

2015

The Plagues of Colonialism: Representations of Suffering in the Colonial and Postcolonial Francophone Algerian Novel from 1950-1966

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THE PLAGUES OF COLONIALISM:
REPRESENTATIONS OF SUFFERING IN THE COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL
FRANCOPHONE ALGERIAN NOVEL FROM 1950-1966

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of French Studies

by
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December 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation advisor Dr. Pius Ngandu for all of his guidance and his constant, encouraging smile. I am similarly very appreciative of the constructive criticism provided by my committee members, Dr. Jack Yeager and Dr. Rosemary Peters, which allowed me to delve deeper into the subject of suffering in the Francophone Algerian novel. I also owe much gratitude to Dr. Wade Provo for his editorial advice.

I would like to thank my loving wife Megan for her dedication and support through these long, arduous years. Without her support this journey would not have been possible. I am similarly grateful for my three loving children, Evelyn, Harrison and Nathan, who have been patient with me over the past few years. I would also like to thank my parents for always being supportive and encouraging, continually pushing me to do my best.

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ABSTRACT

The indigenous Francophone Algerian novel dates from the early 1950s and since then has been a political manifestation of uneasiness. The anticolonial undertones of this literature demonstrate the sufferings and harsh realities of life under an oppressive colonial regime; meanwhile the postcolonial novel continues the representation of this suffering through the residual effects of colonialism and the impact of the bloody decolonization war. This dissertation contributes to the discourse regarding suffering as a result of French colonial oppression in light of François Hollande's official recognition of the trauma of colonialism and the acceptance of the events from 1954-1962 as a war rather than an internal conflict.

This dissertation analyzes the power and effects of suffering in the colonial and postcolonial Francophone Algerian novel through violence and poverty, the plagues of colonialism. In doing so, it looks at the role of suffering in this literature and its effects on narration and character development. The themes of violence and poverty plague the colonial novel insomuch that the characters' actions become directly tied to their suffering; whether leading to despair or hope, death or revolution. In looking at the role and effects of suffering this dissertation analyzes the works by Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Mouloud Feraoun and Kateb Yacine.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For over 132 years, the Algerian population endured harsh conditions under French colonial rule, including eight long years of brutal warfare, until achieving independence in 1962. These long years would shape and define a literary movement that would emerge in the 1950s in opposition to this unjust system. At the outset, this movement seemed to be nothing more than a mere ethnographic description of Algerian life, appearing exotic to the European reader. But, in fact, the colonial Francophone Algerian novel, through this mask of ethnography, demonstrated the harsh realities of life under this regime. This literature initially contained subversive attacks against an oppressive administration exhibited primarily through the theme of suffering. These attacks over time would become more overt, while still based on the misery of the general population. Colonial literary criticism too often glosses over this element as a mere consequence of the historical milieu rather than looking at the significance of this theme in the progression and narration of the novels. This dissertation analyzes how these particular colonial literary texts represent this oppression and trauma, whether explicitly or allegorically and the implications of that suffering on the postcolonial novel. In looking at the representation of oppression in this literature, this dissertation also demonstrates the specific roles the thematic elements involving suffering play on the characters and their actions rather than their portrayal as mere descriptive background information.

The significance of this work derives from the deliberate disregard of the French government concerning the events of colonialism, suffering and the Algerian war. The events of the Algerian War had not been officially recognized as a war¹ until 1999; the government had even gone so far as to pass a law in 2005 which dictated instruction of the positive influences of

¹ Alistair Horne terms these events as a war of peace as there were no declarations of hostilities made (14).

colonization in the school system.² On December 20, 2012, François Hollande, the current French president, met with the Algerian parliament in order to address concerns of collaboration in a strategic partnership, both economic and political. During this speech, Hollande addressed an important issue which had been ignored for many years: France and Algeria's traumatic and complicated past. He stated:

