi manages to show, this broad questioning touches the complex mix of feelings characterizing not only complicated love stories, but also the complex relationship of the postcolonial bilingual subject with both his mother tongue and the foreign language.

If at times the amnesia forced upon him by his use of French language comes to separate him from his native culture and generate confusion, at other times, this sense of memory loss "becomes a symbol of liberation, allowing him to sever signs from their origins and to invent a fluid bilingual discourse"[117] (Khatibi 1990:66). Especially in the initial part of the book, the narrator's discourse towards his lover illustrates the experience of this kind of bilingual discourse that allows "words and signifiers, as well as their attendant cultural implications" to be "detached from their roots and" to "become intermingled in a plural, sensual encounter" (Hiddleston 2005:103). At some moments, the lovers' discourse is thus characterized by this

[117] Given the symbol and texture-filled, and sometimes bewildering nature of the narrative in AB, it seems a worthwhile effort to briefly resort to some of Khatibi's other writings in which he also gives some centrality to the issue of bilingualism. Because his mother was illiterate, his relation with Arabic was already disjunctive – something Khatibi narrates in more details in LMT, where he tells how his memories of the mother's language were interrupted by the memory of learning Arabic – the written language of 'the Book' – in the Koranic school in Morocco (Khatibi 1971). Arabic is his mother tongue [*langue maternelle*], but it has in someway lost its association with the mother in a process that already contains a sense of alienation. If Arabic was first a dialectal spoken language intermingled with the figure of the mother and that later suffered a disjunction with the arrival of the classical Arabic from the sacred Book (the Koran), the encounter with French language followed the opposite direction. Khatibi tells us that French was first a silent language, a mandatory discipline when he started at the Franco-Muslim school in 1945. This "aphasic" situation of his persisted until, "at a certain age", he and the others "were forced to read what was first unreadable, undecipherable" and, he confesses, "I think that the love of the illegible has left a strong trace in the memory of this sonorous and vocally emotional child" ((Khatibi 2007:43). Thus, he first learned French as a written language and only later started his spoken engagements with it. "[A]s we do not speak as a book, everything started all over again"[117]– he tells us (Khatibi 2007:44). To this matter, Khatibi also highlights that the first diglossia of the bilingual Maghrebian Arab who writes in French is not between these two languages, but between the oral and the written, "the inaugural mother tongue and the language of the Islamic law" – the one he calls the language of "the Fathers-name and of the sacred scripture" (Khatibi 1983[1981]:188). French language is thus a third code that arrives later on, turning this already complicated picture into an even more complex one.

reckless and light-hearted abandonment of conventions, reflecting their hopes for communication and fusion. On page 18 one can read: "Double wandering: we laughed, we sobbed. When we made love, two countries made love". However, the intermingling of one language with another is highly complicated, and it is also associated with silence, untranslatability, and the frustration that may come along with it. In this sense, the sea – at times identified as the Mediterranean Sea – constantly appears as a metaphor for movement, wandering, but also for the confusion between the mother language and the foreign language, between the mother (*la mère*, in French) and the sea (*la mer*)[118] – the sort of misunderstanding, or, to draw on Rosello's (2005) terminology, performative dis-junction, that often occur in "linguistic encounters"[119].

Bilingualism – and the specific bilingualism between Arab and French – is thus just one of the many possible scenarios considering the plural he recounts the linguistic encounter between Arabic and French, bringing to the fore the complexity of bilingualism in ways that are not confined to the encounter of languages, but to the mix of feelings and reactions generated in the in-between languages:

> When I speak to you in your language, what happens to mine? Does my language continue to speak, but in silence? Because it is never eliminated from this moments. When I speak to you I feel the flow of my mother tongue divided into two streams: one is gutturally silent, the other, running on empty, unmakes itself with an implosion into the disorder of bilingualism. I don't know how to say the whole chain of names and sounds of my native speech, born as I was in the mouth of an invisible god, this chain, similar to a speech impediment, which destroys itself and then comes back backward, stammering. It's then that I lose my words, forgetting which one belongs to which language.
> Language has its own incalculable reasons. Language strikes, blow for blow, with a deaf energy. …I speak to you with despair, for the pleasure of understanding you. How ironic! Your mother tongue gave you to me and is probably more attached to me than you (Khatibi, p.41).

Relatedly, the narrator seems to alert the reader, there is no peace in myths of origin when one embraces the blurred confusion, discomfort but also privileged

[118] In the original French version: "Il écrivait 'mer' ou 'mort' au lieu de 'mère', et ce trouble était déjà son récit. Il voulait s'enchaîner à la langue, avant d'en tresser la pensée pour toute bi-langue" (AB 1990:43).

[119] Mireille Rosello theorizes about "linguistic encounters", as a sort of "dynamic point of contact […] a multilayered series of confrontations between the subject an at least one language, but also between several languages and several types of languages" (2005:81). In La Mémoire Tatouée, for example, Khatibi talks about different types of language, including the language of the tribe (tribu), the language of the body, in which he includes the tattooed body as a metaphor for embodied memories. In this matter, Rosello also reminds us of Assia Djebar's notion of the 4th language, that of the body. See Rosello 2005; Khatibi 1971.

view point of being in-between languages: "I discovered no total language, no common origin… [t]his situation perplexed me [and]…denied me any and all unity" (Khatibi 1990:28). In this sense, the epigraph appears as one of the richest moments in the text in what touches this ambivalent condition of the bilingual Franco-Maghrebian subject in the postcolonial context. It is the moment when the narrator introduces the "bi-langue" as both his "luck" and "own individual abyss" (Khatibi, p. 5), and refers to situations of neither all-encompassing communion nor absolute difference and separation, but an awareness of the irresolute intersection that often occurs in linguistic encounters. Khatibi/the narrator presents himself as that fortunate writer who can (only) love, think, take pleasure "in the space or interval opened by his need…to hear/see/write in both languages at once" (Bensmaïa 2003:104):

> Bi-langue? My luck, my own individual abyss and my lovely amnesiac energy. An energy I don't experience as a deficiency, curiously enough. Rather, it's my third ear. Had I experienced some kind of breakdown, I liked to think I would have developed in the opposite direction, I would have grown up in the dissociation peculiar to any unique language. That's why I admire the gravity of the blind man's gestures and the desperate impossible love the deaf man has for language (Khatibi 1990:5)

Khatibi's bi-langue is a third space (or ear) that does not imply a beforehand choice, that is to say, the subject in question does not choose to be bilingual. It refers to the situation in which the Franco-Maghrebian subject needs to learn how to deal with her condition of being in-between languages, world views and cultures. In this sense, Khatibi's AB is not only a narrative about loss (of origins, of the mother tongue), but about loss *and* recovery, and their constant interplay in the various dimensions and contingencies of one's life. The bi-langue is therefore different from bilingualism– although it can certainly be understood as one possible outcome of one's encounters with different languages and one's own reflections upon linguistic encounters. Because it stems from the fact that French remains an object of attraction and repulsion but also of constant attention and fascination, his relationship with the bi-langue can only be one of an unstable nature. Thus, the bi-langue denotes inexorable motion and highlights the tensions between the communicable and the incommunicable in languages and in human relations in a broader sense, it is also different from the pacified or idealized space that might emerge out of dialectical systems (Rosello 2005; Khatibi 1990:20, 35). In Rosello's

words, it can be more properly characterized as "an unstable and elusive non-space, the tension between two languages", or "another name for a performative encounter" (Rosello 2005:78).

If Khatibi describes the bi-langue as a kind of "translation machine" (Khatibi 1990:49), Rèda Bensmaïa is enthusiastic enough to conceive it as a "revolutionary kind of translation" in his own interpretation of Khatibi's novel (Bensmaïa 2003:107). According to Bensmaïa, it relates with the constant effort to overcome the anxieties of being in-between languages and the pursuit of a "revolutionary kind of translation" which allows one to "[pull] the French language calligraphy (…) [and make] constant use of 'spacing'", while it is also able to make "it see/hear the other language (Arabic) in the between-two-languages, in the breach opened by this very spacing, without ever returning to a simple point of origin" sourced in any of these or other Maghrebian languages (Bensmaïa 2003:107,108). In other words, Khatibi "wants to make language *loucher* (to look cross-eyed)" (Bensmaïa 2003:108; see Khatibi 1971:69).

From this broad perspective, Khatibi's notion of the bi-langue is important to understand what he calls "mad identities" [*identités folles*], that is, those that resist the constraints of dualistic frameworks in bounded systems such as language, nation and culture – as in French *versus* Arabic, colonizer *versus* colonized, traditional *versus* modern, national *versus* foreign, authentic *versus* non-authentic, inside *versus* outside approaches – for it opens space (a sort of "third space") for re-thinking questions of belonging, sameness, and difference in a more nuanced way. When the narrator resorts to the image of the couple's intercourse, for example (Khatibi 1990:18), he brings texture to the claim that, no matter the violence implied in nation-states and cultural borders of any kind, and no matter the discourses of origins and purity contained in the uses of French language in both France and Maghrebian countries, hegemonic politics and discourses of identity usually find their limits in the realm of encounters – that is, when people's everyday lives are included in the picture. In his narrative of the Franco-Maghrebian encounter, Khatibi thus draws our attention to those individuals whose lives are already connected to both shores of the Mediterranean, in despite of nation-state, cultural, and/or linguistic borders. The hyphen in "Franco-Maghrebian" is a constant presence, however – sometimes more sometimes less visible –, simultaneously uniting and separating individuals in the realms of everyday encounters, that is to

say, in the enactment of their individual and social protocols – which, of course, include repetition but also unpredictability and potential change (Rosello 2005).

In this sense, the key element of the kind of "revolutionary translation" the bi-langue seems to imply is the possibility of creating spaces where languages can meet without merging. In other words, spaces "where graphic gestures confront each other without a reconciling osmosis or synthesis", and where the issue of "belonging to (at least) two languages burst theoretically and practically" and overcomes the previous hierarchical and "Manichean vision of language and (cultural, ethnic, religious, and national) identity" in the context of Maghrebian literature (Bensmaïa 2003:104). By calling attention to "the strangeness, or foreignness inhabiting every language" Khatibi's bi-langue thus discloses the inadequacy of those approaches that presuppose that both language and text constitute closed systems. If one takes into account the context when Khatibi was writing, the political meaning of his insight becomes clear, as Woodhull points out, in the ways it challenges the hegemonic concept of Francophone literature "supported by the structure of French departments in the United States, where the one 'Francophone' specialist (if there is one at all)" is supposed to be capable of covering a vast and heterogeneous field of literatures in French – which, or course, includes the literatures of the former colonies (Woodhull 1993:29). In addition, "the bi-langue counters the complementary concept of an authentic, autonomous Maghrebian literature in Arabic" (Woodhull, p. 29).

In another level of Khatibi's narrative, however, the bi-langue also appears in connection with the narrator's pursuit of a "thought of nothingness" (Khatibi 1990:5). Bi-langue, his "chance of exorcism" (Khatibi 1990:66), is also synonym for "[f]reedom of a happiness which divides…[him] in two, but in order to educate…in thoughts of nothingness"; for, he continues, "I know nothing and this nothing is twofold"[120] (Khatibi 1990:5). This is the point, at least in my view, that

[120] This seems to be the moment when Khatibi connects his deconstructionist concept of bi-langue with his broader intellectual project towards decolonization, which can be translated in his own terms as the pursuit of "another thinking" [*pensée autre*] (Khatibi [1981]1983). In *Maghreb Pluriel*, Khatibi describes the main features of this mode of thought that is still in the realm of the yet-to-come, it is still a promise, but that should be an horizon for thinking otherness without excluding the other(s) in question. In this sense, his strong remark that "the nothing" in this thought of nothingness is "twofold" can both relates with his plea for communication in opposition to closure, but also to his notion of "double critique" – that is, a critique of both the Islamic and the Occidental heritage as means to rethink postcolonial Maghreb. See discussion in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Khatibi's deconstructionist concept of bi-langue exposes the ambivalent situation of the Franco-Maghrebian subject/writer more openly. If, on the one hand, his strong assertion that "the nothing" in this thought of nothingness is "twofold" denotes communication in opposition to closure towards otherness. That is, it may refer to an specific understanding of the contact zone between culturally different others, in which there seems to be no attachment to one's roots as absolute truths and, similarly, no clear expectations beyond a strong commitment with contingency. On the other hand, the notion of nothingness always runs the risk of emptying out otherness to the point at which the other is turned into an elusive, ahistorical frame of reference (Woodhull 1993).

The dangers in elusive conceptions of otherness becomes clear in one specific passage of AB: "I like all languages, therefore, all races", the narrator proclaims when remembering one specific scene out of the many he has witnessed in his life as a traveller: that of a black man in a café in New York. He continuous: "that black man there, to whom was he speaking? Wasn't it as though he had become white? But color is first of all a name" (Khatibi 1990:9). Khatibi's narrative in the novel does not give a clear hint of the time when the main male character has travelled to New York, what leaves the reader with an ambiguous feeling, for the "black man" in this scene could be either transgressing the boundaries of racial inequality in a 1950-60s United States (by openly raising his voice and opinions in a public space usually frequented by white people), or simply playing the role of the difference that the narrator-self simply wants to avoid when turning it into a non-difference, into a "void" ("I like *all* languages, therefore, *all* races"). If the second case is the case, his affirmation of esteem for all languages and all races and his very depiction of language and race (two common signifiers for difference) as bearing a similar weight, end up by effacing all the violence that encounters may also generate. The narrator in AB does not bother to clarify though. In short, this passage in the text does not do any justice to the realm of difference (in terms of both inequality in positions and divergence in world views and claims) between/among different ones. Thus, echoing Woodhull's words, one's declared awareness of the other's complexity does not exempt one from falling into some dimension of the trap of seeing all difference as *equally* different, and then turning difference into an empty, "prediscursive" signifier (Woodhull 1993:xii), that is, into a label detached from

the worldliness of people's political positions, demands, claims of truth, and the possibilities and contradictions coming out of these manifestations.

This ambivalence towards otherness is constantly evoked throughout Khatibi's narrative. The narrator seems to be constantly asking himself whether (or to what extent) one can really detach himself from his own history – especially in situations when the experience of loss and traumatic memories tend to prevail, as in the case of colonized subjects –, his preconceptions, and thus adopt a truly open attitude towards difference and towards the other – especially in situations when the other is the former colonizer. Here, if the bi-langue appears as "his chance of exorcism" (Khatibi 1990:66), the ghost of the mother tongue and the memories of loss it evokes are also present in the story. There is a rupture in this sense dividing the novel in two – and the narrator's voice explicitly tells the reasons of such division. Nonetheless, it is not a neat division between before and after, for the narrator's memories keep emerging in a non-linear logic, but a gap (almost a sight) in the narrator's voice that seems to perform the moment of the romantic couple's breakup. The second part of the book is thus a reflection about this separation, the end of the love story. It is also where the realm of the colonial difference between the French woman and the Moroccan man speaks louder.

Thus, in the first part of the narrative there seems to be a pretended obliteration of the asymmetry of the encounter between the two main characters in the name of their love – something the narrator describes as an "ambiguous solitude" (Khatibi 1990:40) and that comes across as a kind of odd hospitality of the self in order to remain opened towards the beloved other. In the second part, in contrast, forgetfulness is unambiguously replaced by hypermnesia and by the grief emanating from colonial difference. The narrator's reflection on the breakup (with the French woman/language) thus brings to surface the other ghostly presence that remained covered by the symbol-filled layers of the love story and the narrator's (at times suspiciously unproblematic and detached) wandering across continents and languages: "Humiliation which connected me with the humiliation of my people (for I had a people!) …I was wretched on my own account and no one owed me anything" (Khatibi 1990:76). At some points of this second moment in Khatibi's narrative, the reader may have the impression that, at the end of the day, the narrator felt he had the moral duty of choosing for *his* language and his people over the beloved one – who unfortunately could not adapt herself or accept his culture as he

constantly tried to do when it came to hers[121]. "She had disappeared in her language" – the narrator regrets (Khatibi, p. 102). For, despite his bilingual condition and his gestures aiming at a re-signification of the encounter between languages and cultures that has characterized his life (his movements towards the bi-langue), there is, and there will always be, a realm of colonial difference operating (and even stronger than any misunderstanding and silence they may have had to cope with) between them: "I was never, am never the master" (Khatibi 1990:93). Nonetheless, as the story in AB highlights uncountable times, there is no possible turning back, for the trace of the other will always be there, in a constant movement of completion and suppression, and along with it there will always be the unpredictability of the encounters, for:

> [w]hen desire is satisfied, it's appropriate to accompany the forgetting and the desolation, not so that the other will be extravagantly obliterated, but for an extenuation of the pain. To ignore such movement, such necessity for completion and suppression of the self in the other is the same as not recognizing the ordeal of love, its devastating truth, the fright, the magnificent fearfulness of how it turns back on itself. This love is rare, terrible, and faces the unnameable (Khatibi, p.76)

Therefore, if we return to Bensmaïa's reading of Khatibi's novel, his celebratory tone when addressing Khatibi's attempts to "white out" French language in AB seems to overstate the latter's inclination (or intent) to distance himself from his own "origins" and, I would add, from the recognition of the colonial difference operating between and among Francophone subjects in the

[121] Here, it is interesting to notice that the only time the narrator mentions the French woman's attempts to talk in Arabic, it comes across as an example of humiliation for him (as it recalls to his experience as a former colonized subject) and of the realm of colonial difference that seems to be always there in-between the two lovers: "I liked the fact that she maintained this distance, that she always spoke to me formally. When she used *vous*, she did so with a sovereign charm. However, the day she spoke Arabic in a familiar manner to a maid, it sounded so fierce that I felt my dialect had humbled. She was face to face with that which had so humiliated me when I was a child. She was trembling, all the more because she didn't guess that such a humiliation, far from diminishing, grew between us as it ravaged our conniving sincerity. It's certain that between two languages the use of *tu* is intractable. To say that at this moment the tricks of language are what's at stake in this defeat and that the incommunicable was our pretty fatality in no way diminishes these gripping moments where, despite delicacy, a poignant pain was pitilessly at work. And although I realized that there had been misunderstandings – and they weren't exclusively that – I didn't think of not playing with humiliation, of not spiriting away its destructive force. This naiveté was without issue. What I was suffering, what I was paying for my past and my people, escaped her and that was dangerous. The French language will have been for me this passion for the untranslatable. She herself, neglected by the powers of her childhood, fed on this humiliation which could only unhinge her" (Khatibi 1990:63).

France-Maghreb (dis)connection. According to Bensmaïa, the idea of "whiting out" French language is not only connected to the more technical textual strategy of spacing – that is, of making use of "the disruptive power of Arabic calligraphy in a French linguistic context" by "increasing the intervals" of the supposedly "foreign language" and, by doing so, clearing "an unprecedented space where what is called the mother tongue can make itself heard" (Bensmaïa 2003:119). There is also a simple metaphorical sense that stems from the very expression "whiting out" which is connected to a movement of "wresting it [French language] from a history in which it had become synonymous with deculturation and/or acculturation" (Bensmaïa 2003:119). This second sense, Bensmaïa highlights, is crucial for alleviating "the guilt Maghrebi writers feel when they resort to the 'paper language'… that French represents for them" (Bensmaïa 2003:119). This would make the rules for a "(new) game of languages" – the bi-langue – which brings about a new sense of "(psychological and sexual) identity" [122] and "(national and cultural) belonging" that is beyond grammatical and linguistic games (Bensmaïa 2003:119). In my view, however, what gives substance to this "paragrammatical dimension" of Khatibi's work is not this presumed chance of detaching French language from the history of violence it has inflicted upon Maghrebian societies, but precisely Khatibi's hypermnesia about his experiences of loss as a Moroccan Arab bilingual subject. Hypermnesia is what nurtures his grief, yes, but also his anxiety to invent a new language – or new languages – to narrate and possibly overcome such condition.

Thus, the "hypermnesic" condition to the narrator in the novel resorts in order to describe the Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial writer's condition is also (and paradoxically) what turns French language into "the instrument of a new mental topography, what Khatibi calls *une pensée autre*, a way of thinking differently or otherwise" (Bensmaïa 2003:119). It is neither an effacement of (or total overcoming from) the colonial wound left by the imposition of a foreign language by the French colonizer nor an easy celebration of cultural hybridization or of the liberating power contained in the use of French language in the post-independence context. To resort

[122] The reference for this new sexual identity is the androgyne, a figure constant evoked in Khatibi's writings which appears in AB. This figure might be interpreted as emblematic of Khatibi's ongoing effort to question binary oppositions and think beyond categories such as male/female, man/woman to explore other possibilities in what regards identities, sexualities and expressions of love.

to Khatibi's words in his homonymous essay *Pensée-Autre*, it is a "thought of the 'us'", a way of thinking which is not "ethnocidal" precisely because it recognizes the ontological status of the contact zone and despises any notion of self-sufficiency[123]. And, for that reason, it is always oriented towards what/who is "minority, marginal, fragmentary and incomplete" (Khatibi [1981]1983:17-18).

To what matters to our discussion, Khatibi's novel reveals, among other things, "a desire to bridge the abyss between his native language [already a transcription of Berber dialect into Arabic] and the imposed language and culture of the West" (McNeece 1993:16) in ways that not only remind the reader of the lingering effects of colonial violence, but also of the creative potential of cultural and linguistic encounters – even in situations marked by a great degree of violence and dispossession, i.e. colonial encounters (Rosello 2005). In sum, if at times Khatibi's narrative "celebrates the creative potential of linguistic interaction, encouraging the writer or poet to open his or her language to the echoes and traces of other idioms and signs", at others, it "laments the loss caused by the invasion of colonial culture" and the lingering memories of such loss (Hiddleston 2005:98).



## 4.3 **Jacques Derrida and Monolingual Alterity in Colonial Algeria**

Jacques Derrida [1930-2004] structures *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre* (1996)[124] around his experience of "autobiographical anamnesis" as a Franco-Maghrebian subject and the "double interdict" this entailed during his life on both shores of the Mediterranean. Whereas Derrida once affirmed that, in a way, every text is autobiographical (Deângeli 2012), MA is where the author uses a more evident autobiographical "I" voice. The double interdict to which Derrida resorts in his narrative refers to, on one hand, his situation of being interdicted access to any non-French language of Algeria (e.g. Arabic, Berber), hence his paradoxical effort

[123] It is interesting how in *Pensée-Autre*, in despite of declaring that the Maghreb is his main "horizon du pensée", Khatibi usually resorts to broader notions of "margins" such as the Third World, the "undeveloped societies of the globe" and the necessity of a "global thought" [*pensée planetaire*] against the dominance of both Western Metaphysics and Islamic Theology.