Pendant 132 ans, l'Algérie a été soumise à un système profondément injuste et brutal. Ce système a un nom : la colonisation. Je reconnais ici les souffrances que la colonisation a infligées au peuple algérien. Les massacres de Sétif, de Guelma et de Kherrata demeurent ancrés dans la conscience des Algériens, mais aussi des Français. [...] Cette vérité, nous la devons à tous ceux qui, par leur histoire douloureuse, blessée, veulent ouvrir une nouvelle page [...] La vérité rassemble, répare. Alors l'Histoire, même quand elle est tragique et douloureuse, doit être dite [...] Sur cette guerre, qui, longtemps, n'a pas dit son nom en France, la guerre d'Algérie, nous avons ce devoir de vérité sur la violence, l'injustice, les massacres, la torture. (qtd. in Le Roux)

Hollande's speech addresses the issue of past conflicts which had been, for the most part, overlooked until this point in history. Hollande recognizes the suffering inflicted upon the Algerian population by colonialism and accepts the events from 1954 to 1962 as a war rather than as an internal conflict. This dissertation, in light of France's recent official recognition of suffering inflicted upon the Algerian people, thus aims to demonstrate and bring to the forefront these sufferings through the colonial and postcolonial Francophone Algerian novel. This dissertation, thus, provides another lens through which the unjust machine of colonialism can be viewed sociologically and historically because just as Hollande argues, "l'Histoire, même quand elle est tragique et douloureuse, doit être dite." James D. Le Sueur likewise argues that, "Due to the severity and importance of the Algerian crisis, there is a sense of urgency to research on the

² The fourth article of the « Loi du 23 février 2005 » states:

Les programmes de recherche universitaire accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite.

Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit.

La coopération permettant la mise en relation des sources orales et écrites disponibles en France et à l'étranger est encouragée (legifrance.gouv.fr).

French-Algerian War because it continues to affect France and Algeria, and by extension Europe and North Africa” (“Decolonizing ‘French Universalism’” 103).

Historians, such as Benjamin Stora, James D. Le Sueur, Alistair Horne and many others have dedicated much of their lives to the research of colonial Algeria and the Algerian War through a historical lens. Likewise, Jean Déjeux, Jacqueline Arnaud and Charles Bonn have been at the forefront and pioneered the analysis of the Francophone Algerian novel. Déjeux initially became interested in this literature as an ordained priest in Algeria and, as such, provided critical insight outside of the academy into this newly emerged literary genre as well as delimiting this literature in his anthologies. In praising Déjeux, Charles Bonn notes:

N’oublions pas que Jean Déjeux, totalement autodidacte, n’avait aucune formation universitaire (il n’était pas même titulaire du baccalauréat). C’est peut-être pourquoi il a pu jouer ce rôle de défricheur dans un domaine littéraire que l’institution universitaire, des deux côtés de la Méditerranée, s’est toujours obstinée à ignorer. (3)

More recently this literature has been the subject of study by Anglophone and Francophone scholars alike. Abdelkader Aoudjit seeks to bring this praiseworthy literature to light for an unaware Anglophone audience. Aoudjit in his work, *The Algerian Novel and Colonial Discourse: Witnessing to a Différend*, looks at this literature and argues that these novels are to be read as a *différend* as defined by Jean-François Lyotard: “a case of conflict in which an individual or group on one side of the opposition suffers an injustice and is at the same time reduced to silence, deprived of the means to argue, because the conflict is articulated in the discourse of their opponents and their concerns do not make sense within that discourse” (Aoudjit 3). The colonial body was voiceless before the colonial justice system as Mohammed Dib states: “Ce qu’ils appellent la justice n’est que leur justice. Elle est faite uniquement pour les protéger, pour garantir leur pouvoir sur nous, pour nous réduire et nous mater” (Dib, *La grande maison* 49). Contrary to the idea of a *différend*, the novels Aoudjit studies, which

coincide with the novels of this dissertation, do in fact present a counter argument to the injustices because they are not simply ethnographic and apolitical; they take a stand against the oppressive colonial regime. These authors and their works speak for an oppressed people. This dissertation, contrary to Aoudjit's work, will, therefore, look at these novels and authors in a different light, as a form of resistance and opposition against an oppressive colonial administration, rather than representative of a voiceless body: demonstrating that this is a *littérature engagée*.