[124] Derrida's *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre* results from a shorter text presented in the occasion of a colloquium entitled "Echoes from Elsewhere" (*Renvois d'ailleurs*) hosted by Edouard Glissant in 1992 at the Louisiana State University. The event was dedicated to the effort of thinking the conditions of *la francophonie* outside France, and from linguistic, literary, political, and/or cultural points of view. In the opening page of his book, Derrida also mentions an earlier version of the paper presented in Louisiana (USA) which had been read at a colloquium organized at the Sorbonne by the International College of Philosophy. See Derrida 1998.

of translating into "the only French culture [he had] at [his] disposal"; i.e. the monolanguage. On the other hand, and maybe more explicitly, it also refers to the loss of his status of French citizen when it was stripped from him, like other Jews of Algeria, during the Second World War. In this vein, one way of reading Derrida's narrative in MA is by giving it the status of as a testimony of the exile of Algerian Jews in the "monolanguage of the other", and the persistent mark such exile imprints in one's language[125]and body.

When referring to the episode when the Crémieux decree of 1870 awarding French citizenship to the Algerian Jews was revoked for two years during the Vichy regime, in the context of the Second World War, Derrida tells to his reader how the Algerian Jews were alienated from the language and culture to which they supposedly belong. He testifies the embodiment of the feeling of being "hostages of the French". The mark or sign he is talking about is, however, one that paradoxically resembles a trace, something that does not need to be externally evident, but that stays with him: "something of it remains with me, no matter how much I travel", he seems to confess (Derrida 1998:17). Thus, among other possible interpretations, Derrida's MA can be also read as an account on questions of belonging that slithers away from the overused and problematic category of identity, and that focus on the question of language and affiliation spinning from the explorations of his autobiographical anamnesis as a Franco-Maghrebian subject/writer. In his own words, "autobiographical anamnesis presupposes identification", and "precisely not identity", for "an identity is never given, received, or attained; only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures" (Derrida 1998:27) – a sentence that already gestures towards his deconstructionist conception of language[126]. At the same time, as in



[125] As in: 'One entered French literature only by losing one's accent. I think I have not lost my accent; not everything in my "French Algerian" accent is lost. Its intonation is more apparent in certain "pragmatic" situations (anger or exclamation in familial or familiar surroundings, more often in private than in public, which is a quite reliable criterion for the experience of this strange and precarious distinction). But I would like to hope, I would very much prefer, that no publication permit my "French Algerian" to appear. In the meantime, and until the contrary is proven, I do not believe that anyone can detect by reading, if I do not myself declare it, that I am a "French Algerian." (1998:45-6)

[126] In MA, language appears as slippery and excessive, rendering meanings that always elude. One cannot possess language, as much as one cannot fully grasp meanings, since texts and meanings are, according to Derrida (1998), always and essentially unresolved, founded on a "irreducible" complexity, an absence disguised as presence, "an interminable delaying" (Derrida 2001:202) or deferral of meaning that he calls *différance*. See Derrida 1998; 2001.

Khatibi's novel, the "association of [French] republican and, by extension, colonial identity with linguistic unity" is not only put in tension but recast through a consideration of the complexities intervening between the subject and the languages she/he uses (Hiddleston 2005:91). As he attests right in the first pages of *MA*, "[w]e never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom" (Derrida 1998:8).

Derrida's MA is an avowed opportunity for the author to dialogue with his friend Khatibi about a common theme between them as Francophone Maghrebian writers: the mother tongue/language. Derrida marvels in front of Khatibi's easiness to affirm that he *has* a mother tongue. "[H]e does not seem to recoil from the words 'mother tongue'… He even asserts the possessive, which is yet another issue. He dares to" (Derrida 1998:36). Khatibi's mother tongue, Derrida explains, is certainly not French and he uses another language, precisely French language, to write and say of his mother tongue and to latter confess that it "lost" him (See Khatibi 1990). His Moroccan friend, who did not have to invent "a language for the *grievance*", therefore, thus had the possibility (perhaps the privilege) of saying "my mother tongue" with no regrets or hesitation, whereas he, Derrida, did not (Derrida 1998:36). In this sense, Derrida seems to put not only his own approach to French language in contrast to his friend's, but also his experience of marginality as a Franco-Maghrebian colonized subject. Because Khatibi had access not only to a language which he could call without grief "my mother tongue" and, later on, after being alphabetized in French, he could call himself a bilingual subject, Derrida see his friend as someone occupying a privileged position in comparison to his own position: a "hostage" of French language and hegemony disguised as universality (Deângeli 2012). Khatibi's narrator's testimony in AB thus comes to remind the narrator of MA, in his own words, of "the tale I tell myself, *the intrigue whose representative I am here*, or whose *victim*, as other will too quickly say" (Derrida 1998:35, my emphasis).

Derrida's book starts with two simultaneous and paradoxical assertions, "I only have one language; it is not mine" ['*Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne'*] (Derrida 1998:1 [1996:13]). The contradiction implied here is his first gesture toward his conception of monolingualism. In the "antinomical duplicity of this clause of belonging" (Derrida 1998:9), he tells that, as an Algerian Jew born and educated during the years of French colonial rule, he only speaks French. And yet, he feels that he does not fully possess or belong to such language, as it is first

and foremost the language of the other, the colonizer. French was the language coming from the distant *métropole* and carrying its own interdicts, representing a culture that is other to Algerian locals. Derrida's sense of alienation from his own language thus reflects the duality of his experience as a Franco-Maghrebian Jew, for he both is and is not at home [*chez-soi*] in the French language – since French is and is not his "mother tongue". "My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak", he confesses, "is the language of the other" (Derrida 1998:25). According to Derrida, the colonial project in Algeria was such that the Algerian Jews relationship with their language was characterized mainly by alienation and loss, they were as if trapped in this position of occlusion.

Language, as well as identity or any related claim of belonging (e.g. citizenship, the mother tongue etc), therefore, is always "an immanent structure of promise or desire, an expectation" that only concretizes itself in a provisory manner (Derrida 1998:22). Nonetheless, even after avowedly claiming the condition of being "hostage" of a language and culture which are not his, Derrida still felt the need – or desire – to resort to some affiliation when he decides to introduce himself as "*the most* Franco-Maghrebian" subject. The tone, as Deângeli (2012) demarcates, is that of a testimony. The subject who testifies in MA then resorts to the category of "citizenship" to narrate and present himself – albeit in a "precarious, recent, threatened and more artificial than ever" way:

> You see, dear Abdelkebir, between the two of us, I consider myself to be the most Franco-Maghrebian, and perhaps even the only Franco-Maghrebian here. If I am mistaken, in error, or being misleading, then, well, I am certain someone will contradict me. I would then attempt to explain or justify myself in the best way I can. Let us look around us and classify, separate, and take things one group at a time.
> "A. Among us, there are Francophone French speakers who are not Maghrebian: French speakers from France, in a word, French citizens who have come here from France.
> "B. There are also among us some 'Francophones' who are neither French nor Maghrebian: Swiss, Canadians, Belgians, or Africans from various Central African countries.
> "C. Finally, among us there are French-speaking Maghrebians who are not and have never been French, meaning French citizens: yourself, for example, and other Moroccans or Tunisians.
> "Now, as you can see, I do not belong to any of these clearly defined groups. My 'identity' does not fall under any of these three categories. Where would I categorize myself then? What taxonomy should I invent?
> "My hypothesis is, therefore, that I am perhaps the only one here who can call himself at once a Maghrebian (which is not a citizenship) and a French citizen. One and the other at the same time. And better yet, at once one and the other by birth. Birth, nationality by birth, native culture - is that not our theme here? (Derrida 1998:12-13)

Perhaps, this latent necessity to invent a taxonomy to take account of the "identity" of this subject denotes the anxiety of someone who believes he only belongs to each of those clearly defined groups in a precarious way. As a member of the Jewish community in the Maghreb and as a subject who experienced both status of being and not-being a French citizen simultaneously, that is to say, by "[i]nhabiting neither the space of colonial privilege, nor the abjection of the colonized", Derrida ends up by claiming "a peculiar native and (post)colonial subject status" for himself (Sajed 2013:25). Nonetheless, his self-representation as "the most Franco-Maghrebian, and perhaps the only Franco-Maghrebian" (Derrida 1998:12), in fact, brings an intimate "sense of difference from both the French colonizer and from the colonized 'natives, and gestures towards a colonial identity experienced as agony" (Sajed 2013:25). If on the one hand such definition manages to subvert the privileged status of the "colonized", on the other hand, and paradoxically, it undoubtedly silences other experiences of marginality in the Franco-Algerian (or Franco-Maghrebian) encounter. Therefore, there seem to be two referents of otherness in his narrative: the colonizer-other and the native Algerian (probably Arab-speaker) colonized-other (see Derrida 1998:41-42). In this sense, the author's desire of exposing his own grief and trauma caused by the violence of French colonialism in Algeria nurtures his anxiety to destabilize the monolanguage from *within* (Derrida 1998:70), but also prevents him from acknowledging colonial difference beyond his own experience as a colonized-subject.

In this sense, and even more paradoxically, Derrida moves away from the specificities of the violence inflicted upon him as an Algerian Jew during French colonial rule in the Maghreb, and arrives at a generalization that turns his own testimony and critical assessment of the politics of the monolanguage blind to its very condition of possibility, that is, colonialism. "I would not like to make too easy use of the word 'colonialism'", he starts. Then he continues:

> *[a]ll culture is originarily colonial… Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some "politics" of language.* Mastery begins, as we know, through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appellations. We know how that went with French in France itself, in revolutionary France as much as, or more than, in monarchical France. This sovereign establishment [*mise en demeure souveraine*] may be open, legal, armed, or cunning, disguised under alibis of

> "universal" humanism, and sometimes of the most generous hospitality. It always follows or precedes culture like its shadow (Derrida 1998:39, emphasis added)

Considering the importance of his autobiographical voice (and the mark of the colonial wound that comes out of it) in the narrative, the paradox in this last assertion is such that it is immediately followed by a disclaimer about the colonial condition:

> The question here is not to efface the arrogant specificity or the traumatizing brutality of what is called modern colonial war in the "strictest definition" of the expression, at the very moment of military conquest, or when a symbolic conquest prolongs the war by other means. On the contrary. Certain people, myself included, have experienced colonial cruelty from two sides, so to speak. *But once again, it reveals the colonial structure of any culture in an exemplary way. It testifies to it in martyrdom, and "vividly"* [*en martyre, et "it vif"*]." (Derrida 1998:39, emphasis added)

Here, the exposure of "the traumatizing brutality" of modern colonialisms and their lingering effects assumes the role of mere examples – to which Derrida is *the* exemplary of a marginal subjectivity – that only "reveals the colonial structure of any culture" (1998:39), considerably effacing the specificity of inequalities among different ones. It is thus possible to notice that the movement from the universal to the particular in Derrida's narrative in MA is precarious and uneasy. One might wonder, for example, how the specific occlusion and dispossession of the Algerian Jews that haunts his whole narrative in MA differs from or spins off from the generalised alienation of all subjects he talks about. For Jane Hiddleston (2010), the explanation lies in the textual dimension of the narrative, where the tension between Derrida's autobiographical "I" voice and his theoretical voice comes across as ambivalence towards colonialism and colonial violence. If, on the one hand, Derrida needs to resort to his "I" voice and to the specificities of his own experience as colonized subject in order to explore the ways in which the hegemonic, colonial language attempted to preclude cultural difference; on the other hand, his "I" voice and his colonial experience needed to be suppressed in order to make room for his theoretical desire of "making something happen with French language" (Derrida 1998:51). This tension or ambivalence in his narrative, at least to my view, cannot be treated simply as belonging to the textual realm. Above all, Derrida's resistance to acknowledge the specificity of colonial violence and the effects of unequal colonial experiences indicates the complexities of colonial difference and,

importantly, "its enduring legacy in contemporary social and theoretical structures", including the ones to which Derrida is affiliated (Sajed 2013:25).

When Derrida claims that every culture is "always essentially colonial" (Derrida 1998:23), he is making the way for a universal statement that actually (and paradoxically) aims at disrupting universalisms. He then resorts to a kind of double-layered explanation of the monolingualism of the other, since it is anchored in a philosophical universalism and, at the same time, aims to expose the violent essence of any claim to universalism. The first meaning of the monolingualism of the other relates to the notion of "law as language", and refers to language as the law that is originated elsewhere and imposes itself as sovereign. As he points out, such imposition occurs in a way that encourages the belief that it could be property of the subject who receives it. In other words, it works as a myth of origin. "Its experience would be ostensibly *autonomous*", because the subject has to "speak this law and appropriate it in order to understand it as if" she/he was giving it to herself/himself" (Derrida 1998:39). However, as Derrida problematizes, this law exposes its "madness" when facing the inevitability of heteronomy or, in other words, the inevitability "the relationship to the other" (Derrida 1998:40). According to him, "[t]he monolingualism imposed by the (colonizer) other operates by relying upon that foundation", that is to say, "through *a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial*, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous" (1998:40). From this perspective, because this law "can be verified everywhere…at work in the culture, effacing the folds and flattening the text", at the end of the day, colonial violence does not hold any specificity. If the first meaning of monolingualism was set out to deconstruct the ethnocentrism of any sovereign language (e.g. culture, nation, Western philosophy etc), the second examines the alienation in language experienced by all speakers including those who claim an hegemonic position. He thus continues:

> the monolingualism of the other means another thing… that in any case we speak only one language – and that we do not own it…since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other (Derrida, p.40).

The universalism of this assertion thus serves to undermine the coloniser's claim to mastery, since it reminds us that no speaker possesses his language and culture. By "coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the

other", language always suppresses alterity without completely extinguishing it. Thus, interestingly enough, Derrida moves back from universalism to specificity in this analysis in order to argue that the generalized structure is what allows one to conceive the means by which "a specific colonial group [i.e. the colonizers] can concretise and literalise the other's alienation in its application of political policy" (Hiddleston 2010:39). Consequently, it may never be possible to "inhabit" or "possess" a language and, indeed, Derrida highlights that the colonizer is also alienated:

> "[f]or the contrary to what one is often most tempted to believe, the master is nothing. And he does not have exclusive possession of anything. Because the master does not possess exclusively, and *naturally*, what he calls his language, because, whatever he wants or does, he cannot maintain any relations of property or identity that are natural, national, congenital, or ontological, with it, because he can give substance to and articulate [dire] this appropriation only in the course of an unnatural process of politico-phantasmatic constructions, because language is not his natural possession, he can, thanks to that very fact, pretend historically, through the rape of a cultural usurpation, which means always essentially colonial, to appropriate it in order to impose it as "his own"(Derrida 1998:23).

When Derrida brings to the fore what he called a "prudent and differentiated universalisation" his aim is thus to take away the supposed mastery faculties away from "the master". To put it differently, and to connect it once again with the context of colonial and postcolonial Maghreb, French language holds no universality or right to truth beyond the phantasmatic traits of its own myths of origin and supposed universalism. This also holds true for the universal language sustaining Western knowledge and its inability to talk about the other without trying to assimilate her/him into its own totalizing structure sustained by claims of universalism[127] (see Derrida 1998b). Based on that, Derrida affirms the

[127] Jane Hiddleston (2010) brings an insightful summary of Derrida's explorations of the Western conception of language and its connections with the ethnocentric myth of language as the signifier of presence, in a nutshell, what he calls "Western logocentrism": "Logocentrism is the affirmation of presence in language; it names the privileging of phonetic writing, in which meaning is apparently unmediated and perfectly captured. This phonetic writing assumes that speech is primary, since it depends on the controlling presence of the speaker, and writing then mimics or follows speech, claiming in turn to signify presence. Derrida locates this privileging of the logos in philosophers from Plato to Hegel, and goes on to trace its development in Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau. His purpose, however, is not only to unravel a certain myth of language as the signifier of presence, but also to show that this is an ideology that both predominates specifically in 'the West' and that excludes and denies the cultural others that it cannot contain. For Derrida, 'l'écriture phonétique, milieu de la grande aventure métaphysique, scientifique, technique, économique de l'Occident, est limitée dans le temps et l'espace, se limite elle-même au moment précis où elle est en train d'imposer sa loi aux seules aires culturelles qui lui échappaient encore'. Logocentrism offers an illusion of presence, as if to signify control over meaning, but Derrida argues that this ideology fails to admit

impossibility of any absolute metalanguage or any claim to universal truth to which one can resort in order to address the other without first "introduc[ing] into it some translation and some objectification in progress" (1998:22). This is what he denounces as the "terror inside languages", every language (Derrida 1998:23). In other words, this is what allows him to voice not only that he is a "hostage of the French" – for he unsettlingly locates himself both within and outside French language –, but also that he is an "universal hostage" (Derrida 1998:17, 20). Nonetheless, at this point, the latent question is: how do we recognize singularity among plurals without turning this singularity once again into silence in the realms of the "universal law" or the "law of language"? In addition, considering both the inevitability and the impossibility of translation in the realm of the monolanguage, is there any – perhaps less violent – way of engaging others beyond the subject's "experience of monolingual solipsism" (Derrida 1998:22)?

The narrative in Derrida's MA evolves like an attempt of a reflexive and critical auto-ethnography in which the "I" voice allows the author to tell his traumatic memories as a Franco-Maghrebian Jew during colonial times in Algeria and how they are interwoven with his theoretical commitment at "making something happen to [French] language" (Derrida 1998:51). Nonetheless, Derrida could not help confess his "attachment to the French language", and how he "feel[s] lost outside" it. When he expresses his language's "resistance to translation", however, the reference is not only to the more superficial trait of his monolingual condition (that is, the fact that he is a French speaker and that he only speaks French) (1998:56). In Rey Chow's reading, Derrida performs a kind of surrender in his narrative in MA, but less as an "acceptance of defeat by an enemy" than "an affirmative, binding gesture of submitting to the force of an inexorable, impersonal other" (Chow 2014:30). In his description of his encounter with French literary culture, for example, it comes across as a situation of "captivation – an uncertain combination of love and capture" (Kotrosits 2016:432):

> I seemed to be harpooned by French philosophy and literature, the one and the other, the one or the other: wooden or metallic darts [fleches], a penetrating body of enviable, formidable, sentences which it was necessary to appropriate, domesticate, or coax [amadouer], that is to say, love by setting them on fire… (Derrida 1998:50)

its own situatedness, and the intractable, inassimilable meanings that lie beyond its reach. Derrida's endeavour will be to supplement Eurocentric and logocentric philosophy with an ethical call for attention to the multiple others it seeks to assimilate" (Hiddleston 2010:24).

There is a much deeper question when Derrida takes issue with the limits of translation, but that he will only name and properly engage a few pages later in MA: the "ipseity of the host" (Derrida 1998:61). The notion of ipseity is intimately connected to his view of the communication process as it appears on the pages of MA, in which the other is turned into a ghostly presence, a promise, for the subject's desire of speaking and being fully comprehended by the other is never fulfilled in the erratic movements of *différance* (see Deângeli 2012). The other cannot be fully comprehended in the particularities of her/his own language, which turns her/him into an unsurmountable limit. Through this same rationale, the subject's desire for an original ("prior-to-the first") or an universal metalanguage "destined to translate…memory" and to come to grips with the inevitable realm of the "undecidable" between/among different singulars is thus not only utopic but "unsettling". For it "can always run the risk of becoming or wanting to another language of the master, sometimes that of new masters" (Derrida 1998:61-62). Derrida thus writes:

> It is at each instant of writing or reading, at each moment of poetic experience that the decision must arise against a background of the undecidable [...]. As a condition of the decision as well as that of responsibility, the undecidable inscribes threat in chance, and *terror in the ipseity of the host* (Derrida, p.62).

The question that hits me, however, is why the "ipseity of the host", this sort of pre-discursive difference has to necessarily lead to the feeling of "terror" and anxiety in Derrida. Why not curiosity? Identification? Solidarity? It comes across as if his recognition of the inescapability of the "undecidable" or the "untranslatable" in every relation has already settled the outcome of any encounter with difference. This way, if, on the one hand, the notion of the ipseity of the host in Derrida comes along with the ethics of responsibility he is trying to put forward, which stands as the caution to avoid the adoption of a "master language" disguised as universality; on the other hand, this ethics of responsibility that holds back the desire of speaking *for* others (and, not rarely, to speak *with* others) bears the danger of becoming a radical solipsism that prevents one from meaningfully engaging with other voices and other world views[128]. As Sajed highlights, when this kind of radical

[128] On page 14 of MA (English version), Derrida asserts: "If I have indeed revealed the sentiment of being the only Franco-Maghrebian here or there, that does not authorize me to speak in the name of anyone, especially not about some Franco-Maghrebian entity whose identity remains in question. (…) Our question is still identity. What is identity, this concept of which the transparent identity to itself is always dogmatically presupposed by so many debates on monoculturalism or

reflexivity becomes the rule, "what emerges is an apologia for self-referentiality (masked as the transparency or effacing of the subject) on account of the subject being able to speak only for himself, so that the other might be allowed their own voice" (Sajed 2013:31). Put differently, rather than creating the conditions for making power relations more visible and mobilizing the writer-subject's self-awareness to be forthright about contentions and contradictions reflexivity[129] here bears an implicit (and paradoxical) sense of authority. It becomes an odd and paradoxical "recolonizing gesture", in which the (Western) critic "chooses to engage with the other without presumption of patronage" –as if she/he could somehow "absolving" herself/himself "of the responsibility for the brutality of history" – and attributes to himself/herself the "right to grant the other 'permission to narrate her (hi)story" (Varadharajan 1995:xvi-xvii). Another effect of this modality of reflexivity is implying that the "other" necessarily "constitutes a 'barrier of some sort" (Sajed 2013:31). Also, it is in consonance with Azzedine Haddour's (2000) fierce critique regarding Derridean notions of dissemination. Haddour claims that "reducing difference to an ongoing play of differentiation neutralizes and attenuates the agency and subjectivity of the other, effectively reducing it to a homogeneous category of sameness (Haddour 2000 in Hiddleston 2009:63).

In addition, there seems to be a particular "ghostly" presence performing the role of a radical dimension of otherness in Derrida's MA. His experience of marginality and alienation as part of the community of indigenous Jews in Algeria is predominantly narrated in comparison with this specific group or "others" among the constellation of other groups compounding the social and cultural landscape of Algeria and of Maghreb region. The Arab others are the ones with whom Derrida shares a dimension of sameness in their condition as colonial and marginal subjects in an Algeria under French colonization. However, there seems to be a two-layers

multiculturalism, nationality, citizenship, and, in general, belonging? And before the identity of the subject, what is ipseity? The latter is not reducible to an abstract capacity to say "I," which it will always have preceded. Perhaps it signifies, in the first place, the power of an "I can," which is more originary than the "I" in a chain where the "pse" of ipse no longer allows itself to be dissociated from power, from the mastery and sovereignty of the hospes (here, I am referring to the semantic chain that works on the body of hospitality as well as hostility- hostis, hospes, hosti-pet, posis, despotes, potere, potis sum, possum, pote est, potest, pot sedere, possidere, compos, etc ). To be a Franco-Maghrebian, one " like myself," is not, not particularly, and particularly not, a surfeit or richness of identities, attributes, or names. In the first place, it would rather betray a disorder of identity [trouble d'identité] (Derrida 1998:14).

[129] See: Jackson 2011, especially p. 167.

differentiation at play between the Algerian Jew colonized and the Arab colonized in the narrative. The first layer of this differentiation is performed by the politics of language in colonial Algeria, one that turned Arabic and Berber (to begin with) into elided and alien languages in the country's educational system during French rule. Even though Derrida resists in acknowledging the specificity of colonial violence this first layer of differentiation between French-speaker colonized and Arabic-/Berber-speaker is already inscribed into the realm of colonial difference. The second layer of this differentiation is a silent one, but it is still there as a "phantom-like" [*fantomal*] presence (Derrida 1998:42) that supplies his undeclared need of differentiation in order to remain "closer" to the language he confesses he has surrendered to. He confides:

> this privilege did not come without a certain strange and confused proximity. Sometimes *I wonder whether this unknown language is not my favorite language.* The first of my favorite languages. And like each of my favorite languages (for I confess to having more than one), *I especially like to hear it outside of all "communication," in the poetic solemnity of the chant or prayer.* Consequently, 'it will be all the more difficult for me to show that the French language was also equally forbidden to us. Equally but differently, I admit (Derrida 1998:41-42).

His fascination of the other interdicted language, Arabic, is what turns the Algerian Arab into a category of sameness as, paradoxically, the exotic at this point of his narrative. The Arab is the other colonized within French Algeria and an elusive presence who becomes the limit of his comprehension in MA. The Arab other in Derrida can only be addressed "outside of all communication", for it is constituted as the unsurmountable limit to the same Western discourse's language/knowledge Derrida wants to subvert (but to which he paradoxically has always to return). The Arab other only speaks meaningfully in Derrida's MA when it comes to his friend Khatibi, a bilingual Arab Moroccan intellectual who happened to be strongly influenced by both Western and Islamic canons, and to write and publish in French. This definition of otherness – or the language of the (Arab) other – as something "outside of all communication" implicates in detaching the other from his/her reality and paralysing him/her into "a stereotypical frame of difference and exoticism" that turns the other into an object of desire aimed to fulfill one's needs for differentiation and "utopian inspiration" (Sajed 2013:31). Derrida's own privileged position – as a Francophone French citizen, even though he was provisory divested from this citizenship – in relation to other Maghrebian colonized subjects in Algeria escapes scrutiny.

## 4.4 **The "I" and the Language of the Other**

The incorporation of the "I" voice in practices of thinking and writing has been an important point of reflection and debate for those adopting narrative approaches to IR. Scholars are used to write from a place that buries the author's voice – which, of course, signals to something much more complex than simply writing in the first person. In her seminal article *Maladies of Our Souls: Identity and Voice in the Writing of Academic International Relations,* Roxanne Lynn Doty (2004) made a plea for the awakening of the self in IR, provoking authors in IR to radically alter the forms of writing usually accepted in our field, opting for styles that retrieves voices that would otherwise be lost to the sanitized language of academic traditional writing. In the introduction to Autobiographical International Relations, Naeem Inayatullah (2011) insightfully speaks of the (supposedly) objective distancing in academic research and writing as "fictive" and alienating – "fictive distancing disconnects our work from our daily life (…) produc[ing] writing that often seems formal, abstruse, and lacking in practical purpose" (Inayatullah 2011:6). When we bury the "I" voice in academic writing, "we commit violence not only against ourselves as murderer authors, but also because of the silence we institute around explaining our situatedness" (Naumes 2015:826). Therefore, rather than advocating what may come across as mere exercises of academic vanity or self-indulgence, those who favor a retrieve of the "I" voice as a legitimate narrative strategy in IR claims that "[t]he first person voice creates the conditions for reflexivity and makes power relations more visible", that is, "the 'I' helps the reader see the colonizer writing about the colonized, men writing about women, and the ethnic-racial majority writing about the ethnic-racial minority" (Erdmans 2007:8). And this alone may contribute enormously to a discipline whose object of study is nothing less than *world* affairs.

With all this in mind, in the previous section I focused on how Khatibi and Derrida make use of the "I" voice in their respective writings with an explicit reflexivist intent. More than (only) indulging at exposing their (discrepant) colonial experiences during French colonial rule in the Maghreb, the use of strategies such as autobiographical and auto-ethnographical writing allowed these authors to be forthright, at least in the best moments of their respective texts, about the roles the

colonizer's language played in their lives and theoretical thinking. In this interplay between personal account and theoretical anxiety – to use Hiddleston (2010) terminology –, they both managed to show that French language is not a property of French people or something which perfectly conflates as the exclusive language of France, for it already bears within itself the traces of other languages and other stories of inclusions and exclusions. In this section, I take my previous reading of Khatibi's and Derrida's texts as examples in order to briefly engage with some of the potentialities and limits the use of the "I" voice and the exposure of the human element in the figure of the writer-subject might have for the practices of engaging and representing others.

In Khatibi, as in the case of his friend Derrida, language is the question to which he always feels the need to return. As Allison Rice posited, Khatibi "begins all of his analysis from a linguistic standpoint and inevitably brings everything back to language, whether he is reflecting on sexuality, politics or religion" (Rice 2009:157). This obsession turns both Derrida's and Khatibi's questionings into thinking journeys in which language not only appears as an object of enquiry, but the subject of desire itself. In this sense, an important element in the equation of Khatibi's and Derrida's not dissimilar deconstructionist approaches towards language, belonging and translation, is precisely the place of the "other" in the process of identification.

In Khatibi's AB, the narrator's journeys are not only physical peregrinations to different places between the two shores of the Mediterranean and even to farther cities, but also constant journeys towards the other's language, culture, and mindset. The "other" in AB happens to be the beloved one (a French woman). The French woman is a silent character, but one that is in a constant movement of overture and closure towards the male main character/narrator, a "[f]rightening test", at some moments allowing and at others resisting to his attempts to make sense of her wishes, feelings and ambivalent behavior (Khatibi 1990:17). Khatibi's narrative in AB thus performs his attempts to transgress boundaries between languages, cultures, between the one and the other. He performs border-crossings through inward thinking journeys in which the narrator questions his own ambivalences towards himself, his lover, and his people. Nonetheless, the narrator's thinking journeys towards the "other" – and the language of the other – (from where the notion of bi-langue seems to emerge) is the key element in his narrative.

The discussion about the bi-langue, this hyphenated term that appears right in the first pages of the book, gestures towards, among many other possible senses, a specific type of translation in which the "authority" of both self and other (host and guest, listener and speaker) over meaning is undermined by the recognition of the primacy of the contact zone. In other words, a "third space" created during communication (See Bensmaïa 2003). This third term in Khatibi is precisely what Derrida seems to understand as the untranslatable between two subjects, the realm of what maintains their singularity. However, and in contrast with Derrida, what Khatibi highlights is not the realm of the untranslatable *per se*, but the transgressive potential this contact zone between different ones seems to carry.

Derrida's oscillations in MA between general postulations about language and the particularity of his experience as an Algerian Jew and uncertain citizen of France serves to illustrate how the autobiographical "I" is an unavoidable presence in anyone's theoretical digressions. In Derrida, the "homo-hegemony" of the monolanguage[130] that has turned him orphan by depriving him of any "mother tongue" and that has kept him "hostage" of the French is also what nurtured his desire "to make something happen with… [French] language" (Derrida 1998:51). Nonetheless, the anamnesic journey towards his condition of being both orphan and hostage inside one language that is not his "own" has led Derrida to embrace the self-assigned label of marginal subject – or even "martyr" (Derrida 1998:19, 27). In addition, and importantly, by "always surrender[ing] [himself]… to language" (Derrida 1998:47), he indulges in a perhaps too comfortable task of deconstructing the categories of the West (e.g. ethnocentrism, logocentrism) without never trespassing the constitutive boundaries of Western discourse. As Sajed point out, his efforts can be summarized in the important although limited task of "subverting the imperial language *from within*" (Sajed 2013:26). His engagements with the key question category of the other can thus be better (and maybe only) understood as inward thinking journeys.

[130] Derrida speaks of the homo-hegemony at work in every culture: "The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon that foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the Other, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous. This can be verified everywhere, everywhere this homo-hegemony remains at work in the culture, effacing the folds and flattening the text. To achieve that, colonial power does not need, in its heart of hearts, to organize any spectacular initiatives: religious missions, philanthropic or humanitarian good Works, conquest of markets, military expeditions, or genocides" (Derrida 1998:39-40).

At some specific points of MA – notably, the moments when he retells his traumatic memories as an Algerian Jew during in colonial Maghreb – Derrida does seem to put himself in a position of marginality that assumes a less solipsist function in his narrative. His colonial experience of marginality thus sometimes appears as the source of his responsibility towards the other – which, in turn, is an elusive signifier throughout most of the narrative. In other moments, however, Derrida seems to recoil from the task of meaningfully engaging the other beyond the simple recognition of his/her otherness. It takes place as a sort of inward-looking recognition that comes not so much from any experience of relationality or engagement with the other, but from the general conception of the other as an unsurmountable limit given the subject's "experience of monolingual solipsism", that is, the subject's own radical singularity (Derrida 1998:22).

Therefore, in their far from unambiguous exercises at combining high philosophical enquiry with a more grounded exploration of their own particular experiences, Khatibi and Derrida are both eventually caught in movements towards closure – something that they precisely claim to be the violence of hegemonic discourse that they are trying to resist –, albeit in different ways. In Derrida, this closure derives from his romanticized self-claimed marginal position (or "exemplarity") in the context of Francophonie, whereas in Khatibi it is more related to the way the author converts his condition of subject in-between languages and cultures into weapon of resistance. In Derrida, the desire of providing another idiom capable of acknowledging and engaging difference without trying to capture or effacing it is undermined by his self-assigned marginalization in *MA* and, importantly, by his disenchantment with regard any possibility of concrete change in the "language of law"[131]. Such position prevents, among other things, the

[131] In MA Derrida shows an ambiguous position in what touches the continuum transgression – revolution (in both an ethical-philosophical critique and a more practical political realm) in different parts of the book. On page 24 (of the English version), for example, he insists that "liberation, emancipation and revolution will necessarily be the second trick" in "absolute appropriations or reappropriation" of a collective subjectivity in political discourses. This is what he considers as the "essential…coloniality of culture". On page 32, when exposing his own experience with the double interdict he suffered in the politics of French language in the Maghreb, he tells "[i]t could not not be the experience of an overstepping of limits. I am not saying 'transgression' – the word is at once too facile and too loaded…", he then proceeds with the tale about how writing became an act of trespassing limits and of performing his desire of "making something happen with this language". Here I believe that his resistance to the word "transgression" is related precisely with his exercise of deconstruction of monolingualism without ever leaving the monolanguage (when by monolanguage we understand French language and, perhaps, French culture) given his condition of being a

emergence of other marginal subjectivities and different claims of those who either/both believe are also speaking from the margins, or/and are trying to push forward modes of thought and action aiming at particular understandings of political change (see Krishna 1993; Woodhull 1993). This problematic stance in Derrida also leads to the portrayal of difference as a value and an unsurmountable limit in itself. In other words, the contact zone loses its productivity by being already determined by the limit constituted in the other (and the other's language). Khatibi's approach, on the other hand, leaves no clear answer to the crucial question of who else – besides the bilingual intellectual – can actually afford being in this in-between of languages, cultures and modes of knowledge. Put differently, what if not all experiences of marginality are enabling in this sense of learning how to "see double", to turn "cross-eyed" as his seemed to have been? (Khatibi 1971:69)?

Echoing Woodhull's insightful words, the most problematic dimension of such claims, in this sense, is that they are usually (and paradoxically) followed by a positioning that remains "faithful to an otherness variously referred to", as it happens in Khatibi's AB more specifically, "as the feminine (or the maternal)", as "passion for language", or an "intractable love", among others (Woodhull 1993:xii). For, according to Woodhull, we find inscribed in the decontextualized appropriations of signifiers by many intellectuals "a history of the depoliticization of irreducible otherness". This culminates in the obliteration of difference between/among various manifestations of "intractable difference"[132], resulting in the situation in which "various figures of otherness – femininity, Arabness, Jewishness, blackness – circulate indifferently in a space of 'immemorial



monolingual subject. Later on, however, the author also talks about an ethics of responsibility towards the "intractable" singularity of the other, signaling to the need of an ethical stance that can indeed signals towards more plural forms of being, thinking and making politics. Nonetheless, Derrida never goes as far as to suggest ways of congregating this more ethical positioning towards different others with the more concrete question of the political decision in MA. On page 57, however, the "too facile and too loaded" idea of transgression seems to be implicitly present when he preaches: "Compatriots of every country, translator-poets, rebel against patriotism! Do you hear me! Each time I write a word, a word that I love and love to write; in the time of this word, at the instant of a single syllable, the song of this new International awakens in me. I never resist it, I am in the street at its call, even if, apparently, I have been working silently since dawn at my table". It is never clear, however, to what extent the revolution in poetics and writing is going to be translated into practical politics and change in thought and practice (See Derrida 1998).

[132] "Intractable difference" is a terminology emblematic in Lyotard's work. It is also present in Khatibi's *Maghreb Pluriel*, albeit bearing a different meaning. See Khatibi [1981]1983; See chapter 5 of this thesis.

bewitchment' divorced from the particular intersecting histories of these groups" (Woodhull 1993: xxiv; Khatibi 1992:80).

In a recent article entitled *Is all 'I' IR?*, Sarah Naumes (2015) highlights that, although narrative writing is not necessarily attached to any specific methodological or ethical commitment, "the commitment to a reflexive methodology allows narrative to offer a transformative approach to IR in a way that non-reflexive methodologies do not" (Naumes 2015:822). Evidently, Naumes is preoccupied with the recent debates regarding Narrative IR (see Chapter 2) – which was not my focus in this chapter, but to which I resorted in this last section. Among other things, Naumes discusses the transgressive potential – the author uses the term "disruptive" – of narrative and/or ethnographic styles due to the way they often challenge normative assumptions about IR common themes – e.g. war, ethics, collective subjectivity, politics – and help to keep one's eyes open to scholarly/ writer's situatedness. The two narratives I engaged throughout this chapter corroborate with the perception that the use of the "I" voice indeed helps to meaningfully expose the author's humanity – which makes room for the reader to acknowledge important realms that would otherwise be obliterated, such as doubt, fear, anxiety, estrangement, contradiction and failure, to name a few. However, the "I" voice is not a guarantee of subversion, especially in what touches practices of engaging and representing others – which, as it is known, are an important dimension of academic practice and writing. As the discussion in the previous sections has shown, the "I" can, indeed, reinstate the writer's authority disguised as reflexivity, and turn what was once intended to be a critical auto-ethnography into a narrative that captures the other within stereotypical frames of exoticism and difference. In other words, it can keep us indulging the comforts of conceiving *the other* as an insurmountable *limit*, jeopardizing the productivity of contact zones.

# 5. East and West Encounters, Dreams of Trespass and the Limits of Double Critique in Fatema Mernissi's Writings

> *The globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge. This form of global knowledge is generally referred to as 'universal' knowledge, available to all and not really 'owned' by anyone, that is, until non-Western scholars make claims to it. When claims like that are made history is revised (again) so that the story of civilization remains the story of the West. For this purpose, the Mediterranean world, the basin of Arabic culture and the lands east of Constantinople are conveniently appropriated as part of the story of Western civilization, Western philosophy and Western knowledge. Through imperialism, however, these cultures, peoples and their nation states were re-positioned as 'oriental', or 'outsider' in order to legitimate the imposition of colonial rule. For indigenous peoples from other places, the real lesson to be learned is that we have no claim whatsoever to civilization. It is something which has been introduced from the West, by the West, to indigenous peoples, for our benefit and for which we should be duly grateful*
>
> (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*)

> *Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, an unmonolithic*
>
> (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*)

> *The influence of the Turkish Revolution reverberated throughout the Muslim world. Thanks to it, the first schools for girls were established in Morocco – schools that I attended in the 1940s and without which I would have been a desperately frustrated illiterate. I often wonder what I would have done had I been raised illiterate. What comes to my mind most frequently is clairvoyance. Yes, I would have become the best clairvoyant in all the Kingdom of Morocco. Why? Because clairvoyants sell hope and build self-confidence by insisting on their clients' capacity to change the situation in which they find themselves. […] I would have peddled hope. Hope is my drug and official addiction. Pessimism is the luxury of the powerful. I can't afford it*
>
> (Fatema Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West*)

Moroccan sociologist, writer and feminist activist Fatema Mernissi [1940-2015] structures two of her later books, *Dreams of Trespass – Tales of a Harem Girlhood* [1994] and *Scheherazade Goes West – Different Cultures, Different Harems* [2001] as examinations of the practices entailed by the *hudud*, or the "sacred frontier". *Hudud*, the author explains, is what distinguishes the permissible from the forbidden – and, thus, carries a profound religious bend. Writing in a memoir form, Mernissi uses narrative strategies to put in the mouth of her characters different understandings of what *hudud* must look like, with the intent of

destabilizing its legitimacy and signaling to the fact that frontiers can be more fluid, uncertain and negotiable than we think. In the first page of *Dreams*, Mernissi's father claims that "[h]armony exists when each group [Muslims and Christians, men and women] respects the prescribed limits", and that "trespassing leads only to sorrow and unhappiness" (1994:1). Even though the writer-narrator confesses that the situation of not being able to locate the line organizing things causes her anxiety, it is Yamina's (Mernissi's grandmother) definition that appears as most appealing throughout her narrative. "To travel is the best way to learn and empower yourself", Yasmina claims, for travelling is the best way to meet and learn from others. To learn from travel – which, as we go through Mernissi's narrative, stands for both physical but also mind-travelling practices – one "must train oneself to capture messages", to transform feelings of shock "into an openness to learn from" the foreign (Mernissi 2001:2-3). As Mernissi manages to show to her reader, dreams of trespass both physical and mental frontiers were part of the routine of the women surrounding her, as well as a constitutive part of the approach towards otherness she is trying to put forward through narrative strategies – which, in her case, include writing in a memoir form, communicating life episodes and thoughts in a clear, ironic and engaging style, and often resorting to "the techniques of a fiction writer, despite the fact that most of her texts are non-fiction essays" (Bernardi 2010:420).

For Mernissi, language is a tool of communication, learning and resistance, especially in what touches the oral tradition in Muslim thought and the power of storytelling as means to challenge dominant epistemological and sociological positions – e.g. Western knowledge in a global context; male privilege in both Western and non-Western societies (Mernissi 1994; 2001, especially p.9). As we go through Mernissi`s beautiful narrative of her life experience as a Muslim girl born and raised in a harem in 1940s Fez [*Dreams*] and, later, as an Arab Muslim polyglot feminist scholar travelling to Europe to promote one of her books to foreign audiences [*Scheherazade*], we understand the importance of *hudud* practices for women in Muslim societies at a time when modernization processes are affecting the traditional gender dividing lines within these societies, and offering women opportunities to vindicate their autonomy in the public sphere. In both texts, Mernissi reminds us that women's agency is not something to be retrieved, as it was never absent from the dynamics of Muslim societies (see

Woodhull 1993). Rather than that, women have always had to find their own weapons to question, act upon, and trespass frontiers even when the sacredness of *hudud* has for long time consigned them exclusively to the domain of the private and thus to a marginal position in their societies.

Mernissi acknowledges, from her own experience, that one carries the harem within oneself, for once one learns the line between *haram* (the word from which 'harem' derives, meaning "the forbidden") and *halal* (the permissible), the harem is internalized, "inscribed" under "the forehead and the skin" (Mernissi 1994:61). In this sense, even though the *hudud* is nothing but a social construction, it becomes internalized in people's heads and legitimized both in the macro-sphere of the cultural encounters between societies – e.g. her exploration of 'East' and 'West' encounters in artwork – and in the microspheres of everyday life interactions – e.g. her tales of a harem girlhood. Nonetheless, what makes the notion of *hudud* particularly relevant to Mernissi's own reflections is not so much its claims to a sacred and definitive order of things, but rather one's exposure to the in-betweenness of frontiers and boundaries in the meanwhile. In other words, if on the one hand frontiers are meant to separate, on the other, their location between worlds also signals to the existence of alternative ways of being and thinking, and thus to possibilities of negotiation and trespassing. The internalization and legitimization of *haram*, of course, has concrete effects upon people's life, what signals to the fact that the power of frontiers and the sort of imaginaries, attitudes – e.g. compliance, resistance, indifference, etc –, and practices they entail must not be ignored or taken as given.

In this chapter, I intend to read Fatema Mernissi's writings as containing a few possible answers to a very challenging question: *what is at stake in thinking between 'East' and 'West'?* (Sajed 2006). As a postcolonial, polyglot, female subject who has lived, studied and worked across different lands, Mernissi herself could be understood as someone who embodies the very cultural complexity that she aims to expose in her memoirs, in which she envisions "East and West mostly as visual landscapes rather than geographical[ly] and historical[ly]" fixed ones (Bernardi 2010:142). Therefore, if in *Dreams of Trespass* she narrates her memories of growing up as a Muslim Moroccan woman in ways that criss-cross those of some important women in her life – e.g. her mother, aunts, grandmother, first teacher at the Koranic school etc – in ways that certainly destabilize Western conceptions of

Islam, Muslim women and Islamic institutions such as family and the now almost inexistent harems in Morocco (Mernissi 1994); in *Scheherazade Goes West* Mernissi advances what can be said to be a cross-cultural analysis of the production and reception of representations of Middle Eastern women in both Western and non-Western artwork and philosophy (Mernissi 2001). Through narratives that mix personal memories and reflections on the long-lasting intercultural antagonisms between the so-called East/Orient/non-West and the Occident/West, she approaches the issue of otherness by often emphasizing cultural complexity over homogenizing and reifying readings of East and West encounters.