When discussing the Francophone novel in Algeria, the Anglophone sphere tends to focus primarily on Pied-noir authors, such as Albert Camus, who have gained international fame. Such as is the case in Azzedine Haddour's work *Colonial Myths: History and Narrative* in which he focuses on Albert Camus, with a minor emphasis on the indigenous authors. Haddour, nonetheless, provides an insightful analysis of literature produced in Algeria which proves applicable to the focus of this dissertation. Haddour looks at this literature from a historical perspective addressing assimilation, myths, colonial gaze, famine, racism and miscegenation. In contrast to Haddour's work, this dissertation will intentionally leave out Pied-noir authors and will look at the indigenous literature, analyzing the modes used to express suffering through a historical and societal framework.

1.1 Corpus

The corpus for this dissertation focuses on the writings of Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri and Kateb Yacine whose initial works were published near the beginning of the 1950s. These four authors, who can be considered as the founding fathers of the Francophone Algerian novel, possessed the means and abilities to demonstrate a *prise de*

conscience to a wide, primarily French readership³. Before the 1950s, Pied-noirs⁴ authors like Albert Camus had been writing and contributing to the Algerian narrative, but in 1950, the first widely accepted novel from an indigenous Algerian not of European descent emerges as *Le fils du pauvre* by Mouloud Feraoun.⁵ In describing the significant role of these authors, Leïla Sebbar states: “Je suis la fille de ces fils qui écrivent des livres si loin de la maison qu’ils ont quittée pour n’y plus revenir et, parce qu’ils sont partis, parce qu’ils ont subi l’épreuve du passage pour tous les autres, nous écrivons, j’écris. Mohammed Dib est de ces fils-là, dont je serais comme l’une des filles” (Sebbar 95). Sebbar’s acknowledgement of the influential role played by these authors supports the decision to use them as the basis for a literary analysis of suffering in Francophone Algerian literature. Their works contributed greatly to the establishment of the Francophone Algerian novel. I have intentionally omitted Pied-noir authors, as well as others who publish later, in order to limit the corpus to the founding fathers of the Francophone Algerian novel. In delimiting this corpus, I also acknowledge the impact of other authors such as Jean Sénac, Rachid Boudjedra and especially Assia Djebar on this literature.

Albert Memmi described this literary movement which began in the 1950s and shaped by colonialism as the Generation of 1954, a group of literary scholars in the Maghreb writing against colonialism. He states of this group:

L'appellation n'a pas été tellement retenue mais c'est tout de même un point de repère, car un peu avant avaient paru *La colline oubliée* (1952), premier roman de Mouloud Mammeri — Berbère, arabophone et Francophone —, *La grande maison* (1952) de Mohammed Dib, et, de moi, *La statue de sel*. Est-ce un hasard historique ? Pas entièrement, car les consciences étaient en train de s'éveiller au problème de la décolonisation. Personne n'en avait une conscience claire, mais cela affleurait. Or, ces

³ The majority of native Algerians were either illiterate or only spoke native dialects. Similarly, the French publishing houses for these novels demonstrate the targeted audience; all of the novels in this corpus were published in France.

⁴ The Larousse dictionary defines Pied-noir as: “Français d’origine européenne installé en Afrique du nord jusqu’à l’époque de l’indépendance.” This reductive term did not come to represent this group until 1954 (Brager 13).

⁵ At this point, the literature provided by these authors was categorized as pertaining to French literature and not a distinguishable separate identity now known as Francophone Algerian literature.