In personifying the dilemmas of someone who is aware of the complexity of the *hudud* both in Muslim societies (in her case, Moroccan society) and in the realms of 'East' and 'West' encounters, Mernissi's writings come across, at least in my view, as attempts to narrate the sort of "dis-orientations" affecting one's epistemological, cultural and personal "frontiers" when dealing with otherness. In the first section, I start with a brief discussion on how non-Western approaches and border knowledge came to "disorient" the Orientalist discourse. I focus on Abdelkebir Khatibi's contribution to this debate and on his efforts to locate bilingual postcolonial literature from the Maghreb as one stance aimed at "disorienting" Orientalism and other totalizing views of difference that disregard the contact zone between cultures. Then, I resort to Mernissi's writings focusing on her theorizations about the *hudud* and how she envisions trespassing – e.g. story-telling, travelling, cultural translation, etc – as both disruptive and productive for (re)thinking the encounters between the "East" and the "West". Together with Mernissi, I believe that the notion of *hudud* is extremely relevant to practices of writing and thinking in-between languages, cultures, social frames and disciplines. In the scope of this chapter, it serves, among other things, "to cast a shadow of doubt on a binary that is so widely embraced: West(ern)/non-West(ern)" (Sajed 2006:2). What does her reading of Western patterns of thought and action reveal to her (mostly) Western audience? What sorts of frontiers are produced and reinforced by Western societies with regard non-Western individuals and subjectivities? By the same token, what roles does the non-West/Orient play in the construction of the Western *hudud*? (Sajed, p. 7-8).

Thus, one aspect of Mernissi's work that I endeavour to explore here relates with her attempt to establish the conditions for challenging dominant

representations and promoting "'trans-coding' about the East, constructing new meanings over old ones" in the hope of "fostering knowledge and intercultural dialogue between the East and the West" without *necessarily* reifying or antagonizing neither of these two referents (Bernardi 2010:413). In this matter, what Mernissi's narratives suggest is that generalizations and binaries are sometimes unavoidable constructions when one is trying to subvert the hierarchizations produced under the power-knowledge nexus – such as in cultural encounters between the East and the West in which the "West and the rest" (Hall 1992) framework or Orientalist discourses prevail. Instead of immediately abandoning binaries and generalizations, or of hiding behind claims of the other's "intractable difference", Mernissi shows that exploring the mechanisms that allow such binaries to be (re)produced, and trying to expose the ensconced desires and fantasies that surface in the form of binaries perhaps constitutes a more productive approach to understand the politics of the contact zone between cultures. Following this clue, in the last section I read Mernissi's writings through the lenses of Khatibi's "Plural Maghreb" framework and his plea for a "double critique" of both Western and non-Western forms. In Khatibi's intellectual project, double critique appears as one necessary step towards decolonization in the Maghrebian context specifically, and in the global context of knowledge production in general.



## 5.1 **Disorienting Orientalism**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) words that appear as epigraph to this chapter summarize how the narrative of the triumph of the West and Western knowledge (as a "universal", depersonalized and civilized form of knowledge) relies upon a fiction, that is, the "Eurocentric myth of the pristine West" (Hobson 2004). In this imperial frame, knowledge, civilization and progress have been introduced to other "Oriental", "indigenous", and thus "non-Western" peoples "from the West, by the West" (Smith 1999:63). The history of "East" and "West" encounters becomes a one-way road in which frontiers are (supposedly) rigid and there is a clear separation between "the West and the rest", between the centre and its margins, between those who are able to meaningfully speak on behalf of others and represent others and those who are what Abdelkebir Khatibi would call "silent societies" (1983b[1981]:50). From an Orientalist point of view, "silent societies" have

nothing relevant to say and, therefore, must remain in the condition of subjects to be only represented and guided. "Only an Occidental could speak of Orientals, for example, just as it was the White Man who could designate and name the coloreds, or nonwhites" (Said 1978:228). Because of Orientalism – which can be conceived as a proper example of the discourse of "the West and the rest" as Stuart Hall (1992) has traced it in his homonymous book – "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action" (Said 1978:3). More specifically, Orientalism fabricates a permanent image of the superior, rational, avant-garde 'West' which is defined negatively against a no less imaginary 'Other', the inferior, irrational, backward 'East' (Khatibi [1974]1983; Said 1978).

The Orientalist facet of the discourse of "the West and the rest" engenders at least three main interrelated images which, together, nurtures common-sensical views of 'East' and 'West': it turns both the West/Occident and the East/Orient into knowable geo-historical entities hierarchically (and often antagonistically) arranged against each other; it overshadows the polyphonic and multi-local character of the 'East' by portraying it as a homophonic, monological, unchangeable territory[133]; and it erases the contact zone that emerges between what we have been calling "East" and "West" encounters. As Hall (after Edward Said) and Abdelkebir Khatibi (before both Said and Hall) suggest, the persistence of Orientalist ideas continues to infect even the best intentioned contemporary scholars including those who somehow sought to deconstruct the West.

The absence of the contact zone forged in East and West encounters thus appears as a telling silence, precisely the sort of telling silences that scholars working from critical perspectives and who are attentive to colonial difference and

[133] Some critics of Edward Said's approach in his book Orientalism [1978] would say that the same problematic representation of "the Other" goes for his portrayal of the West/Occident as a homogeneous, fixed, and knowable entity. Clearly there are differences within the so-called West. One could think, for instance, on the differences that might exist in the geographical imaginary of those countries that did not possess colonies, not to mention European former internal colonies (such as Ireland) and groups of others within Europe (e.g. groups coming from East Europe, and those coming from or descending of people from former colonies now living in Europe). Although these are significant issues, it is important to remember that "although the structures of representation are similar" in both "Orientalism" and "Occidentalism" – if by "Occidentalism" here we understand the geographical imagination of representation regarding a geo-cultural and historical entity called "the Occident" – "there is one big difference between Orientalism and Occidentalism which is power, i.e. that the west had, and continues to have, the most powerful voice in representing the West and the rest throughout the world. Historically the influence of Orientalist representations of the world has been much greater than that of Occidentalist accounts" (Sharp 2006:27).

epistemic violence against "non-Western" subaltern knowledges aim to dismantle[134]. According to Khatibi, however, what happens when those silenced societies and subjectivities objectified and/or effaced in the Orientalist discourse find their ways into being heard and manage to put their demands out-loud is "disorientation" (therefore his 1974 article's title "*L'Orientalisme Désorienté*"). In this regard, the author highlights, for instance, that "the docile Arab", a common trope in Jacques Berque's and other contemporary Orientalist scholars' writings, is remnant of the "literary Arab", whose immutability and authenticity dates back the pre-Islamic period and "the lost ruins of the Bedouin desert" but persist in our days as a recurrent way of figuring out and representing Arab Muslim peoples in the West. It tells nothing about contemporary Maghrebian societies – which are not exclusively of an Arab background, to begin with – nor about those who recognize themselves under "the Arab" sign but whose behavior and social-political demands do not obey such exercises of categorization (see Toumi 2002). Moreover, according to Khatibi, even when obscure, untranslatable aspects of a supposedly unitary Arab identity appears as another trope within the Orientalist discourse, it serves only to the Orientalist own anxiety to represent the Arab Other through "the inebriation of intractable difference" ("l'ivresse de la difference intraitable"). The complexity that the word "intractable" suggests here translates as the Orientalist desire for confining difference to exoticism instead, capturing the other through the image of a wholly and ever intangible otherness. In other words, within the Orientalist discourse, the Oriental/non-Western subject's "right to difference" deriving from fantasies of authenticity regarding this gazed/represented object works as a refusal to actual encounters with difference. Here, there is no intention to meaningfully engage in dialogue with difference (Khatibi (1974)1983:134).

Khatibi comes to remind us, however, that bilingual Arab literature – such as some Maghrebian postcolonial literary works written in French – is an example of the sort of border-crossing happening in the contact zone between cultures. It is also an example among the variety of things that cause disorientation to the Orientalist researcher/gazer who does not expect his represented/gazed object to answer back. "How to measure what can happen in this radical strangeness? If our desire is, in

[134] See, for example: Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2012) (especially chapter 2). In IR, see introduction and individual chapters in Shilliam, *International Relations and Non-Western Thought* (2011); Sajed, *Postcolonial Encounters in International Relations*, 2013.

its essence, bilingual[135], in whose name will Berque prevent us from answering him in his own language and out of his stilted rhetoric?" – Khatibi has provocatively asked (Khatibi, p.141).

Khatibi's definition of "intractable difference" appears more openly stated in his 1981 article *Pensée-autre*, in which he meditates on the question of "identity" in postcolonial Maghrebian societies. According to him, because people in the region tend to make sense of themselves through one of two hegemonic frameworks – either an idealized Islamic past and the related aspirations for authenticity and conformity, or a technologically advanced West, and related aspirations for change and "modernity" –, as a result, the Maghreb remains an unthought space, crushed (or split) between these two dominant "metaphysics" (i.e. "modes of thought") (Khatibi [1981a]1983:35-39). Intractable difference is, thus, the result of this mode of self-understanding indulged by two opposite totalizing narratives in which a difficult relationship with non-conformity and uncertainty prevails. In simple terms, what Khatibi suggests is that when a Maghrebian individual is confronted to the inevitable difference between lived and ideal reality, this individual finds himself or herself unable to deal with this difference. This confrontation (and the difficulties in dealing with it) is precisely what he calls "différence sauvage" (wild difference) or "différence intraitable" (intractable, inexplicable difference), because it tends to emphasize existing insecurities. In the context of the Maghreb, for instance, such insecurities are often translated as the persisting memories of a painful colonial experience or the resentment of not being "Arab enough" (see Jebari 2017). Besides frustrations, this process also leads to the adoption of rejectionist postures and extremist stances.

As Mignolo suggests, Khatibi's problematizations of the way discourses about identity and difference are shaped in the framework of "intractable difference" finds a parallel in Edouard Glissant's envision of a dialectic structuration between transparency and opacity in cultural encounters. According to Glissant, "the right to difference" is not sufficient; it is necessary to go further and "agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy", that is, to think of opacities as coexistent, sometimes convergent, "weaving fabrics". To understand this, he writes, "one must focus on the texture of

[135] On Khatibi's conception of "bilingualism'", see Chapter 4.

the weave and not on the nature of its component" (Glissant [1990]1997:190 quoted in Mignolo 2012:82). This appears, therefore, as one way out of the Western social sciences frame to engage culturally different others – which, in turn, tends to overemphasize one dimension (i.e. either transparency or opacity) over the other and reifying difference as either completely evident to the researcher's gaze or completely intangible (Mignolo, p. 82). However, at some moments of Khatibi's texts, one may also sense the difficulties of thinking of dialogues and connections among different others considering this intractable dimension of difference. As Khatibi himself recognizes in his critique of the Orientalist discourse, the ever-present danger here is turning intractability into an excuse to prevent a true engagement with difference. It may translate as either a refusal of approaching the other in his/her contradictions, demands and divergent worldviews, or in practices of un-naming, that is, using "difference" as an umbrella terminology and depriving different others of any specificity. In Winnifred Woodhull's interpretation, however, although the framework suggested by Khatibi in *Maghreb Pluriel*[136] does have its merits in attempting to think difference otherwise, in most of his works this Moroccan intellectual tends to resemble his French counterparts when thinking of difference from a deconstructivist perspective[137]. The result is a collection of high philosophical, impersonated wanderings detached from – or even averse to – articulations of otherness stemming from the realities of social struggles, especially of women's social struggles (see Woodhull 1993). I will have to return to this point later, in the last section of this chapter.

Considering Khatibi's independent approach to Orientalism, it is possible to notice that the historical account that he puts forward is aimed at locating the emergence of "border thinking" – to use Mignolo's terminology –, as one remedy to the violence of the Orientalist discourse towards Arabs in general and towards the Maghreb specifically. In Khatibi's "local history" (Mignolo 2012), l'Occident (the West) is also defined in opposition to "*notre patrimoine*", Islam, even though he is quick to offer ways to think out of this dichotomy – a necessary step to set the stage for "*une pensée autre*" (another thinking) that he is trying to articulate. Whereas Edward Said sees "Orientalism" as the hegemonic cultural imagination of

[136] Maghreb Pluriel is a collection of essays by Abdelkebir Khatibi published in 1983. Pensée-autre [1981], Double Critique [1981] and L'Orientalisme Désorienté [1978] are among them.
[137] See Chapter 4 of this PhD thesis.

the modern world that finds its roots in the prevailing imagery among 19th century European colonial power (England, France and Germany, or "the heart of Europe"), Khatibi argues that the opposition on which Orientalism relies, in fact, dates back to the early history of the modern world system and the conflict between Christians and Moors in the 16th century Iberian Peninsula. This, together with the still prevailing ideology of the time, Renaissance, is what Khatibi calls "Occidentalism" – or the moment when the image of a self-sufficient, virtuous and superior Occident emerged in Europe (Khatibi [1981a]1983). During Renaissance, the perception of the Arab world in Europe was different from what we now call "Orientalism". The Arabs were not even the subaltern "Other", they were rather "an enemy whose knowledge had the same foundation: Greek thought"[138] (Mignolo 2012:61). They would become this subaltern other precisely in the aftermath of the victory of

[138] The process of the discovery by the Arabs of the cultural production from the Classical Antiquity is analyzed by 14th century historian Ibn Khaldūn in chapter VI ("The various kinds of sciences") of his *Muqaddimah*. In the subsection entitled "The Various kinds of Intellectual Sciences", he narrates the translation movement from Greek into Arabic that occurred in different parts of the Islamic World and which began with the accession of the Abbasids to power: "When the Greek dynasty was destroyed and the Roman emperors seized power and adopted Christianity, the intellectual sciences were shunned by them, as religious groups and their laws require. (But) they continued to have a permanent life in scientific writings and treatments which were preserved in their libraries. The (Roman emperors) later on took possession of Syria. The (ancient)scientific books continued to exist during their (rule). Then, God brought Islam, and its adherents gained their incomparable victory. They deprived the Byzantines (Rum), as well as all other nations, of their realms. At the beginning, they were simple (in their ways) and disregarded the crafts. Eventually, however, the Muslim rule and dynasty flourished. The Muslims developed a sedentary culture, such as no other nation had ever possessed. They became versed in many different crafts and sciences. Then, they desired to study the philosophical disciplines. They had heard some mention of them by the bishops and priests among (their) Christian subjects, and man's ability to think has (in any case) aspirations in the direction of the intellectual sciences. Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, therefore, sent to the Byzantine Emperor and asked him to send him translations of mathematical works. The Emperor sent him Euclid's book and some works on physics. The Muslims read them and studied their contents. Their desire to obtain the rest of them grew. Later on, al-Ma'mun came. He had some (scientific knowledge). Therefore, he had a desire for science. His desire aroused him to action in behalf of the (intellectual) sciences. He sent ambassadors to the Byzantine emperors. (These ambassadors were) to discover the Greek sciences and to have them copied in Arabic writing. He sent translators for that purpose (into Byzantine territory). As a result, a good deal of the material was preserved and collected. Muslim scientists assiduously studied the (Greek sciences). They became skilled in the various branches. The (progress they made in the) study of those sciences could not have been better. They contradicted the First Teacher (Aristotle)on many points. They considered him the decisive authority as to whether an opinion should be rejected or accepted, because he possessed the greatest fame. They wrote systematic works on the subject. They surpassed their predecessors in the intellectual sciences. Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna) in the East, and Judge Abul-Walid b. Rushd (Averroes) and the wazir Abu Bakr b. as-Sa'igh (Avempace) in Spain, were among the greatest Muslim (philosophers), and there were others who reached the limit in the intellectual sciences. The men mentioned enjoy especial fame and prestige (Khaldūn 1958/2005:629). One of the most complete accounts of this singular period of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement of Baghdad, at least to my knowledge, can be found in Gutas, Dimitri (1998). Greek Thought, Arabic Culture – the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society. London/New York: Routledge.

Christianity over Islam and the conflation of Arabs with Islam, from the 16th century on. As Mignolo helps to sum up: "[I]t was only the triumph of Christian Spain at the inception of a new circuit, the Atlantic circuit, that will place the "Arabs" in a subaltern position", turning them the Other to Europe, or the Occident/West, "and contributing to the configuration of the object of study in the eighteenth century that prompts what Said named Orientalism" (Mignolo p.61). By the same token, even after the decadence of the first European colonial powers (Portugal and Spain), the Greco-Roman and Christian epistemological configuration, that is, Occidentalism, remained as the dominant mode of thought, whereas Islamic knowledge "became a yardstick to judge and subalternize" other forms of knowledge that cannot be justified within the Western knowledge frame (Mignolo, p.61).

Khatibi argues that since this ancient conflict between Europe and the Arab/Muslim world became a machine of mutual misunderstanding (Khatibi [1981a]:15), the only way out of this circle of violence is a "double critique" of both Occidental and Islamic fundamentalisms[139]. Double critique is the condition of possibility for the emergence of "another thinking", a thinking that departs from and is no longer conceivable within Hegel's dialectics and linear conception of historical development (Khatibi 37). As it will be further discussed, Khatibi's "another thinking" can be better portrayed as "the spatial confrontations between different concepts of history" by means of exposing different local histories and their particular power relations to the critical energies emanated by the contact zone (Mignolo 2012:67). In this framework, Arabic philosopher Ibn Khaldun becomes canonical in his difference from his European counterparts (see Khatibi [1981b]1983), for instance.

In the light of these previous articulations regarding "Orientalist disorientation", "returned gaze" strategies and border thinking in the context of Maghrebian postcolonial thought, in the following pages I discuss some aspects of Fatema Mernissi's approach to East and West encounters as well as her contributions to the question of "thinking/writing in-between". In the last section, I then resort to Khatibi's work in his efforts to rearticulate the Maghreb as an epistemological site for the emergence of "another thinking". In his own words, a

[139] According to Mignolo, Khatibi's "double critique" is one possible modality of "border thinking" or "border knowledge", one that stems form the latter's local history and own perspective on decoloniality. See Mignolo 2012.

mode of thought that was generated in the violence of the contact zone between the "West" and the "rest" in which the Third World was born (i.e. colonial histories and imperialism) and from which Third World peoples had to find creative ways towards liberation. A mode of thinking which has inhabited the border between modernity and its dark side, coloniality and, precisely because of that, it became able to step aside Western knowledge and other imperial forms and rearticulate itself as a way of thinking that is universally marginal, fragmentary, and unachieved – and because of that, is "not ethnocidal" (Khatibi [1981a]1983:19). I draw on Khatibi's notion of "double critique" as a conceptual apparatus to read Mernissi's theorization of the *hudud* between East and West.

## 5.2 Encounters Between "East" and "West", Dreams of Trespass and Storytelling as Resistance

"I was born in a harem in 1940 in Fez", is the first sentence of Moroccan sociologist Fatema Mernissi's 1994 memoir *Dreams of Trespass*. Mernissi is considered one of the leading Islamic feminists writers of our times[140], and her work has been read especially in terms of her deep concern about Muslim and Arab women from all social classes and of her reflections about the theme of East and West encounters[141]. After consigning her memories of growing up as a Muslim Moroccan woman in *Dreams* (1994) with *Scheherazade Goes West* (2001), Mernissi introduces an analysis of the production and reception of representations of Middle Eastern women in both Western and Eastern artwork and philosophy, in a narrative in which her personal experience and wonderings as Muslim,



[140] "Pioneering Muslim feminist writer Fatima Mernissi dies", BBC, Nov. 30 2015. Available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34968022

[141] Throughout her career and commitment to women's historical agency in the context of Moroccan society specifically but also in the so-called Muslim world in general, the author has investigated the sexual dynamics in her society and focused on inequality experienced by marginalized women in works such as *Beyond the Veil* (1975) and *Doing Daily Battle* (1983) – the latter consisting of a collection of interviews of Moroccan Women published in French and then translated into 6 languages – and *Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1990). Written and published after the first Gulf War, *Islam and Democracy - Fear of the Modern World* (1992, French original), a book in which Mernissi focused on the issue of fundamentalism in contemporary Islam, was then re-published with a new introduction immediately after September 11 2001 (Bernardi 2010). For a chronological overview of Fatema Mernissi's life work, see: http://mernissi.net/index.html

postcolonial, polyglot, feminist female scholar criss-crosses with her intellectual efforts at examining the abiding antagonisms between the East and the West.

In the account she offers us, the power of imagination appears as one important dimension nurturing the persisting antagonism between the East and the West. If we take *Scheherazade Goes West*, for example, there Mernissi wonders why the Western image of the harem (as it appears in the paintings of famous artists such as Picasso, Ingres, Delacroix and Matisse, and in Hollywood movies industry) lacks the tension and subversion that marked the harem in which she grew up (Mernissi 2001:14, 16). "My harem was associated with a historical reality [while] [t]heirs was associated with artistic images… [which] reduced women to odalisques (a Turkish word for a female slave)" (Mernissi, p.14). Importantly, she points to the paradox that the harem inhabiting Western imagination experienced a wider circulation and credibility than the actual harem (a Muslim household system now extinct in most Muslim countries)[142]. In other words, it was the "fictional" rather than the "factual" harem that is present in the imagination of most of us, populating our fantasies of the exotic when it comes to this part of the non-West. As one should notice, this is one aspect of the power of imagination that Mernissi aims to uncover to her readers – a second, equally important one will be commented later in this section.



[142] In a footnote in *Dreams of Trespass*, the author brings an extended description of two distinct kinds of harems: "the first we will call imperial harems, and the second, domestic harems. The first flourished with the territorial conquests and accumulation of wealth of the Muslim imperial dynasties, starting with the Omayyads, a seventh-century Arab dynasty based in Damascus, and ending with the Ottomans, a Turkish dynasty which threatened European capitals from the sixteenth century onward until its last sultan, Abdelhamid II, was deposed by western powers in 1909, and his harem dismantled. We will call domestic harems those which continued to exist after 1909, when Muslims lost power and their territories were occupied and colonized. Domestic harems were in fact extended families, like the one described in this book, with no slaves and no eunuchs, and often with monogamous couples, but who carried on the tradition of women's seclusion. It is the Ottoman imperial harem that has fascinated the West almost to the point of obsession. It is this Turkish harem which inspired hundreds of orientalist paintings of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries (…). Why have the Ottoman imperial harem had such an impact on Western imagination? One reason could be the Ottoman's spectacular conquest of Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, in 1453, and their subsequent occupation of many European cities, as well as the fact that they were the West's closest and most threatening neighbor. (…)" (Mernissi 1994:35-35 ft 3).

It should be noted, however, that by the time Mernissi wrote Dreams, that is, almost four decades after independence, "at a time when harems have largely vanished, many women have abandoned the veil, and others have adopted new forms of it" (Gauch 2007:45 quoted in Bourget 2013:37).

When one contrasts Western and Muslim artistic representations of the harem one has two very different worlds in front of one's eyes. As Mernissi describes:

> (…) Muslim men represent women as active participants, while Westerners such as Matisse, Ingres and Picasso show them as nude and passive. Muslim painters imagine harem women as riding fast horses, armed with bows and arrows, and dressed in heavy coats. Muslim men portray harem women as uncontrollable sexual partners. But Westerners, I have come to realize, see the harem as a peaceful pleasure-garden where omnipotent men reign supreme over obedient women. While Muslim men describe themselves as insecure in their harems, real or imagined, Westerners describe themselves as self-assured heroes with no fears of women. The tragic dimension so present in Muslim harems – fear of women and male self-doubt – is missing in the Western harem (2001:15-16)

Western popular imagery of the harem thus is not able to capture the politics of the "factual" harem, a domestic space populated by individuals with their own emotions, aspirations, delusions and contradictions. Ingres and others only see passive – though mysterious and exotic – women ready to offer themselves to Western men's fetishizing gaze. In this sense, the inaccuracy of the harem representation in the West also hides a misrepresentation of Muslim women as passive, controllable secluded beauties in the arrested time of Western aesthetics and fetishizing gaze. In another passage of *Scheherazade*, Mernissi brings a deeper analysis of the Muslim ideal of female beauty, showing how the women portrayed in Persian miniatures by Muslim artists (mainly those of Princess Shirin, the protagonist from the thirteenth century's tale *Krusraw and Shirin,* written by the poet Nizami) transgress the dominant model of female reclusion established by the religious law. If "Scheherazade is a literary heroine, Shirin is her equivalent in art" (2001:170). Shirin – in Nizami's story, an harem fugitive – is often portrayed riding alone through the woods, looking for her Prince Krusraw; or, when the two of them are portrayed together, they often are hunting wild animals together. Therefore, Shirin symbolizes women's active role rather than naked passive sexuality. As our writer maintains, such features in fact encapsulate the essence of womanhood in the Muslim imaginary, in which women are "the powerful Others, endowed with personal will" (Mernissi, p.137). And this is the very reason for the harem existence. As "a mobile energy, the emotional place of disruptive forces and power beyond controls" (Bernardi 2010:419), many Muslim women were/are secluded in a space delimited by high walls and prevented from exerting a public role.

Moreover, if the odalisque is a standard trope of time in Western men's and women's imaginary regarding women in the Orient, it certainly speaks with the broader structure of global knowledge production and, therefore, the epistemic violence (to paraphrase Mignolo 2009) exerted on non-Western societies too. In fact, as Mernissi highlights, the context when French and British painters were producing their portrayals of odalisques in a sort of lethargic and lascivious poses in Western Europe was the same context when Kemal Atatürk's Turkey was promulgating feminist laws empowering women not very far from there (Mernissi 2001:109).

The "tragic dimension" of Muslim harems – which stands in sharp contrast with Western representations – is precisely what Mernissi tries to recount to her readers in *Dreams of Trespass*. The tension permeating the space of the harem appears as soon as in the first two pages, where the two usually opposed notions of "frontier" and "trespass" are posited side by side, giving meaning to each other and putting each other into motion:

> When Allah created the earth, said Father, he separated men from women, and put a sea between Muslims and Christians for a reason. Harmony exists when each group respects the prescribed limits of the other, trespassing leads only to sorrow and unhappiness. But women dreamed of trespassing all the time. The world beyond the gate was their obsession. They fantasized all day long about parading in unfamiliar streets, while the Christians kept crossing the sea, bringing death and chaos (Mernissi 1994:1-2)

In Mernissi's portrayal of the harem, it appears as a political space where multiple stories are told, and men-women relationships cannot be reduced to mere oppression. In her multilayered narrative, the most important women of her life – her mother, grandmothers, aunts and cousins – are protagonists, the ones whose worldviews, emotions, aspirations and contradictions become more apparent. As Sajed (2013) highlighted, Mernissi's narrative focuses more on "who they are (women in the harem)" rather than on "'what' these women are (prisoners in the harem)". This is important precisely because in such depiction of the harem, one must expect some generalities, indeed, for the domestic harem is a living institution in the Muslim world; but in Mernissi's reading, the harem also appears as a space where the specificities of daily subversion occur. A space "where women employ creative tactics to manifest their sense of self" (Sajed 2013:101). And here it is possible to find a second dimension of the power of imagination as Mernissi theorizes about it. Mernissi's harem is a feminine space of seclusion that can be

marked by the resignation and sadness of those who feel powerless inside its walls and gates, but this is only part of the story. *Dreams* "recounts the development of [Mernissi's] feminist consciousness as she learns from a variety of role models and from personal questioning" (Donadey 2000:86 quoted in Bourget 2013:31). In this aspect, Mernissi's text advocates a home-grown, emotionally affected "Arab-Muslim feminism crafted by women from all walks of life, both educated and illiterate" (Ibid), by making references to well-known figures in the Muslim world, such as Lebanese Zaynab Fawwaz, Egyptian Huda Sha'rawi, Scheherazade – the literary character of the *A Thousand and One Nights* –, but also to the women of her own household. The women Mernissi brings to attention are "agents, painfully aware of their limitations and restrictions, but with a deep sense of their political role" (Sajed 2006:6). The emphasis on indigenous role modes from her own cultural background is thus one main aspect of Mernissi's work that has been praised by various scholars, and appears as of upmost relevance in her work[143].

One remarkable dimension of women's subversion in Mernissi's harem is storytelling. It is known that the Maghreb and the Muslim world at large have a rich tradition in oral stories (Mernissi 1994, 2001; Abu-Lughod 1993). And what is most interesting here is that women seem to be the ones who perform such roles, as story-telling is usually seen as an exclusive feminine and, thus, domestic practice[144]. Resistance takes shape in this dimension as women can (and they do) make use of storytelling as means to reverse positions of power, undermining prevailing patriarchal structures and practices by disrupting the imaginary and logics



[143] See Woodhull 1993; Bernardi 2010.

[144] However, Mernissi herself highlights how the introduction of communication technologies and other sociological aspects (such as class and urban-rural divisions) can affect the status of story-telling practices nowadays: As she clarifies: "We discovered the power of our mothers' story-telling while listening to our students, who in the 1970s came mostly from the shantytowns of Casablanca and Rabat – areas not equipped with either electricity or television. If the mothers of our middle- and upper-class students had lost their power to tell stories and saw their kids fall prey to Hollywood fantasies, this was not the case for the less fortunate majority" (2001:9). In a more recent work, in which Mernissi was also discussing the persistence of the lowly image often attributed to Muslim women both in their society and in the world at large today, she argued that that was not due a supposed absence of women from traditional oral memory or written history, but to "the fact that the image of women in society is not derived from history per se by any simple process, but is crucially dependent on the media which can either disseminate such research or restrict its dissemination" (Mernissi 2005:39 quoted in Bernardi 2010: 415). In this sense, resilient mis-visions on gender and orality dynamics are intimately connected with global hegemonic structures of power and dissemination than with a presumed absence of women's historical agency in non-Western societies.

sustaining them. “[I]n many oral tales the cleverer sex is rarely the one that religious authorities would expect”. Thus, whereas Muslim law and Western visual artwork (e.g. paintworks, broadcast media, films) “give men the right to dominate women, the opposite seems to be true in the oral tradition” (Mernissi 2001:9). Reading Fatema Mernissi’s text, one is able to notice, however, that storytelling can be both a tool for resisting hegemonic and patriarchal codes of thought and practices and a site for practicing self-empowerment; and yet, by the same token, stories can be tools for enforcing and accrediting those very codes.

Take, for example, the figure of Scheherazade, the emblematic storyteller and heroine of the *A Thousand and One Nights*. Through Mernissi’s constant references to this mythic figure one is able to notice how it is constantly captured by dynamics of either compliance or resistance – and the ambivalences, or multivalences, in-between – to hegemonic forms in both Western and non-Western spaces. According to Mernissi, while Westerners tend to ignore Scheherazade’s political message, Arab readings tend to focus precisely on this aspect of the myth, highlighting Scheherazade’s “brainy sensuality” (Mernissi 2001:68) in ways that resist to Orientalist identifications. In a footnote, Mernissi narrates her own surprise when she realized that for many in the West, her favorite literary heroine was trivialized as “a lovely but simple-minded entertainer, someone who narrates innocuous tales and dresses fabulously” (Mernissi p.15, fn 2); whereas in her part of the world, the protagonist of *A Thousand and One Nights*, is a rare female mythical figure cherished for her courage and skilfulness. In *Dreams*, Mernissi reproduces the way her mother used to tell her Scheherazade’s trajectory and the significance of her skills as an amazing storyteller. It is not necessary to read between the lines to understand how Scheherazade’s accomplishments in the tale were vital – for Scheherazade herself, but also for her youngest sister, who would soon become King Schahriar’s next victim, as well as for all the young virgins in her village who would come after them hadn´t she taken a new and creative strategy to defy the murderous circle created by the King’s hands and emotional wounds (Mernissi 1994:13-16). “Scheherazade is a strategist and a powerful thinker”, writes Mernissi, who used her psychological knowledge of human beings and the power of imagination and orality to stress “female self-determination” and the possibility of trespass frontiers (both material and imagined ones) and thus “transform the world and its people” (Mernissi, p.13-16).

"Scheherazade teaches that a woman can effectively rebel by developing her brain, acquiring knowledge, and helping men to shed their narcissistic need for simplified homogeneity" – writes Mernissi (2001:52). At a point in *Scheherazade Goes West*, the author then offers a re-reading of Scheherazade's role and story-telling as a "modern civilizing myth" (Mernissi, p.51). As the heroine in question only had words and not armies under her command to transform her situation, her efforts can be seen as "a symbol of the triumph of reason over violence" – where "reason" stands for the capacity of establishing dialogue with the different other, while acknowledging and respecting the boundaries of difference and enjoying the fluidity and unpredictability of encounters. At this point, it is possible to notice that Mernissi's usage of the expressions "civilizing myth" and "triumph of reason" as a non-innocent gesture inasmuch as she replaces their common usages by the West in the context of imperial encounters and suggest others, less violent ones. By the same token, the Storyteller/King opposition in the tales also tells a lot about the conflict between Shari'a (the sacred Truth) and fiction in the Muslim world. Scheherazade's role stands in parallel with the *quççaç* ("street storytellers") as both made use of storytelling as strategy to bring reflections (albeit often in an anecdotal form) upon given realities, not rarely inflicting changes into people's perceptions regarding such realities. Following Moroccan historian Abdesslam Cheddadi's insights, Mernissi tells us, for example, how street storytellers of Middle Ages were considered "instigators of rebellion" and persecuted in the Muslim world for questioning the legitimacy of the keepers of *çidq* ("truth"). Such practice was also despised by the powerful due to the ways it disrupted the frontier between fact and fiction by making *wahm* ("imagination") into a means to interfere in the actuality of the world – by opening channels to imagine alternative worlds and reclaim spaces for agency – and triumph over totalitarian claims of truth (Mernissi 2001:53-54). Resorting to a more contemporary context, Mernissi then mentions the episodes in 1980s and 1990s Egypt, when fundamentalists repeatedly burned symbolic copies of the Arab editions of the book, under charges of transgression and anti-Islamism, in order to illustrate how the political dimension of the tales and their dissemination are rarely ignored in the Arab world (Mernissi 68).

Mernissi's admiration and plea for the power of knowledge and word-mastering has nothing to do with "academic" intellectual credibility – although, as she is keen to admit, her access to education has certainly helped her to ascend to a

privileged position in both her society and abroad. Rather, she encourages her readers to reflect on the politics of less privileged ones, that is, on how subjects have to use the weapons they have at their disposal in order to resist against the violence of the hegemonic structures surrounding them. The illiterate secluded women of her girlhood are not defenseless and voiceless, they just had to learn alternative ways to express their individuality as well as their solidarity towards each other and make themselves heard – as Scheherazade did throughout the *A Thousand and One Nights*. Resistance, Mernissi seems to claim, comes from unexpected places.

The idea of "talk in the night" is presented on page 19 of *Dreams*, when Mernissi is narrating how her Aunt Habiba was astute both in the art of bringing her audience together – despite all the barriers the routine and rules of the harem posited to such furtive gatherings at the building's terrace, – and in the art of entertaining a demanding audience composed of curious infants and argumentative women. As it is evident, the notion of "talk in the night" speaks to the fact that those storytelling sections occurred usually in secret, during nighttime, but also, and importantly, they had a purpose beyond simply amusement. As Lila Abu-Lughod argues in her own account of Awlad 'Ali Bedouin tribes' practices of storytelling in Egypt, a "story is always situated" as it has both a teller and a known audience; consequently, in spite of their intimate connection with olden times memories and practices translated as "tradition", stories are contextual and "[their] telling is motivated" (Abu-Lughod 1993:12). Orality in the context of the Muslim harem where Mernissi grew up served not only to the purpose of transmitting timeless myths, or recounting past events and the moral lessons usually associated to them (which, by the way, are also subordinate to the situational aspect of storytelling and to the narrator's life experience)[145], but speaks to women's attempts to cope with and sometimes resist certain practices that consign them to the silenced and invisible sphere. This dimension becomes evident in the quote below:

> [Aunt Habiba] knew how to talk in the night. With words alone, she could put us onto a large ship sailing from Aden to the Maldives, or take us to an island where the birds spoke like human beings. Riding on her words, we traveled past Sind and Hind (India), leaving Muslim territories behind, living dangerously, and making friends with Christians and Jews, who shared their bizarre foods with us and watched us do our prayers, while we watched them do theirs. Sometimes we traveled so far

[145] For an account on the narrator's role in both orality and writing practices, see: ONG, Walter J. Orality and Literacy – the technologizing of the Word. London/New York: Routledge, 2002.

> that no gods were to be found, only sun- and fire-worshippers, but even they seemed friendly and endearing when introduced by Aunt Habiba. Her tales made me long to become an adult and an expert storyteller myself. I wanted to learn how to talk in the night (Mernissi 1994:19).

It is known that orality became one of the subjugated knowledges of Western thought. However, what the works of authors such as Mernissi and Lila Abu-Lughod show is that orality is one of those so-called "traditional" forms of thought and knowledge that is still very much alive. In spite of being subjugated by Western knowledge (and the supremacy of the written sign it has endorsed), orality practices coexist with institutional definitions of philosophy and knowledge but are not considered as such from the institutional perspective that defines philosophy and knowledge (Mignolo 2000:64; Mignolo 2009). In the prevailing discourse of Western knowledge and of modernity at large, there seems to be no legitimate space for storytelling beyond the realm of the private or beyond the condition of object to be submitted to pure anthropological curiosity and scrutiny – a view many feminist and critical scholars from different disciplines have been trying to oppose (Abu-Lughod 1993; Mernissi 1988; Smith 1999; Wibben 2011; Woodhul 1993). Orality practices are characterized by their spontaneity, lack of fixity (meaning that a story can have its content, meaning and purpose significantly altered every time the relationship between narrator and audience is re-established, what indeed happens basically every time stories are recounted), and non-verifiable content. They therefore lack the formality, truthfulness, and authority as understood in modern sciences practices of knowledge, rendering storytelling the status of mere forms of communication with no value as a legitimate source of knowledge or trustworthy representations of realities whatsoever. More to the point, as Sajed (2006) summarizes (drawing from Monia Hejaiej's insights), orality appears as inappropriate for academia precisely because it operates with different epistemological tools and sustains its practices on a very different ontological stance. In orality "the narrator manages to simultaneously subvert and re-found the traditional system of values that underpins her stories" both recreating and contesting "traditionally held views on life and knowledge". What is embraced as "'legitimate academic knowledge'", by contrast, operates within a much more rigid framework that allows for little contestation (and ambiguity) and makes little space for the recreation of knowledge paradigms" (Sajed, p.11). Importantly, if one takes the power-knowledge nexus into account, storytelling is usually addressed as a sort

of "primitivism" (Ong 2002:170-171) or, as Mernissi herself reminds us, a "symbol of the uneducated masses" despised by conservative elites as folklore or, not rarely, as a source of rebellion (Mernissi 2001:55). This in itself says a lot about orality's illegitimate status as well as its attempted obliteration over time in various contexts, including academia[146].

In this sense, it is possible to extrapolate and suggest that what both Mernissi and Abu-Lughod manage to show us is that "the link between experience, meaning and knowledge as it has been imagined in modern (positivist) science can no longer be sustained" (Wibben 2011:44). It should be noted, however, that their argumentations depart from very different viewpoints. Abu-Lughod rushes to worship storytelling (orality) as an antidote to the practices of generalization by the social sciences – which, in her view, stands for the supremacy of the discourse of "cultural difference" and its inherent violence as "an essential tool for making the 'other'" into self-evident, discreet, and thus unproblematically interpretable/representable by the hierarchically superior 'self' (the essential interpreter). Mernissi, in turn, seems to be much less interested in giving to storytelling the status of method for a more "polyvocal" ethnographic account than in stating its deeply subversive political messages.

For Abu-Lughod, the merit and subversive dimension of storytelling relates to the fact that, by being situated in terms of a teller and her audience, "storytelling



[146] Walter J. Ong resorts to Plato's ambivalent attitude towards orality as a telling example to illustrate how the hierarchy between oral and writing practices is neither new nor fixed in the history of communication practices and their relationship with (what is considered legitimate) forms of knowledge: "Plato's relationship to orality was thoroughly ambiguous. On the one hand, in the Phaedrus and the Seventh Letter he downgraded writing in favor or oral speech, and thus is phonocentric. On the other hand, when, in his Republic, he proscribed poets, he did so (…) because they stood for the old oral, mnemonic world of imitation, aggregative, redundant, copious, traditionalist, warmly human, participatory – a world antipathetic to the analytic, sparse, exact, abstract, visualist, immobile world of the 'ideas' which Plato was touting. Plato did not consciously think of his antipathy to poets as an antipathy to the old oral poetic economy, but that is what it was, as we can now discern. Plato felt this antipathy because he lived at the time when the alphabet had first become sufficiently interiorized to affect Greek thought, including his own, the time when patiently analytic, lengthily sequential thought processes were first coming into existence because of the ways in which literacy enabled the mind to process data. Paradoxically, Plato could formulate his phonocentrism, his preference for orality over writing, clearly and effectively only because he could write. Plato's phonocentrism is textually contrived and textually defended. Whether his phonocentrism translates into logocentrism and metaphysic of 'presence' is at least disputable. The Platonic doctrine of 'ideas' suggests that it does not, since in this doctrine the psyche deals only with shadows or shadows of shadows, not with the presences of true 'ideas'" (Ong 2002:163-164).

[…] draws attention to, even as it refuses, the power of social scientific generalization to produce 'cultures' (with their differentiation of selves and others" (Abu-Lughod 1993:12). That is, in her view, what makes stories subversive is their aptitude to show that beliefs, modes of thought and worldviews do not necessarily fit the sociological and cultural characterizations that traditional analytical frames in anthropology normally indulge (Abu-Lughod, p.15). As Sajed (2006) brilliantly notes, the problem here is that Abu-Lughod ignores the fact that storytelling not rarely resorts to generalization in their innate production of archetypes of human beings, situations, tempers etc. It certainly relies on the contingent as well, but its desire to touch an audience in its plurality and to make them somehow identify with the situations and characters at play turn generalization into an common tool in storytelling. Abu-Lughod fails to notice that perhaps because she focuses too much on the violences that her role as researcher inflicts on the subjects she chose to address, and not so much on "the basic configuration of global power on which anthropology is based" as she seems to desire (Abu-Lughod, p.26). Even though at some point she aptly recognizes that strategies such as "reconfiguring informants as consultants or 'letting the other speak' in dialogic […] or polyvocal texts" are more to "relieve anthropologists' discomforts about their power over their subjects" than to meaningfully change the terms of the conversation, she ends up by replicating the unequal relation between researcher and researched when capturing the latter under *her own desire* to emphasize difference, contingency and complexity (in this case, opposing "storytelling contingency" against "scientific generalization")[147]. Suppressing any indications of homogeneity, similarity and timelessness to meet this desire to emphasize difference, complexity and contingency can actually be fallacious and counterproductive in the pursuit of being a "critical" and/or a more responsible and ethical researcher towards her/his subjects, as Sajed (2006) reminds us. In this sense, Abu-Lughod's stated aim backfires as she ends up ignoring the "blend of fluidity and fixity […], [and] the social and moral systems" the practice of storytelling indicates (Sajed 2006:12).

[147] Here, one should also consider that "[t]he time of stories is often not that of historical contingency, but rather that of timelessness and mythical time", therefore, orality brings a sense of ahistoricity that contrasts with quick assumptions highlighting stories' contingency. As Sajed reminds us, the contingency of storytelling relates to matters of performance and teller/narrator-listener/audience relations rather than to the content of stories themselves (See Sajed 2006:13).

Mernissi, in contrast, tries to emphasize precisely the political aspect of storytelling that Abu-Lughod managed to touch only superficially. Her narrative reveals to the reader situations in which the relationship between narrator/teller and audience/listener is efficient in disrupting hierarchies by empowering those whose voice starts to occupy the centre-stage when taking the role of narrators (i.e. the women in the harem). In this sense, even though the content of the stories is, undoubtedly, important (as women find in storytelling a legitimate space to posit questions regarding their status, state positions and articulate envisioned alternative worlds), what seems to be the main source of orality's transgressive role here is precisely the way the narrator – audience relationship takes shape.

On page 41 of *Dreams*, Mernissi resorts to the dynamics within the harem she claims to have been witness in order to state that "to speak while others are listening is the expression of power itself". In addition, as she powerfully continues to suggest: "But even the seemingly subservient, silent listener has an extremely strategic role, that of the audience. What if the powerful listener loses his audience?" (Mernissi 1994:41). Her suggestion brings the political aspect of storytelling to surface in two important ways. First, it highlights the role of the speaker/storyteller – in this case, implying that women possess the words and performance involved in storytelling as an important weapon. Second, it suggests that listeners also have a crucial part in making narratives relevant, therefore, when one (e.g. female listeners) decides to stop listening to a certain speaker (e.g. male speakers), the relation of domination is subverted. In this sense, both speaking and listening become ways of resistance. In other words, in "pondering on the power relations and on the hierarchies that are present within the harem, [Mernissi] envisions resistance as a 'shuffling of the cards', as a 'confusing of the roles'" (Sajed 2006:6; see also Mernissi 1994:152).