œuvres-là, d'une part, rendaient compte de la manière dont étaient vécus les problèmes, d'autre part, — et cela est très important — elles avaient atteint une forme suffisante pour séduire et persuader de l'importance du phénomène ; pour les Français de la métropole, ce fut souvent une révélation. Il y avait à la fois la révélation d'un questionnement et d'une maîtrise formelle qui pouvait supporter honorablement la comparaison avec la jeune littérature française. (Memmi, *Emergence* 16)

This literature does not merely emerge as an *hasard historique*, but as a result of a *prise de conscience* on the part of the Algerian population, derived from historical events, such as World War II and the ensuing promises of self-determination by Charles de Gaulle⁶. These works, through demonstrating this *prise de conscience*, acted as a staging ground for a larger decolonization movement founded on the exhibition of life under the French colonial regime. In defining this group, Memmi does not implicitly include Kateb Yacine, although he does acknowledge that many do, in fact, include him in the Generation of 1954 (Memmi, *Emergence* 17). Yacine's first novel, *Nedjma*, acts as a fundamental text representative of this movement and mindset; Leïla Sebbar supports this as she declares that *Nedjma* constitutes one of the "romans fondateurs de la littérature algérienne" (*Mes Algéries* 100), and, for this reason, this dissertation will include his works *Nedjma* and *Le polygone étoilé*. Similarly, Memmi omits Mouloud Feraoun as a member of this group, even though his first publication appears in 1950. This novel contributed to the subversive ethnographic discourse attacking the repressive nature of colonialism, however, many argue that it is an acceptance of colonialism. For this reason, both Kateb Yacine and Mouloud Feraoun play an integral role in the corpus of this dissertation along with Mohammed Dib and Mouloud Mammeri whose works provide the foundation for the Francophone Algerian novel.

⁶ Charles de Gaulle, in a televised speech on September 16, 1959, mentioned the possibility of self-determination in declaring his stance toward the Algerian crisis. This declaration likewise demonstrates that De Gaulle "wanted France out of the colonial imbroglio in order to protect its interests and influence in the world" (Layachi 2). Benjamin Stora in *Le mystère De Gaulle : Son choix pour l'Algérie*, an historical work which focuses entirely on this televised speech, quotes De Gaulle as having stated concerning the self-determination of Algeria that all possibilities are open (241).

The works which constitute the corpus of this research include: *La grande maison* (1952), *L'incendie* (1954), *Le métier à tisser* (1957) and *Qui se souvient de la mer* (1962) by Mohammed Dib; *Le fils du pauvre* (1950), *Les chemins qui montent* (1957) and *L'anniversaire* (posthumously published in 1972) by Mouloud Feraoun; *La colline oubliée* (1952), *Le sommeil du juste* (1955) and *L'opium et le bâton* (1965) by Mouloud Mammeri; *Nedjma* (1956) and *Le polygone étoilé* (1966) by Kateb Yacine.

Mohammed Dib, born in 1920 in the city of Tlemcen, began writing at a young age and continued until his death in 2003. His last works published consisted of a book of poetry entitled *L.A. Trip*, which recounts his stay in Los Angeles as a Regents Professor at the University of California at Los Angeles from 1976 to 1977, as well as two other novels: *Simorgh* and *Laëzza*. He is well known for his prolific writings, which include more than thirty novels, short stories and collections of poetry, and in 1998 he won the Prix Mallarmé for *L'enfant-jazz*. According to Jean Déjeux, Mohammed Dib in 1949 devised the idea to write “un roman aux proportions assez vastes qui devait présenter une sorte de portrait divers de l'Algérie” (*Littérature*, 145) which would later become what is now considered as the Algerian trilogy, a collection of semi-autobiographical novels based around the life of a young boy named Omar. Through the observant eyes of Omar, these novels recount the struggles of Algerian life, whether in the countryside or the urban center under French colonial rule. Dib, in these novels uses a social realist lens to portray the suffering of not only Omar and his family but those around him in Dar-Sbitar, the *grande maison*, which summarily describes the whole of Algeria.