On this same regard, if we get back to the discussion on Narrative IR developed in Chapter 1 of this thesis in order to think of parallels, it is possible to extrapolate and take Mernissi's narratives in both *Dreams* and *Scheherazade* as examples of what a "self-reflective" writing might look like. Although both of her texts do not probably have academic audiences as their only target, Mernissi has attempted to conflate personal memories, imagination, and intellectual trajectory, and presented them as non-conflicting parts of her life trajectory and writing endeavours. In her own words, "the emotional landscape is definitely one of the

keys to understanding cultural differences" (Mernissi 2001:157). We can logically conclude that the statement applies to both the structures of emotions, desires and fantasies of one's subject of research, and the researcher herself. Such positioning is thus reflected in Mernissi's writing, in which the separation between the various subject-positions she performs (e.g. harem-girl, literate girl/woman amidst a majority of illiterates, story-teller, writer, Muslim feminist intellectual, "non-Western" intellectual living in the West, etc) is turned into a fiction itself. It is thus possible to read Mernissi's trajectory throughout the narrative of her encounters with "the West" in *Scheherazade* as a sort of self-reflective writing in which she is constantly asking to her various interlocutors (what probably includes her Westerners readers): "Who I am to you?" (Kristeva 1986 quoted in Sajed 2006:11). To extrapolate even more, it is possible to read such positioning as an attempt at knowing others by relying not only on one's own expectations and desire of "capturing" the other through the (inevitable) assumptions that precede encounters (which, of course, includes the desire of adopting a more self-reflective stance towards others), but also on the productiveness of self-doubt when exposing oneself to the other's gaze.

Another dimension relates to the fact that Mernissi is deeply aware of the power-knowledge nexus and, of course, of the ways it structures the production and consumption of knowledge in institutional environments such as academia and media. Her decision of writing *Scheherazade Goes West* in English is not innocent or purposeless. She wanted to show to Western audiences the plurality of worldviews and voices compounding the so-called Muslim world. Moreover, throughout her narrative she manages to disrupt commonplace views on "the East" and on East and West encounters – especially in what comes to the imagery surrounding Muslim women – and to bring women's agency to centre stage as a key societal force of resistance and change in her society. Therefore, both texts were written with a Western audience in mind precisely because, as she seems to imply, in order to build a space for the transformation of such structures and the violence they entail, she needs to trigger doubts into a self-absorbed West. As it was for the mythical Scheherazade, at stake here is nothing less than survival.

## 5.3 Thinking between 'East' and 'West': Potentialities and Limits of Double Critique

Mernissi's 2001 memoir *Scheherazade Goes West* narrates some of the author's many encounters with the West. There, Mernissi plays the role of a feminist postcolonial Moroccan writer and sociologist who temporarily leaves her country to promote her latest book (*Dreams*) to an European audience. In the process of dealing with Western stereotypes regarding her society and herself (as a Muslim women) as well as with her own stereotyped views when returning the gaze towards her European interlocutors, she constantly puts herself in the position of an exemplar of the cultural complexity of East and West encounters. "No one noticed my anxiety during my book promotion tour, however, because I was wearing my huge Berber silver bracelet and my red Chanel lipstick" – she confesses to her reader, in what comes across as an honest but ironic statement (Mernissi 2001:2). Playing with stereotypes and an emotionally inflicted language is thus part of her strategy to emphasize the complexity of cultural encounters and of people's perceptions regarding selfhood and otherness in the interplays of globalized markets and widespread technologies of communication, on the one side, and "tradition" – understood here as "the persistence of memory", that is, a living dimension of negotiation of cultural authenticity and practices[148] –, on the other.

In the following pages, I propose to read Mernissi's narrative in *Scheherazade* as an attempt by the author to perform a "double critique", as theorized by Khatibi in his homonymous essay published in 1983. In Khatibi's words, double critique consists of "set Western episteme against its unthought outside and thus radicalize its margin, and not only in relation to the thought in Arabic" – one of the many subaltern languages and knowledges now working at the margins of Western knowledge –, but "in relation to another thought, a thought that speaks different languages, listening to every word – from where it came from" (Khatibi 1983b[1981]:63, my translation)[149]. As Khatibi explains, the attention to a plural Maghreb, that is, to an understanding of the regional context free from theological, unitary notions of national and cultural identity is the condition of possibility for

[148] See: Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 1996.

[149] The original in French reads: "La double critique consiste à oppose à l'épistémè occidentale son dehors impensé tout en radicalisant la marge, non seulement dans une pensée en arabe, mais dans une pensée autre qui parle en langues, se mettant à l'écoute de toute parole – d'où qu'elle vienne".

decolonization, a process that requires a double critique. In the context of postcolonial Maghreb, a double critique would necessarily encompass the critical examination of the dual inheritance wherein Maghrebian intellectuals are now located: that of the "West" (understood here as a "structural solidarity" between "imperialism, ethnocentrism and self-sufficiency" in the expansion of the so-called social sciences), and that of the Arab-Islamic "so theological, so charismatic, so patriarchal" institutions and culture (Khatibi 1983a[1981]:12; 1983b[1981]:63). Of course, I am not saying that Mernissi necessarily had Khatibi's definition in mind when she decided to write-down her experience of East-West encounters and the reflections entailed in the meanwhile and/or aftermath of such encounters[150]. What I hereby suggest is that Khatibi's reflections on the productivity of cultural borders for critical thinking appears as one possible, insightful way of reading Mernissi's mixed strategy of "returning the gaze" at the West while paying attention to the ways the prevailing discourse and configurations of power within her own society (e.g. women's unequal social position and lack of civil liberties in contemporary Morocco and in the other two Maghrebian countries) either reinforce or defy some of the frontiers produced by Western societies with regard non-Western individuals and subjectivities. What is at stake in thinking between 'East' and 'West' while aiming to both expose the violent patterns in both 'Western' and 'non-Western thought' and, at the same time, unthinking such dualism in order to bring non-"ethnocidal" alternatives to the thought of difference? (Khatibi 1983a[1981]:17). Moreover, as our two authors seem to be asking in their own way: How does one overcome, if ever, the internalized *hudud* when dealing with otherness in a larger, world context?

The works of Khatibi and Mernissi (and a number of other North African postcolonial intellectuals) intersect in important ways with regard their common

[150] It is interesting to mention that Mernissi and Khatibi, as contemporary Morocco-born intellectuals, must have actual encounters with each other. At least one of them can be found in Mernissi's book *Le Maroc raconté par ses femmes* (Rabat: Société Marocaine des Editeurs Réunis, 1983), to which Khatibi wrote the foreword. The book was translated into English two years later by Mary Jo Lakeland and published under the title "Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women". In France, the same work was published only in 1991, with a revised edition and new introduction. The title of the French edition published in France was also different from the one published in Morocco and the Maghreb at large: "Le Monde n'est pas un harem". Khatibi's foreword appears only in the Moroccan edition. See: Fatema Mernissi. Books – Thematic Overview, Doing Daily Battle. Available at: http://www.mernissi.net/books/books/doing_daily_battle.html . See also: Woodhull 1993.

search for alternative ways of thinking of Maghrebian heritage while keeping a critical eye on how it has been currently mobilized by different groups within these societies[151]. As it was discussed in the previous sections, both authors managed to articulate fierce critics against Orientalist views about the Maghreb (Khatibi [1974]1983; Mernissi 1994; 2001). By the same token, Khatibi condemns postcolonial local elites (both intellectual and governmental) for reifying the Occident as an "unthought difference" (*difference impensée)* to be uncritically and forever opposed. To a certain extent, this perception resonates with Mernissi's words when she reports, in an unmistakable confessional tone, that:

> Respecting a Westerner is a heroic achievement for a Muslim, a tour de force, because Western culture is so aggressively present in our daily life that we have the impression we already know it thoroughly. But in fact, as my vulnerability facing the Western journalists made me realize, we Muslims know very little about Westerners as human beings, as bundles of contradictory hopes and yearning, unfulfilled dreams. If we could see Westerners as vulnerable, we would feel closer to them. But we confuse Westerners with Superman, with heartless, robotlike NASA architects who invest all their emotions in crafting inhuman, exorbitantly expensive spaceships to discover faraway galaxies, while neglecting their own planet. I was stunned to realize that a Western man's smile could destabilize me because I had already decided that he was a potential enemy. I had skinned him of his humanism. All my Sufi heritage, I was shocked to discover, did not protect me against the most obvious form of barbarism: the lack of respect for the foreigner (Mernissi 2001:25)

According to Khatibi, the perception of the Occident as radical difference in the Maghreb stems from the persistence of the colonial wound, but in ways that prevent serious engagements with the structures of power still sustaining the privileged position of Western episteme and, thus, keeping non-Western societies silent in the global hierarchy of knowledge and power. It is in this sense that Khatibi puts forward the following reflection:

> Such appeal to the savage difference (savage and naïve) was the thoughtless rage of the decolonial era, and the critique of the West remains seized in resentment (…). And we keep asking ourselves: which West is it? Against which West are we opposing ourselves, within ourselves? Who is this "we"?[152] (Khatibi 1977:8, my translation)

In the first page of *Pensée-Autre*, Khatibi quotes Martinican-born anticolonial theorist/activist Frantz Fanon and appropriates upon his call to the need of finding

[151] See Bensmaïa 2003; Jebari 2017; Woodhul 1993a; 1993b.

[152] "Cet appel à la difference sauvage (sauvage et naïve) était la rage impensée de l'époque décoloniale, et sa critique de l'Occident demeure saisie dans le ressentiment (...). Et nous sommes toujours en train de nous demander: de quel Occident s'agit-il? De quel Occident opposé à nous-mêmes, en nous-mêmes? Qui, nous-mêmes?" (Khatibi, 1977:8).

"something else", now that "the European game" has come to a close ([1981a]1983:11). Khatibi is openly inspired by this urge when he clamours for "another thought", an unprecedented way of conceiving difference. However, he also contextualizes the Fanonian call as the necessary "reaction of those humiliated during the colonial era, who have never achieved decolonization, and whose criticism of the West was still seized with the resentment of a simplified Hegelianism *à la* Sartre" (Khatibi, p.12). Refusing to fall in this Hegelian dualism as he sees it, Khatibi ponders that the ambiguous "European game" cannot be immediately eliminated from this quest for another thinking. For, in his perspective, the "Occident" has come to inhabit the Maghrebian thinker, "the West" has become part of the Maghrebian subject inner being (Khatibi, p.14), and any new critical engagement with this situation must be placed in conversation with this world view. There is no space for denial or the refusal to engage this internalized other, he seems to suggest. The "other-thought" he delineates is therefore not a return to the "inertia of the foundations of our being" (Khatibi, p.12-13), but rather "a questioning of the bases of Maghrebian societies that makes possible an engagement with the larger questions that make up our contemporary world" (Rice 2009:154).

The questions to which the author is referring link encounters between different modes of production, of thinking, and of being with the contemporary "global context" in which colonial wounds and imperial structures are still at play but so is "this formidable energy of survival in transformation, this plural thought of survival which must live in its unheard-of freedom, a freedom without final solution". And this is precisely Khatibi's conceptualization of the Third World, a diversity of claims and political views on what global transformations must mean, but an unambiguous "we" when it comes to the need of a transformation[153] (Khatibi ([1981a]1983:17). This is precisely why the Maghreb appears as one site from where decolonial thought can emerge. In Khatibi's view, therefore, decolonization

[153] My translation of the entire quote is: "I call Third World this formidable energy of survival in transformation, this plural thought of the survival which must live in its unheard-of freedom, a freedom without final solution; but who has ever said that the "end of the world" is in the hands of this technical and scientific system that plans the world by subjecting it to the self-sufficiency of its will?". The original in French reads: "J' appelle Tiers Monde cette énergie formidable de survivance en transformation, cette pensée plurielle de la survie qui se doit de vivre dans sa liberté inouie, une liberté sans solution finale; mais qui a jamais dit que la "fin du monde" se trouve entre les mains de ce système technique et scientifique qui planifie le monde en le soumettant à l'autosuffisance de sa volonté?"

appears as "a process in which people of both the 'East' and the 'West' must participate critically" (Woodhull 1993:x). I will get back to this point later in this chapter. What is important right now, however, is simply to keep in mind that for Khatibi this "other thought", which stands for decolonization in a global context, can only be possible in the Maghreb alongside a critical examination of the dual inheritance wherein Maghrebian intellectuals are located: that of "Western knowledge" and that of their Islamic heritage (See Khatibi[1981a]1983:12). Double critique thus necessarily presumes the contact zone between cultures and aims at capitalizing on these energies for generating critical thought.

Moreover, Khatibi problematizes the urge for a "return to the origins", that is to say, to the fundaments of a Muslim and Arab religious, theological and cultural heritage as remedy against the colonial wound. Nonetheless, as he explains, the contemporary version of the discourse of the *Umma* – which includes the turn to the fundaments of Islamic thought, Arabicization policies and an idealized unicity among Arab peoples – disregards the fact that the substantive "Arab" designates "a war of nominations and ideologies that highlights the active plurality of the Arab world" (Khatibi [1981a]1983:13). In this same regard, Mernissi, in some of the best moments of her narrative, manages to show to her reader the ways "the male proponents of the one true faith in the Maghreb in fact borrow from myriad conflicting historical interpretations" as well as "from diverse cultural practices around the Muslim world in expounding their views and forcibly imposing them on North African women and men" (Woodhul 2003:215; Mernissi 2001:22-23;53-59). As Khatibi brilliantly discusses, it becomes an impossible narrative of a fictional past's presence that not only prevents Maghrebian societies from truly questioning its (silent but still very present) colonial wound, but also overshadows Maghreb's "plurality and diversity", making its peoples hostages "between the nostalgia for a totalizing identity and a difference still not elaborated, amorphous and, in one word: not yet thought" (Khatibi [1981a]1983:14). The only way to deconstructing both totalizing discourses of knowledge is, therefore, a double critique.

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that both Khatibi and Mernissi attempted to perform throughout their works what I have been called "writing/thinking between East and West" while adopting the Maghreb as their "horizon of thinking" (Khatibi 1977). Mernissi focuses on structures of fantasy and emotions between cultures, whereas Khatibi centers his attention on structures of knowledge

(re)production in a sort of sociology of knowledge from the borders of two epistemic traditions (see Mignolo 2012). As Idriss Jebari (2017) has recently highlighted, the adoption of the epistemological Maghreb as a reconfigured horizon of thinking by a group of North African intellectuals in this specific context ranging from late 1970s to late 1990s must be understood as "a call for radical rupture with existing modes of thought, especially the pervasiveness of nationalist thinking on academic and literary writing" which rendered Francophone Maghrebian thinkers a marginal position not only in the global context of knowledge production but also, and importantly, in intellectual circles within their home societies[154]. Both Mernissi and Khatibi can be located within this trend among some Francophone Maghrebian intellectuals.

"Thinking the Maghreb" – as Khatibi's 1977 article advocates – was thus an important move to link epistemological and cultural frameworks with political developments in that context. There, Khatibi's central argument was straightforward and yet puzzling: thinking differently about the region would resonates in its political reality. The calls for a "plural Maghreb" in aesthetic and intellectual productions of the time were therefore in straight connection with the



[154] In order to give us a glimpse of the moods operating in the context highlighted, Jebari draws our attention to the publication of a special volume in the famous French journal Les Temps Modernes, 'Du Maghreb', in 1977. The volume was coordinated by Abdelkebir Khatibi, Nourredine Abdi and Abdelwahab Meddeb, and brought together the contributions of a number of Maghrebian scholars which were divided in thematic sections addressing different dimensions of the realities in the region, two decades after independence. They included: "(Economic) Planification and Dependency", "The State", "(Social) Classes", "Culture/Writing/Ideology", "Agrarian Studies" and "Migration". As Jebari ponders, in this specific period of the region's intellectual and social history, those "who refused to align with the new governments, out of principle or ideological disagreement, were sometimes targeted as opponents, and occasionally made to fear for their safety if they were too out-spoken" (Jebari 2017:3. See Sukys 2007). This says a lot about the opportunity taken by the three mentioned young Francophone Maghrebian intellectuals to publish abroad, in the former metropole France – and thus call the attention of the French intelligentsia (and hopefully other foreign intellectual audiences) and also of their peers at home –, and to redefine their political role towards their home societies through the articulation of alternative views on the region's culture, economy and politics aiming at political transformations. As Jebari also points out throughout his recent article addressing this specific context in the intellectual and social history of the Maghreb, "[i]t is important to read the texts included in 'Du Maghreb' in light of the sociology and history of the intellectual's condition after independence, as the argument advanced by this volume relied on a claim that they were effectively marginalised, a symbolic violence that made them question their purpose in the national projects" (p. 4). The positions in the mentioned publication were indeed various, with some of its contributors demonstrating their eagerness to advance alternative views to the national projects in the region and to redefine the political role of intellectuals as the ones to start articulating the means to think and act otherwise; whereas others envisioned a more open space for public engagement in face of the flourishing civil society movements, specially in Morocco and Tunisia, and thus opted for a sort of "pragmatism" towards their roles as intellectuals and towards their countries. Thus, "rethinking the Maghreb" (the title of Khatibi's opening article in that volume) meant different things for these set of scholars at the time.

articulation of a political positioning directly opposed to the different forms of violence operating in the regional and global contexts (e.g. territorial disputes, nationalist discourses and the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism, the links between Orientalism and the global context of knowledge production, social inequality etc)[155]. The focus on alternative research framings and concepts – such

[155] The context at stake here was characterized by the threat as well as the reality of different forms violence in the post-independence states of the Maghreb. In what relates to political antagonism between the three newly independent states, the conflict between Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania over the future of the Western Sahara after Spanish decolonization (Campoy-Cubillo 2012: 153-166) contrasted sharply with the very idea of a shared Maghreb unity – an idea that had captivated local elites and the people in general during the anticolonial struggles in the 1950s (Al Jabri 1985; Seddon 2009). At the national level, as Mohsen Toumi (1977) summarizes in his contribution to the 1977 special editions of *Les Temps Modernes*, in spite of the persistence of certain common themes or tropes in the political discourse in each of the three countries – e.g. Arab unity, Maghrebian unity, Arab-Muslim civilization, national unity, authenticity, development, etc –, the uses of these common tropes tended to vary among governments individually. In Hassan II's Morocco, the main language is "is the language of the Book", the Koran, and the king is the divinely-ordained authority to conduct his people. The King is constantly resort his prophetic ascendancy, and the function and institution that he incarnates are almost divine. Here, "history is abolished. The discourse is maintained. When the economic and social realities trespass it, the contradiction is explosive". In Algeria, the official discourse finds its fundament in "the Algerian revolution, a model of heroic struggle towards freedom. As Boumediene himself asserted in a discourse in 1975, in Algiers: "If there is one revolution whose victories and heroic acts have been sung by the Arabs, it is the Algerian Revolution" ["*S'il est une révolution dont les victoires et les actes héroiques ont été chantés par les Arabes, c'est bien la Révolution algérienne*"] (Boumediene, *Discours*, 1975:251 quoted in Toumi 1977:152). As Toumi explains, the official discourse in Algeria goes like this: "Since 1971, the country has set an example to other Third World countries of an effective strategy for the recovery of their national wealth. For this reason, it finds itself in the throes of the active hostility of international imperialism that is still strong in the very heart of Algerian society thanks to its allies, the counter-revolutionaries, who sabotage development programs and the agrarian revolution, in particular. The discourse must recall, explain this situation and indicate the tasks each one has to cope with. The language used in this analysis and assigned to the discourse is Marxist. Or rather, a language deriving from Marxism, since the Algerian regime does not accept its presuppositions (class struggle, laicity) as a whole. What follows from this use is a kind of fictitious ideology. It does not reflect the realities of the country. This distortion pushes Boumediene and other leaders to seek security / room for maneuver in the narrative of the struggle for independence" (1977:152-153). In Tunisia, in turn, the official discourse follows two synchronic articulations: a pragmatic, pedagogical one in which every Tunisian citizen, the people, is addressed as part of a national unity, and a second one, organized around the figure of Bourguiba, who is glorified as an almost mythical character who was/is responsible for forging the history of the country. In a set of public speeches offered by Bourguiba himself in 1973 at *l'Institute de presse et de sciences de l'information* in Tunis, a whole historical scheme is reconstituted with the purpose of discrediting every individual who participated in the movement for independence. At the same time that Bourguiba calls on the future generations to the necessity of "safeguard national unity", he claims for himself the merits for forging such unity ("J'ai moi-même forgé cette unite"), since the people was "closed upon itself, terrified, living under constant threat, and I freed this people from fear" ("*était renfermé sur lui-même, terrorisé, vivant sous la menace constante. Je l'ai libéré de la peur*") (Bourguiba 1973 quoted in Toumi 1977:153-154). Political persecution was, therefore, a common practice against those who dared to oppose the established authorities in each of the three Maghrebian states. Among numerous violent episodes, in Morocco, there was the 1963 mass arrests within the socialist party as well as the 1965 Casablanca riots; in Tunisia, the trials against leftist and student groups; and, in Algeria, the expulsion of Marxist sympathisers after the 1965 coup and thereafter (Jebari 2017). In addition, the Algerian war for national independence continued to exert a powerful impact in the heightened nationalist discourse in the country and, a few decades later, the brutal civil war of 1990s Algeria came to remind Algerians and their Maghrebian counterparts of the unfulfilled promises of unity,

as cultural encounters and border knowledge – are thus a reflection of a collective effort by some at reimagining politics independently from the nation-state framework as well as from deadly uses to which transnational capitalism puts technology, science, and the mass media (Mernissi 2007; Woodhull 1993:ix; Bensmaïa 2003).

As it should be evident to the reader by now, Khatibi's and Mernissi's approach intersect in important ways – what, as a matter of fact, help us in the effort of reading them in parallel. However, the conceptualization of a "Plural Maghreb" endorsed by both of them also help to pinpoint what it personally meant to them to define the Maghreb as such in their individual projects. In addition, it brings to light some of the pitfalls in their particular endeavours to perform a double critique.

In Khatib's case, his critical efforts as well as the ultimate goal of his intellectual-ethical project, that is, the pursuit of a "marginal thought", a way of thinking difference otherwise, presupposes the work of rethinking Maghrebian cultural politics through a double critique of the region's heritage. In this sense, Khatibi capitalizes on the trope of "plural Maghreb" by highlighting "Maghrebian betweenness", that is, the region's historical and geographical situation in-between worlds, cultures and philosophical heritages in order to deconstruct the East/West binary by exposing how both macro-narratives, that is, that of Western knowledge and that of Islamic thought intersect in their violent traits and limitations (see Mignolo 2012). Nonetheless, following Woodhull's reading of Khatibi's work, the trope of "Maghrebian betweenness" is a double-edge sword in this author's approach towards critical thinking and decolonization. It oscillates between a much more geographically and historically grounded understanding of the subversive energies emanated by a much less ambiguous "we" (e.g. Third World intellectuals and the intersections of their multiple local contestations against the unfulfilled promises of both nationalist projects and transnational capitalism in the postcolonial context); and the promotion of "philosophy or a poetics" that appears as a better substitute for revolutionary politics due to its capacity to remain faithful to the "right to difference". Here, as Woodhull's problematizes, "right to difference" appears as much closer to a depoliticized, pre-discursive notion of irreducible or intractable difference that prevents engagement and dialogue than to an

social justice and political participation of the various segments of the societies not only at the regional level, but also at the national level (Gallissot 2010; Seddon 2009).

understanding of difference as historically, socially, geopolitically and culturally situated in subjects' political struggles, worldviews and demands[156]. In this way, it is in constant danger of naturalizing existing cultural configurations and discouraging the imagination of alternative systems and attitudes. Khatibi names this poetics "another thought" in *Maghreb Pluriel* and "another literature" in *Amour Bilingue*.

As it was highlighted along this section, in the two first articles of Maghreb Pluriel – *Pensée – autre* [1981a] and *Double critique* [1981b] – Khatibi situates his urge for a double critique in the history of the emergence of the Third World – in which he includes and highlights the Maghreb as one local story in the global history of colonial modernity as well as his locus of enunciation. The "third route" he describes there involves seizing the "power of word and action" ([1981b] 1983:50) in order to "enable intellectuals and activists around the world to carry out, by post-revolutionary means" the task of rethinking the creative forces that have being already exercised by struggles in Third World societies, and to become conscious of them, so that they may lead themselves towards decolonization. After criticizing Maghrebian leftists' uncritical adoption of a dogmatic Marxism inspired on the model adopted by the French Communist party in the 1960s (once "no other revolutionary theory seemed to us to be operative on a national and global scale"), Khatibi then calls for a double critique of "a simplified Marxian thought and, in parallel, the theological ideology of Arab nationalism" ([1981a]1983:16). For, in his view, the frustrations of the past indeed contain their own regenerative force and, in his own words, what seems to be required then is "a strategy without a closed system, but rather the construction of a play of thought and the political… To decolonize ourselves and each other is this chance of thought" (Khatibi, p.16). And although Khatibi remains suspicious of homogenizing unitary appeals to solidarity in his writings, he does suggest the possibility of "another politics" that stands for a perhaps less ambiguous "we". This alternative politics he envisions stems from the notions of epistemic and sociopolitical marginalization and material impoverishment he invokes, but still remains in the realm of the unthought, "unprecedent unsettling, in the face of all forms of tyranny" (Woodhull 1993:xviii). In one way or another, he underscores the urgency of addressing the situation of

[156] See Rao, *Third World Protest*, 2010.

those marginalized in the Maghreb and other parts of the Third World concretely, for at stake here is nothing less than survival (Khatibi [1981a]1983:17)

In his conceptualizations of the bi-langue in *Amour Bilingue* (see Chapter 2), by contrast, the constant "emphasis on the transformative power of a subversive poetics [alone and] removed from what is conventionally referred to as the political sphere" not rarely "reinforces a patriarchal law that is assumed to be immutable, rather than effectively challenging that law" (Woodhull 1993:x). If we take a moment to briefly return to the story narrated in Khatibi's 1983 novel[157], the female partner is often imagined as the radical other, one whose intractability seems to lie in other aspects besides the simple fact that she is a foreign (French) woman. On one side, there is the mix of pleasure and pain of the male main character/narrator "who actively assumes his divided subjectivity and plays with it in language" [Woodhull 1993: xix; Khatibi 1990). And on the other, there is the situation of the female character in the text, a melancholic and emotionally instable figure "whose exile from self, native language, and home takes her to the limit of madness and death before she finds the strength to 'face the mother tongue'" (Khatibi 1990: 106-7). Furthermore, as Woodhull pinpoints, Khatibi's difficulties and defensive response when faced with a concrete situation of women's struggle to challenge existing symbolic structures is exemplary of his faithfulness to "a supposedly prediscursive intractable difference" – one of the same sort he brilliant criticizes in his approach to Maghrebian plural heritance in *Pensée autre*, *Double Critique,* and *L'Orientalisme Désorienté*. Another important example of this contradiction in Khatibi's work can be found in his foreword to the Moroccan French edition of Mernissi's *Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women*, where, once again, he seems to figure intractable difference as sexual dissymmetry:

> Law is divided/shared [la loi se partage]; its principle of rigor obeys rules. For example, we have said that inegalitarian dissymmetry fixes the principle in terms of two territories: the sexual (on the feminine side), the economic and the political (on the masculine side). This patriarchal and phallocentric regulation is denounced today. Fine. But the utopia of an absolute and paradisaical equality is excluded for us. Of course, we must have economic, legal, and political equality, but how can one think the sexual outside of all dissymmetry? […] This seems to me absurd. I mean that dissymmetry is insoluble in itself, and must be regulated by a thought that thinks

[157] In this PhD thesis, I used both the original version of 1983 in French and the translation to English by Richard Howard [as *Love in Two Languages*] published in 1990 by The University of Minnesota. All are borrowed from this 1990 English version. See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

> that which is impossible to divide/share (Khatibi 1983: 8-9 quoted in Woodhull 1993:xx)[158].

What matters to us at this point of the discussion is this perception of how Khatibi's whole project of decolonization of knowledge finds itself at the verge of total backfire when he ignores and keeps at the margins precisely some of the most marginalized subjects in his own society: women. Perhaps, in his eagerness to name his own difference as an intellectual who finds himself marginalized as a Francophone Maghrebian writer who does not stand for neither the nationalist nor the Arab-Islamic totalizing narratives in his home society, Khatibi ends up disregarding the fact that women are still the one to whom the power of the word has been denied in the public sphere[159] – and precisely one of the forms of violence

[158] Woodhull goes on in her critique of Khatibi's misreading of Mernissi's narrative of the interviews she conducted with women of different age, classes and cultural background in Morocco. She writes: "To my mind, nothing in the interviews or in Mernissi's presentation of them suggests that feminist demands in Morocco presuppose thinking the sexual, or any other aspect of social relations, "outside of all dissymmetry". In Fact, it is not feminism's ostensible phallogocentrism that poses a problem so much as the attachment of Khatibi and other theorists to a particular patriarchal version of sexual dissymmetry, according to which the polymorphously perverse body exists prior to marking by sex, is repressed by the paternal law, and subsequently finds expression in a poetic language coded as feminine, "the mother tongue…[that]initiates one into the speaking of the not-said of the confusion with the mother's body" ([Khatibi] Bilinguisme et littérature, 191)" (1993:xx).

[159] In this regard, one recent and notorious episode occurred on June 17, 2014, when the Prime Minister of Morocco, Abdelilah Benkirane, head of the ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party, in one of his speechs to the parliament advocated for women to reject working outside the home (See: Alami, Aida. Leader's Words About Women Jolt Morocco, The New York Times, June 18 2014. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/19/world/middleeast/prime-minister-told-parliament-women-better-off-at-home-than-in-workplace.html Accessed: December 24, 2017*).* Regarding women's political participation in governmental political stances, according to the statistics provided by ONU Femmes Maghreb, in terms of ministerial positions held by women in 2015, Algeria counted 20%, Morocco 15.8% and Tunisia 10.5%. Regarding parliamentary work, Morocco has 17% of its parliamentary positions occupied by women, while Algeria and Tunisia exceed 30% of female representation in this political instance (See: ONU Femmes Maghreb/UN Women. Leadership et participation politique des femmes. Available at: http://maghreb.unwomen.org/ar/nos-priorites/leadership-et-participation). The situation is even more alarming if one takes into account the broader picture provided by the numbers of a 2010 national survey directed by Moroccan High Commission for Planning, which reveals that 63% of women between 18 and 65 years-old have experienced physical, psychological, sexual or economic violence in Morocco (Principaux résultats de l'enquête nationale de la prévalence de la violence à l'égard des femmes. Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP), Jan 11, 2011. Available at: https://www.hcp.ma/downloads/Violence-a-l-egard-des-femmes_t13077.html. Accessed: January 4, 2018). Moreover, Tunisia was ranked 127$^{th}$, Algeria 128$^{th}$, and Morocco 139$^{th}$ out of 145 countries in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report which surveyed women's power and influence based on health, economic, educational, and political indicators (The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 – Algeria. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=DZA Accessed: December 24, 2017; The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 – Morocco. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=MAR. Accessed: December 24, 2017; The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 – Tunisia. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=TNS Acessed: December 24, 2017). See also: Chafai, Habiba. Contextualising street sexual harassment in

against women that Mernissi wants to emphasize in her work. Besides, if, on the one hand, in *L'Orientalisme* he celebrates Maghrebian bilingual condition as one important source for decolonization as it, first, allows the postcolonial subject to "think in languages" and, second, turns possible to those formerly silent societies to answering back at those who had impose silence on them. On the other hand, in *Amour Bilingue* the subversive potential of bilingualism and, thus, of "writing and thinking in-between" is often sabotaged by philosophical wanderings that celebrate an specific form of in-betweenness: one that easily stands for a comfortable trust in the undecidable in ways that, most of the time, translates as 'intractable difference". "I like all languages, therefore, all races. […] But color is first of all a name", affirms the narrator in AB (Khatibi 1990:9). As both Woodhull and Hiddleston pointed in their readings of Khatibi's works, if at his best moments, our author has successfully appropriated deconstruction for third world peoples (see Mignolo 2012), he also gives in to the temptation of "un-naming" difference in favor of a poetics of undecidability that drains from difference its specificity (i.e. its cultural, geopolitical and historical embeddedness) and, thus, its political ground. To resort to Said's terminology discussed in the Introduction and in the first chapter of this thesis, when deprived of its political content and ambivalences difference here becomes "out-worldly" (Said 1983). In these terms, "another thinking" runs the risk of remaining an ever unachievable, incomplete alternative to the ethnocidal bent of Western knowledge. An alternative that is always yet to come but that never arrives due to the fear of naming difference and taking positions even when one is facing concrete situations of injustice, violence and exploitation.

For her part, Mernissi constantly evokes imageries related to the themes of travelling and trespassing as two interrelated tropes that helps to illuminate the transgressive potential rather than immutable character of the *hudud* – the "sacred frontier" between humans and God, good and evil, Muslims and Christians, East and West, men and women; in other words, between everything that is permissible and everything that is forbidden, as she defines it in different parts of her texts. If on the one hand, she tries to explain the centrality of fantasies of mobility and travelling in both Muslim men's and Muslim women's representations of femininity. On the other hand, and simultaneously, she capitalizes on the history of

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Islamic expansion from ancient times to nowadays in order to put forward a perspective on Muslim societies that disrupts Orientalist accounts in their customary objectification and silencing of the Eastern other, not to mention the more contemporary (and non-less Orientalist) views upon Muslims endorsed by Western governments and the global media. On page 175 of *Scheherazade* we can find an entire paragraph that puts in a nutshell what "plural Maghreb" might mean in Mernissi's perspective. She starts with a quote from the Koran and concludes with a description by historian Marshall Hodgson, as I reproduce below:

> One of the most quoted verses of the Koran, and one that I particularly love, reads: "And we made you into different nations and tribes, so that you may know about each other" (Sura 49:12). The Arabic word "to know" in this verse, *'arafa*, comes from *'Arif*, meaning a leader chosen by his group because he has accumulated knowledge by asking many questions about things he did not know. To understand this Muslim emphasis on learning from differences, one has to remember that Islam originated in the desert (present-day Saudi Arabia) and that Mecca's prosperity as a center of trade in the first years of the Muslim calendar was due to travelers constantly crossing through on roads linking Africa with Asia and Europe. Unlike the racist stereotype that most Westerners have of Islam, which they reduce to a jihad, or sacred war, this religion spread from Arabia to Indonesia through trade routes, via travelers talking to one another and learning from one another's cultures. Writes historian Marshall Hodgson: 'During the five centuries after 945 (Abbasid dynasty), the former society of the caliphate was replaced by an international society that was constantly expanding, linguistically and culturally, ruled by numerous independent governments. This society was not held together by a single political order or a single language or culture. Yet it did remain, consciously and effectively, a single historical whole. In its time, this international Islamicate society was certainly the most widely spread and influential society on the globe. That fascinating and enriching diversity is a strong message that comes through in many Muslim fantasies (…) (Mernissi 2001:175-176).

Even though Mernissi undoubtedly capitalizes on Muslim history and modes of thought in order to state her point, what the quote above brings to centre stage is the work of contact zones between societies and cultures, the interplays of encounters with both sameness and difference as an inevitable historical force in the formation and evolvement of human societies. Her revisiting/reimagination of Muslims historical attitude towards otherness here serves to at least two different purposes. First, to dismantle Orientalist macro-narratives on Muslims as fanatics, terrorists and backward, while rendering Muslim peoples visible through other less violent referents than those spread in most Western countries and in the global mass media. And second, to highlight the ever-living contact zone between cultures, between East and West, which turn radical dualisms into temporary fictional representations of East and West as two discreet cultural entities. At the same time,

she does not shy away from stating the importance of the Muslim cultural background in which she grew up and the role such heritage plays in the making of her intellectual-self and aspirations. Nonetheless, at least in my perception, she does it while she also manages to show that both traditions and cultural inheritance, rather than fix in time (i.e. the past) and space (i.e. territorial bounded entities such as nation-states), can be more accurately understood as the sum of persisting memories and fantasies travelling across time, space and minds. She thus strongly opposes the widespread view that Muslim people stay frozen in time or in their individual and collective aspirations – a narrative that is present in Westerners' minds but also, as Khatibi demonstrates in more detail, in radical nationalists and Islamists idealizers in the Maghreb.

This way, what Mernissi's approach tells us is that generalizations can be useful to disrupt macro-narratives (such as Orientalism or Western metaphysics) or macro-structures of power such as patriarchalism, at least in the sort of "returned gaze" towards "the West" strategy she is applying throughout her book – in which the focus seems to be less on specificities and case-by-case accuracy than on inverting power positions. She capitalizes on macro-narratives in her descriptions of both East and West but with the declared intent of disrupting Western dominant (and violent) view over non-Western peoples. The danger here resides, however, in the replication of cultural difference as a discourse of oppositions where the protocols of encounter are already given (e.g. enmity, radical difference, competition, etc). Mernissi's narrative is not free from such pitfalls and ambivalence towards otherness – as she is apt to recognize. Rather than glorify Maghrebian "betweenness" as a pacific synthesis of two or more worlds, she mobilizes writing as an exercise of self-representation in which her narrated-self travels between and across worlds only to find out that trespassing internal frontiers can be as challenging as trespassing exterior ones (such as territorial and cultural ones). "I am frightened when crossing borders because I am afraid of failing to understand strangers" (Mernissi 2001:1).

In this respect, one of the fiercest critics to Mernissi's approach to East and West encounters comes from Hasna Lebaddy (2005), who accuses the former of mistaking confinement within the discourse of Otherness for self-representation. According to Lebaddy, Mernissi actually capitalizes on an Orientalist discourse rather than dismantle it, in a narrative strategy that "compels her to represent herself

in terms that serve to conceptualize her as the Other" (Lebaddy 2005:129 quoted in Bourget 2013:37). In this sense, although Mernissi's depiction of life in the harem does not indulge Orientalist expectations on boundless eroticism, in the view of some of her critics, the distinction she advances between the imperial and the domestic harem merely displaces the image of the odalisque with another, also problematic one, of contemporary Muslim women as hidden behind veils and walls, and who remain victims of similar restrictions (gender segregation, polygamy, etc). On this same matter, Carine Bourget (2013) affirms that "[Mernissi's narrative] contributes to creating a picture of oppressed Moroccan women as frozen in time", for in spite of the differences described by her regarding imperial harems and her household, as well as between urban and rural contexts, "the forms of oppression remain despite slight variations" (Bourget 2013:36). In Bourget's critical stance on Mernissi, the author's search for "the broadest possible readership, undercuts the import of her feminist project", since she chooses to overemphasize "the antiquated and exceptional practice of the harem" while "pass[ing] over some important developments in Morocco and the Arab world, such as reveiling and economic exploitation of poor women" (Bourget, p.32). Although I do not fully agree with these readings of Mernissi's texts, I do recognize that Mernissi's words can sound exaggerated or even offensive to some unadvised readers, especially in what touches her descriptions of the West[160]. However, as she is also eager to demonstrate, the existent danger of failing in understanding others – as one might interpret some of the portrayals of the West that she brings in her writings, for example – cannot prevent one from engaging the other in both his/her sameness and



[160] In the last pages of *Scheherazade*, for instance, Mernissi's brings a depiction of what she calls "Size 6: the Western Women's Harem". She narrates the occasion when she went to an American department store and was unable to find clothes because the whole store only offered sizes 4 and 6 – what sound far-fetched if one considers American current statistics on obesity, for example. The book's concluding paragraphs also serve as an illustration of the author's exaggerated representations of Western societies. And although I personally find amusing her characterizations of the beauty dictatorship in Western societies, and that they indeed speak with her narrative strategy – which I named, after Sajed's terminology (2006) "returning the gaze" towards the West –, they certainly can also sound exaggerated and totalizing in less thoughtful and strategic ways: "Being frozen into the passive position of an object whose very existence depends on the eye of its beholder turns the educated modern Western woman into a harem slave. "I thank you, Allah, for sparing me the tyranny of the 'size 6 harem,'" I repeatedly said to myself while seated on the Paris-Casablanca flight, on my way back home at last. "I am so happy that the conservative male elite does not know about it. Imagine the fundamentalists switching from the veil to forcing women to fit size 6."
How can you stage a credible political demonstration and shout in the streets that your human rights have been violated when you cannot find the right skirt?" (Mernissi 2001:219).

his/her difference. In this sense, double critique can appear as a much more challenging exercise than one might imagine from Khatibi's theorizations of it.

As it becomes clear from both Khatibi's theorizations and from Mernissi's reading of 'East' and 'West' encounters, exercises of double critique depend upon border crossing. However, as Khatibi strongly asserts, in order to put forth alternative ways of thinking of difference – or to think difference otherwise, that is, in a "non-ethnocidal" form –, one must also un-think the border all-together. In Mernissi's case, if on one hand she conceptualises borders as "sacred" limits strongly encrusted in social conventions and cultural and religious codes, and importantly, in individuals' minds and attitudes. On the other hand, she constantly tries to un-think cultural borders when rethinking the encounters between "East" and "West". Her attempt at a double critique occurs when she turns the "in-betweenness" of cultural encounters into neither synthesis nor an empty interval, but into a space of "trans-coding" where structures of fantasy, emotions and power between cultures become exposed, thus disrupting the hierarchy between societies and subjects. In Khatibi's case, unthinking borders is one important step in his decolonial project – which stands for the general ideal of decolonization of knowledge that he articulates in his 1980s writings. As he seems to suggest, decolonization requires instances of identification and solidarity that only the fantasies of proximity that notions such as "Third World(ism)", "postcoloniality", and "margins" can suggest, in spite of the intractable difference among the peoples, (hi)stories, and geo-historical locations that are being lumped together under these general labels. As Mignolo highlights in his own reading of Khatibi's contributions, "double critique is a crucial strategy to build macronarratives from the perspective of coloniality" (Mignolo 2012:69). In this sense, they both complexify common-sensical views on East and West at the same time that they do not totally abandon generalization and binarisms as important resources to rethinking (and unthinking) borders and limits between cultures – specially when these cultures are framed as hierarchically placed opposites, as in the Orientalist discourse, for instance. In their critical exercises, both authors end up disclosing some of the difficulties of the such a challenging but still essential task that is double critique. In the meanwhile, either consciously or not, they also happen to unveil some traits of their own internal *hudud* and thus, of the limits of double critique.

The way stories travel, Mernissi seems to highlight, is key to understand the structures of power and desire marking relations between men and women, and between cultures at large. The silence regarding the intellectual Scheherazade and the political dimension of *The Thousand and One Nights* in the West tells a lot about how Westerners fantasize about non-Western peoples and their minds. As previously discussed, in *Scheherazade Goes West* she performs the strategy of "the returned gaze" in which she "watches the West watching the East" and tries to make sense and constantly reflect on her own position in this web of relationships (Sajed 2006:6). Mernissi constantly makes parallels between Scheherazade and herself, as a Third World Muslim female writer and scholar whose texts have access to Western audiences. If for Scheherazade "keeping the listener entertained was a matter of survival", the same can be stated, as Mernissi seems to suggest, with regard the non-Western intellectual when she/he decides to go West. In this regard, I believe that more than alerting us regarding the ambivalent role of the Third World intellectual – as many have done before – Mernissi indeed comes to remind us of two key important aspects of the postcolonial critic's role. In one dimension, she echoes Gayati Chakravorty Spivak's insightful reminder that one should be aware of the impossibility of not "inhabit(ing) the structures of violence and violation" one is trying to problematize (Spivak 1990:72). Thus, every time these authors decide to incorporate the ethical commitment of constructing a space for the voices of those who obviously speak but who are rarely listened, they cannot escape the danger of somehow objectifying those voices and turning them into her own (See Woodhull 1993; Abu-Lughod 1993).

At least to me, Mernissi does not seem to shy away of such dangers and tries to perform a strategy that stands for returning the gaze, yes, but also for negotiation even when this implies exposing the emotional set behind her uncertainties, mistaken conclusions and overturned plans when encountering otherness. In Khatibi's case, in his best moments, uncertainty indeed appears as an ethical-political stance insofar as it allows to reinterpret intractable difference in ways that differ from its common usage within dominant modes of thought in the Maghreb – and in the world at large. When uncertainty translates as humility instead of insecurity and fear, it might allow for dialogue with difference and, perhaps, "another thinking" of difference, borders and knowledge*s*.

As non-Western academics and intellectuals of a certain international reach, both Khatibi and Mernissi are obviously part of and implicated in a network of power hierarchies, but one in which the academic researcher is certainly not the marginal party. Instead of embracing an unreflective claim of marginality to her own, or to comfortably refuse to talking with/about others/otherness, at least in my reading, Mernissi chooses discomfort and self-exposure without shying away when the ambivalence and the dangers of such choices come to surface. At least in this aspect, I believe her work has fulfilled its purpose.