The trilogy tells the story of Omar's upbringing in these tumultuous times surrounded by inevitable suffering and war as the veil shielding him from reality of life falls from before his

eyes. The trilogy begins with Omar as a ten-year old boy living in Dar-Sbitar⁷ with his mother and two sisters. His mother desperately and tirelessly works to provide food for her children, but often comes up empty-handed. Dib's opening novel displays the harsh conditions of not only the adults in this Manichaean world, but of the children as well. The following novel, *L'incendie*, continues Omar's narration as he travels to Bni Boublen, a village in the Algerian countryside, with Zhor, a neighbor from Dar-Sbitar. In Bni Boublen, Omar, as an observer and witness, describes the horrible conditions of the *fellahs* who have become dispossessed of their lands and have become a resource of cheap labor for the Europeans. He also becomes a witness to the *prise de conscience* of the *fellahs* in which emotions run high and result in not only a strike, but an *incendie*⁸ which symbolizes the *fellahs*' fervor and, thus, cannot be put out. The final novel of the trilogy, *Le métier à tisser*, continues to follow the story of Omar who is now fourteen years old and has left school and become an apprentice weaver. This novel demonstrates that the *prise de conscience* that had occurred in the countryside likewise has taken place back in the urban centers of Tlemcen. Aoudjit argues that, "Through a masterful description of the setting and selection of characters, Dib, in his early trilogy, presents a microcosm of colonized Algeria: cities, countryside, peasants, and laborers" (17-18).

Qui se souvient de la mer, in contrast to the Algerian trilogy, is an allegorical representation of the Algerian war told through the lens of an unnamed narrator. The novel exhibits surrealist symbols and mythology in an attempt to describe the indescribable trauma of war. Mohammed Dib himself, in the postface to the novel, compares this work to Picasso's

⁷ A run-down old hospital that has now become the residence for the poor of Tlemcen, referred to as "la grande maison."

⁸ The purpose of leaving the French term here is to understand the dual meaning attached to the word: the first being a literal fire, secondarily a figurative frenzy or turmoil. Both of these translations help describe the rupture in the trilogy. For this purpose the use of the French term, rather than the English term "fire," will be used to demonstrate the larger impact that the *incendie* played in the narration of the novel.

painting *Guernica* as it portrays the horrors and trauma of war without any blood or realist imagery. The novel takes place in an unnamed hostile city that resembles Algiers and the Casbah during the Algerian war, ruled by minotaurs and mummies while tormented by *iriaces* and *spyrovirs*. This novel, as well as *L'opium et le bâton* by Mouloud Mammeri, are the only two major Francophone novels which centrally deal with the Algerian war, and “yet the words ‘Algeria’ and ‘revolution’ never once appear in the text” (Tremaine viii). The narration of *Qui se souvient de la mer* often resembles a dream-like state in which unpredictable events unfold in an illogical sequence. Louis Tremaine, the translator of the English version, argues that the reader “who looks to this novel, then, for a factual understanding of how and why the Algerian revolution came about or was won will likely be disappointed. But the reader who takes up this book in anticipation of experiencing revolution as it is actually *lived* will find that Dib understands, not only his fellow Algerians, but his fellow human beings very well indeed” (xi).

Dib’s critique of colonialism and the Algerian war resulted in his expulsion from Algeria by the French government. Instead of fleeing to Egypt, like many other political refugees at the time, he moved to Mougins and lived with his wife’s parents, where he stayed for five years and published four novels. After the war, Dib, rather than returning to Algeria, relocated to the Parisian suburbs where he continued to write. Dib holds great importance and significance in this literary period, as he is considered the greatest and most prolific Maghrebin writer.

Mouloud Feraoun, born in 1913, published his first work, *Le fils du pauvre*, in 1950. *Le fils du pauvre*, a primarily autobiographical novel, recounts Feraoun’s childhood through the fictional character of Fouroulou Menrad⁹ and is considered the most widely read novel of the North African literary movement (Déjeux, *Littérature* 114). The reader learns in the first chapter,

⁹ Feraoun’s character’s name closely resembles an anagram, merely containing one extra letter, which further demonstrates the autobiographical nature of this novel.

a type of preface, that the story in front of him comes from a simple school notebook, a sort of personal journal belonging to the young Fouroulou Menrad. The narrator believes that Fouroulou's story needs to be told, that his voice needs to be heard. The novel begins with Fouroulou as a young child who, as a son, has certain privileges and rights over the girls of the family. He first takes advantage of his status, but a change occurs when he attends the school of the colonizer, an unabashed praise of the colonial education system. This is a story of the young Fouroulou's education, beginning with a virile one taught to him by his uncle, while the second education is formal, eventually requiring him to leave his family; his journey through education proved difficult, but rewarding as well.