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,*
*there is a field. I'll meet you there.*
*When the soul lies down in that grass,*
*the world is too full to talk about.*
*Ideas, language, even the phrase* each other
*doesn't make any sense.*

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.*
*Don't go back to sleep. You must ask for what you*
*really want. Don't go back to sleep.*
*People are going back and forth across the doorsill*
*where the two worlds touch. The door is round and*
*open.*
*Don't go back to sleep*

- Rumi, *A Great Wagon*

# 6. IR and the Need for Reimagination - Concluding Remarks

Kateb Yacine once brilliantly said: "Plans are overturned at every moment!"[161], and I believe there is no better sentence to describe the process which made this thesis become what it is. I would like to briefly share with the reader how my plans were constantly overturned regarding this research and how constant change of plans indeed became part of my research and writing strategies. During the execution of this project I was constantly encouraged to rethink my own *protocols of being* and *being with* in what regards reading strategies, research questions, methodology and the place of my "I" voice. The contact zone established between my research project and I was marked by many falls – but also by beautiful, unexpected flights.

In the previous chapters I implied that an attention to literary texts in particular and to the politics of narrative in general brings an alternative view of International Relations (IR) as a complex site of heterology (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). More to the point, literary strategies – and, one might want to add, other narrative strategies – "allows for a glimpse into the performances and intricate negotiations that go into concepts and practices disciplinary IR has taken as given, such as state, agency, and actor(s)" (Sajed 2013:204). Opening space for alternative modes of narration other than traditional academic writing thus allows for a different understanding of international politics and defy the widespread view that it only occurs in the realm of interstate relations. The substrata I chose to read and closely engage in this work enabled me to reflect upon the complexity of overlapping voices, memories, viewpoints and conceptions of the "political", and how IR, when in its conventional more mainstream shape, still lacks the vocabulary and imagination to deal with this complexity. In this sense, I resorted to postcolonial Maghrebian literature written in French for two main reasons: first, to make sense of specific subjectivities produced in the interstices of the various (post)colonial encounters in the Maghreb; and second, to attempt to amplify the understanding of IR as a site of heterology, and thus, to emphasize an aesthetics of encounters over a logic of rigid borders, geographies and subjectivities. As I stated in the

[161] I found this phrase of Kateb's quoted in Bensmaïa 2003:9.

Introduction, rather than accepting and working with the world I encountered in IR conventional theories and approaches – which I perceive as symptomatically "out-worldly" – I intended to explore the diversity of worlds IR theories tend to obliterate.

From the very beginning, I knew I wanted to make my PhD research project into an exploration on the practices of thinking, (re)imagining, and writing global politics from various different places – e.g. "*loci* of enunciation", "subject-positions", "disciplines", "textual modalities". As I soon realized, this anxiety of my own towards other worlds and voices was a reflection of my ambivalent attitude in relation to the field of IR and IR theory as considerably disabling when it comes to politics beyond the limits of the international and to knowledge and viewpoints beyond the West. Nonetheless, if on the one hand I was constantly experiencing disenchantment with IR limited and limiting vocabulary – especially in what regards the discipline`s engagement with non-Western con-texts and approaches – , on the other hand, I was simultaneously experiencing re-enchantment with the world(s), possibilities, and challenges stemming from a considerable portion of the literature I was reviewing. The fact that part of my literature review was also composed by inspiring narratives from the Maghreb made me persistent even at the most disenchanting phases of the research work. Then, at some point, it became an investigation about the need for reimagining and narrating the Maghreb expressed by a number of Francophone Maghrebian intellectuals speaking from and across the three countries compounding that region. By that time, as I now realize, I was already up to the task of reimagining IR – and, of course, I was not alone in such endeavour (see Chapter 2). As Mhurchú and Shindo (2016) highlighted, the history of resilient orthodoxies in IR theory and historiography (e.g. Eurocentrism; state-centrism etc) are not the only record in the evolvement of the discipline, which has been also marked by the flourishing of critical imaginations. I then decided to draw inspiration from my very research subject – postcolonial Maghrebian Francophone literature – in order to turn my anxiety into a sort of productive force focused on the power of critical imaginations.

The research then focused on how the urgency – or, in the terminology I used here, "anxiety" – of reimaging and narrating the Maghreb has generated a whole body of postcolonial literature that creatively appropriated French language as tool to express an ideology and aesthetics of difference oriented towards less violent

forms of *being* and *being with* after decolonization took place in that region. Initially, I followed Rèda Bensmaia's suggestion and started by looking at the ways this literature worked in terms of narrating the *nation* in ways other than the official narratives offered by both postcolonial states of that region and the former metropole France (see Introduction and chapter 3). I was eager to find alternative approaches and vocabulary in order to understand and speak of collective identity and political subjectivity in a way that allows one to listen to the worlds of world affairs which disciplinary IR claims as its object of study. I focused on the narratives of several intellectuals insofar as their accounts could possibly offer "counter-narratives" to the foundationalist, ahistorical, state-centric narrative of modernity that mainstream IR is indebted to (see Shapiro 2008). It took me a while to realize, however, that these writers' main concern could not be simply understood as narratives of the (postcolonial) *nation,* since the vocabulary of "nation" itself – at least as it is usually conceived and applied – is too limited to portray the interventions they attempted to advance with their writings.

Mernissi's, Kateb's, Khatibi's and Derrida's writings and their ethical and political claims were formed, at least to a certain extent, from their acknowledgement of the volatile, daunting, and unexpected dimension of one's encounters with others in their otherness and/or sameness. It is also one way of reading this project's main subject-matter, that is, the amplification of our understanding of IR as heterology through recourse to narratives (mostly literary, autobiographical texts) from specific spatial-temporal context but which could possibly and broadly speak with other spatial-temporal contexts in meaningful ways. In some cases, their theorizations and practice of "writing/narrating the Maghreb" serve to highlight their own weaknesses and failures, and in other cases they serve to showcase their powerful efforts at publicly intervening when both French and Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian authorities were ambivalent or indifferent to what history judged as critically urgent. As Hafid Gafaïti (1997) argued, in a country such as Algeria, the novelists became the real sociologists and historians. However, more than the work of memory highlighting the connections and disconnections within and between the postcolonial society to which they claim to belong and the former metropole with which they nurtured an ambivalent relationship – and to which they had to appeal in order to get published, read and heard –, these intellectuals' anxiety for re-thinking the meanings of being,

belonging, and being with also finds common ground in their critique of the "postcolonial" as an unfulfilled promise. In this sense, although this thesis did not explore the dimension of the postcolonial nation-state in the Maghreb properly speaking, it was possible to have a glimpse of the sorts of exclusions at work in the contexts when these Maghrebian intellectuals were living and writing. Moreover, as Alek Toumi (2002) demonstrated, post-independence Maghrebian states have engaged in aggressive projects of Arabization in their particular efforts to implement cultural decolonization and affirm themselves as independent nation-states. Intolerance towards dissidence was widespread and prevented alternative conceptions of collective identity and history to emerge, in a sort of replication of the violence and depersonalization of colonial times.

Thus, if on one hand these narratives, when read together, help us to envision the common traits and limits of the postcolonial moment in the Maghreb, on the other, their collective efforts at reimagining the Maghreb as a "plural Maghreb" – as Khatibi would put it – can also be read as gestures towards decolonial thinking. In this matter, I took James Clifford insightful words into account when he acknowledges that

> [t]he term 'postcolonial' (like Arjun Appadurai's 'postnational') makes sense only in an emergent, or utopian, context. There are no postcolonial cultures or places: only moments, tactics, discourses. 'Post-'is always shadowed by 'neo-'. Yet, '*postcolonial' does describe real, if incomplete, ruptures with past structures of domination, sites of current struggle and imagined futures* (Clifford 1997:277, my emphasis).

Seen through these more complex lenses, the postcolonial thus encompasses both continuities and ruptures, ongoing struggles, possibilities and constraints. As Román de la Campa (2008) importantly highlighted, postcolonial literature in general became obsessed with the nation and its margins in their own efforts at reimagination – or, as Bhabha would posit it, "re-imagi-nation" –, leaving little room, if any, for alternative imaginaries, vocabulary and subjectivities to receive attention and critical engagement. The debates surrounding decolonial approaches, by contrast, take issue with the centrality of modernity and, therefore, the nation and other embedded categories and assumptions in non-Western epistemologies (see Mignolo 2007; 2008; Sajed 2017). In this sense, I suggested that Mernissi`s, Khatibi`s, Kateb`s and Derrida`s writings to a large extent managed to circumvent the problem of conceiving the political and, by consequence, political subjectivity

solely in terms of the nation. By drawing attention to other important realms through which political subjectivity is imagined and performed – e.g. language, landscapes, borders, storytelling etc – their beautifully written narratives make visible the limits of the anticolonial nationalist vision and strengthen the perception that national independence *does not* necessarily mean decolonization at large. Thus, rather than relying on a simplistic conception of the Maghreb as an inherently problematic region, this approach touches upon the complexity of a history of overlapping encounters and social and cultural hierarchical forces which makes freedom, emancipation and liberation into multiple and, not rarely, competing signifiers informing people`s imagination and political projects. In addition, as the individual chapters of this work show, if on the one hand these authors share a concern with subjectivities and voices at the margins of Maghrebian postcolonial nations (chapters 3 and 5) and of Franco-Maghrebian (post)colonial encounters (chapter 4) as well; on the other hand, they also touched upon the complex and dynamic forms through which such margins are *kept* marginal within colonial modernity. To resort to Cynthia Enloe`s insightful words in her now seminal *Margin, Silences and Bottom Rungs* [1996]:

> There is, I think, a serious flaw in this [IR] analytical economy, and in the research strategy that flows from it. It presumes a priori that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that exactly how they are kept there could not possibly be of interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer. A consequence of this presumption is that the actual amount and the amazing variety of power that are required to keep voices on the margins from having the right language and enough volume to be heard at the centre in ways that might send shivers up and down the ladder are never fully tallied (Enloe 1996:188).

My reading of this collection of texts highlighted that resistance was performed both through (problematic) affirmations of the writer's own marginality and through a shared hope that a turn towards the margins would be the remedy to the shortcomings of dominant historical narratives and political rule. As I tried to demonstrate, such mix of anxiety and high hopes focusing on *marginal subjectivities* (both/either a marginal self and/or marginal others) brought about potentialities but also limits in Maghrebian intellectuals´ attempts at resisting to the hierarchies and violences made possible and intensified by the colonial logic of modernity. To put in general lines, the openly expressed national disenchantment, aligned with a certain self-centered – sometimes elitist because too centered in the figure of the postcolonial bilingual intellectual *exilé(e)* – understanding of *the*

postcolonial subject advanced by these Franco-Maghrebian intellectuals sometimes implied an unqualified faith in what is fragmented, mobile, and in-between languages, times, and places. What is problematic in this view is its thoughtlessness in what regards other claims of marginality by individuals who are much less apt to identify with this specific narrative of postcolonial subjectivity that privileges what is fragmentary, uncertain, fluid, and uncomfortable (see Chapter 4). In a thorough reading of postcolonial Franco-Maghrebian literature and the question of identity, Winnifred Woodhull, writing in the early 1990s, highlighted, for instance, the difficulty of feminist intellectuals from the Maghreb in dialoguing with grassroots Muslim feminist movements. While a number of activists affiliated to the latter defend the veil as a legitimate expression of resistance against both Western modernity and imperialism and local nationalist repression towards Muslim women; the former (Fatema Mernissi among them) tend to conceive the practice of veiling exclusively as a symbol of male repression and retrograde forces. In a similar vein, Alina Sajed (2013) recently problematized the important gap between the subject-positions of the bilingual Maghrebian intellectual – the *exilé(e)* – and the Maghrebian poorer worker – the *immigré(e)* – in Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial encounters. Whereas the former generally finds her way to be heard in the public spaces of the university and literary market, and thus, to claim the status of an unproblematic guest in the former metropole France, the latter is kept at the margins as undesirable foreigners, cultural aliens against which public repression is openly enacted – anti-migration policies and the veil ban bill of 2011 being just two among many examples in this sense[162]. Considering this difference in the status of Maghrebian *exilé(e)* and Maghrebian *immigré(e)* in France might lead us to rethink Khatibi´s conception of the bi-langue as revolutionary tool, for example (see Chapter 4). Would an immigrant worker who felt the need to abandon her homeland and loved ones in search for better life opportunities easily identify with the cultural

[162] See: HIDDLESTON (2005). See also: CHRISAFIS, Angelique. Full-face veils outlawed as France spells out controversial niqab ban. The Guardian, Paris, 3 Mar. 2011. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/03/niqab-ban-france-muslim-veil; WILLSHER, Kim. France's burqa ban upheld by human rights court. The Guardian, Paris, 1 Jul. 2014. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/01/france-burqa-ban-upheld-human-rights-court; CIGAINERO, Jake. Five Years into Ban, Burqa Divides Widens in France. Deutsche Welle, Paris, 4 Oct. 2016. Available at: http://www.dw.com/en/five-years-into-ban-burqa-divide-widens-in-france/a-19177275.

and personal implications of being "detached from [her] roots and" to "become intermingled in a plural" bilingual encounter (Hiddleston 2005:103)?

The "overturning of plans" regarding the general research design adopted here also explains why Tunisian writers are mostly absent here. My intention was to move beyond a territorial understanding of the Maghreb and to draw attention to alternative topologies of community, region, and collective identity than the nation-state and its verticalization, the international. In connection with this, I wanted to structure the chapters around some key tropes of Francophone Maghrebian literature, i.e. landscape, language, and borders/margins (in this latter case, from the perspective of East and West encounters as a source of reflection on in-betweenness in the Maghreb, more specifically). The selection of literary texts happened to be one in which the works of Moroccan and Algerian writers occupied the front line. In this sense, the absence of Tunisian writers in this work was not fully intentional but occurred for a reason. Of course, this does not mean that Tunisian writers were not engaged in the movement that postcolonial Franco-Maghrebian literature became – the fact that various of Albert Memmi's and Hélé Béji's writings are still acclaimed as important reflections upon the postcolonial moment is one evidence in that sense, for example. This is one of the shortcomings of this research I purport to address in the future.

Another important layer in this PhD thesis can be found in my attempt to listen to the margins as much as I could – even though I am very much aware of the dangers that come along with the promises of moving towards the margins. This pursuit led me not only to the formulation of a particular protocol to read texts, but also, and importantly, it instigated me to make parallels between Franco-Maghrebian postcolonial literary texts and narratives strategies employed by IR scholars. As I realize at some point, writers from both sides were resorting to narrative strategies as means to rethink – and sometimes – reimagine their role as political subjects and intellectuals. I started wondering if it was possible to promote an encounter between these two different sets of texts in spite of the diversity of strategies and themes within each side. Nonetheless, truth is – as I now realize – that the terms of such encounter was not hard to be stated. Writers from both *loci* of enunciation – i.e. postcolonial Maghreb and IR scholarship – intersected in the shared pursuit of carving out non-state-centric worlds and vocabulary in order to speak of their own social contexts as well as in of/from the margins of these

particular contexts. Moreover, adopting this specific research strategy led me to the conceptualization of narratives as political acts since both set of texts have displayed constant motion and reinvention as sites of resistance and contestation – albeit in their own terms and particular contexts.

Let me briefly attain myself to the implications of understanding narratives as political acts in the two different textual spaces I addressed in the thesis. As the discussion in chapter 2 has shown, the voices speaking from and with what has been called "Narrative IR" share an unease in relation to traditional academic modes of inquiry and writing as out-worldly, precarious forms of engaging with relevant themes in the field of IR. In parallel with their Franco-Maghrebian counterparts, they share a preoccupation with the ethical-political implications of their textual strategies as well as with their role as intellectuals looking at and speaking of the world(s) of global and international affairs – which, not rarely, are bloody, unequal and hopeless worlds to talk about in the first place. A lingering assumption – which might also translate as hope – that is key for those who have resorted to narrative approaches in IR is that the adoption of a more reflexive, conscious stance in our research and writing practices makes a difference. Although reflexive research and writing do not suffice to bring about political change, opening spaces for other voices, worldviews and modes of inquiry would be a big necessary step for IR scholars to make our accounts on the worlds of international and global politics more "worldly" and, therefore, politically relevant. Of course, I am not saying that one is required *to adopt* narrative strategies in order to accomplish such task. What I am actually saying is that *an attention* to narrative strategies – both of our own and of the subjects with whom we dialogue in our studies – is one necessary step in the complex task of meaningfully translating cultural encounters and engaging with the *pluriverse* of international and global politics.

In the textual space of Maghrebian Francophone postcolonial literature, the conception of narratives as political acts obeyed a different logic. Feeling outraged when facing injustice and violence of all kinds in their home societies – including the many unfulfilled promises from the time of anticolonial struggle – and by being themselves targets of censorship and repression, many Maghrebian writers resorted to narrative strategies in order to reflect on the persistence of colonial memory and perform the work of telling silences in order to challenge the orthodoxies of their time (see Hiddleston 2015a). This movement speaks with the third sense of

worldliness I articulated in chapter 1. I argued that the notion of worldliness describes not only relations between text and their context, the world and the critic, but also bears an ontology of multiple worlds which, in turn, assist us in pushing the limits of our scholarly critical endeavours. Moreover, as recently highlighted by Blaney & Tickner (2017), an ontology of multiple worlds allows for other modalities of "worldism" (Agathangelou & Ling 2009) to be conceived as valid knowledge – and, thus, to contribute in our understandings of the worlds of international and global politics while remaining susceptible to contact, dialogue and critique as well.

Postcolonial Franco-Maghrebian writers have shown that narrative strategies and an openly imaginative attitude towards thinking and writing are important methods for worldism and wordlist interventions. More importantly, an ontology of multiplicity rather than unicity, of "pluriversals" rather than "universals" (see Mignolo 2012) sustains the decolonial utmost conception that "all parties make history", that is to say, that despite inequities and injustices, all parties are capable to imagine, build and articulate worlds. Besides inscribing difference onto politics, an ontology of multiple worlds also highlights contact, entwinements, "syncretic engagements" that "belie seeming oppositions and contradictions among multiple worlds to reveal their underlying connections despite hegemony`s violent erasures" (Agathangelou & Ling 2009:85). To resort to Agathangelou & Ling`s insightful words once again, rather than vain celebrations of transcoding and trans-subjectivities, worldism here implies disenchantment and re-enchantment, "reconstruction and critique, reconciliation and resistance" and serves as basis for communities and individuals to "have opportunities to heal and recuperate so they can build for another day, another generation" (Agathangelou & Ling, p. 86). An ontology of multiplicity also encourages us to rethink – or, perhaps, un-think – the common-sensical assumption that "the subaltern cannot speak" by critically addressing the substance sustaining different types of silences. This alone would contribute enormously to a discipline whose object is nothing less than the *world*.

One dimension that I want to clarify in these concluding pages is my use of the expression "the limits of IR", and how it contains some of the aspects of the study of global politics that I wanted to engage in the thesis. One perhaps more evident meaning highlights the disciplinary limits of the field of knowledge called International Relations. As the discussion in chapters 1 and 2 shows, because the

disciplinary borders of IR have been constantly reimagined through critical theorization from within and across the field these limits are thus less clear and fixed than many would wish them to be. Limits here can be conceived as functions of scholarly imagination and argumentation but also of the webs of power relationships marking such endeavours. Another aspect implied by the notion of limits in the field of IR is the very notion of *the international*, which refers to the modern topology that became hegemonic since European imperial expansion and the subsequent formation of the modern international world system (Quijano 2008; Mignolo 2012). As the discussions in chapters 3, 4 and 5 demonstrated, there is a telling disconnection between the transgressive potential of imagination – especially in what comes to its synergic effects that animate people`s efforts to congregate in inventive forms of political mobilization across geographical, cultural and epistemological borders – and our impoverished scholarly vocabulary and methods to capture the worldly dimension of politics. The international appears as *one* among the many possible topologies upon and through which political acts are imagined and performed across the globe, and still, it is the topology after which IR is named and which is conceived as its exclusive object of inquiry. In this aspect, lack of imagination or of willingness to engage difference is easily translated as a function of disciplinary borders that are not supposed to be trespassed.

In connection with what I understand to be a worldly perspective of IR, I wanted to privilege non-Western voices and perspectives in my research project. In this sense, I attempted to combine "border thinking" and "intellectual decolonization" in approaching both IR theory and postcolonial perspectives from the Maghreb. I believe such combination of ways of looking helped me, first, to take into account the colonial traces that turn possible to speak of certain localities and societies as fixed, docile, voiceless objects of knowledge in the context of Western sciences, its epistemological assumptions and canon; second, to highlight the productive, critical and not rarely contradictory forces engendered by the contact zones between local (hi)stories and projects and global designs (Eurocentric modernity among them) (see Mignolo 2012); and third, to go beyond the mere recognition of subaltern epistemologies – e.g. non-Western thought – and problematization of the means by which they tend to be submerged by Western epistemology. In what regards this latter dimension, I tried to re-situate the Maghreb in the world of international relations by paying due attention to the voices,

knowledge frames, and concepts produced in the interstices of (post)colonial encounters constituting that region. Put differently, I intended to draw attention to the epistemological value and to some of the potentialities and limits of these accounts for understanding the intricacies of postcolonial violence both within the specific context of the Maghreb region and in other dimensions of international and global affairs.

Lastly, I want to briefly return to the question of the "I" voice in academic writing. As argued in chapter 2, the "I" voice does not need to be uttered to be a presence in our texts. However, there is always the danger of turning the "I" in "IR" into solipsist, egoistic exercises of purposeless academic self-indulgence. To this point, even though I do not fully disagree with Naeem Inayatullah (2011) when he claims that we, scholars, perhaps "are actually not indulgent enough" (Inayatullah p. 8) while performing our art, I still find intellectual self-indulgence highly dangerous when deprived of a clear commitment with making power relations more visible. I am not sure if many of us are truly willing to take this sort of risks at "falling and flying" in our already challenging academic routines. In this respect, I would say that we must dare to take risks in ways that lead us to serious engagements with voices, worldviews, stories, spaces and times other than the ones we have become used in IR. In this sense, I like to believe that even when the protocols of "being" and of "being with" are already well-established between individuals, cultures, societies and subject-positions (e.g. researcher and researched), there is still space for imagination, agency and, hopefully, for some change. While reflecting upon and writing about the "R" in *IR*, perhaps, one must simply keep in mind the one straightforward question Kristeva (1986) once posited: "Who am *I* to you?" – the question Fatema Mernissi somehow focused on in her insightful reflections on the *hudud* in East and West encounters. As intellectual subjects speaking from a diversity of *loci* of enunciation and reaching different corners of the world of IR at different degrees, we must keep in mind, however, that we are hardly the most marginal subjects at stake. It is one of the main aspects of the awareness or sensibility I have been talking about. The first fall of every scholarly endeavour we dare to initiate.

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