Feraoun's literary career was short-lived as a result of his assassination by the OAS, *l'Organisation de l'armée secrète*, in 1962, towards the end of the Algerian war. Nevertheless, he published several novels before his untimely death, including *La terre et le sang*, *Les chemins qui montent* and the beginning to *L'anniversaire*. *Les chemins qui montent* does not directly attack colonialism; it appears rather to be an ethnological novel. It tells of the difficulty of living between two cultures as well as the difficulty of *métissage*. The first half provides a feminine perspective of Algerian daily life, with an emphasis on the theme of marriage; meanwhile, the second part contains the story of Amer, a "transcription" of his journal, similar to *Le fils du pauvre*, which is as an attempt to tell his story. The novel ends with the death of Amer foretold by the women in the first part of the novel. *Les chemins qui montent* in its entirety demonstrates the inferiority of the Algerians vis-à-vis the French, discussing the psychological mindset of the colonized.

Feraoun began writing his final novel, *L'anniversaire*, in late 1961, but he had only completed the first four chapters before his death. The original manuscript contained dates in the

margin which indicated the completion day of that particular chapter. The last chapter, dated March 13 and 14, contains the last writings of Feraoun who the following day, March 15, would become the victim of an assassination. Although the novel remains unfinished and was published posthumously in 1972 by Seuil, it tells the story of love between the narrator, a native Algerian, and Claire, a French woman. In between narration with Claire, the narrator intermittently comments on the events of colonization, as well as the war. The majority of Feraoun's works have been translated into multiple languages, including English and German. He is also considered a quintessential novelist of the Kabyle region, along with Mouloud Mammeri, Malek Ouary and Marguerite-Taos Amrouche (Déjeux, *Littérature* 114).

Mouloud Mammeri's legacy in Algeria may rest more on his attempt to preserve Tamazight, his native Berber language to which he devoted most of his life, than on his Francophone literary texts. Born in 1917, he published his first novel, *La colline oubliée*, in 1952 after having served in the French military during World War II; his works are semi-autobiographical, and his experiences during the war seep into his literature. *La colline oubliée* tells the story of life in the Haute Kabylie told from the perspective of the main character, Mokrane. The novel begins in 1939 as friends, who have returned from studies in France due to the outbreak of World War II, reunite. As a result of the war, the men of the village are then called to fight for the French, which, in turn, destroys families and disrupts the daily routine of the village. This novel demonstrates a growing anti-colonial sentiment in the Kabylie region due to the suffering resulting from colonialism. Although the colonizers themselves are rarely present in the novel, their actions and choices are evident through the Algerian involvement in World War II. The individuals in the novel are constantly aware of the war because they have personally endured the majority of it. The end of the novel changes narration from first person to

third person, as the new narrator states, everyone knows the end of Mokrane's story and continues on to recount the events that led up to his death.

Published during this same period, before the outbreak of the Algerian war, *Le sommeil du juste*, a novel divided into four parts, tells of colonial Algeria's inability to assimilate. The first part focuses on the family relations between the father, who is never named, and his cousin Toudert. It tells of the struggles of power and poverty among the indigenous population, as well as the injustices imposed upon the colonized at the hands of the colonizer. The second part tells the story of Sliman; the third part, that of Arezki which focuses on a movement towards a national Algerian identity. The fourth part of the novel brings an end to the story, entitled "Tous au vert paradis," which brings the novel to a conclusion with the murder of Toudert by Mohand who dies shortly after killing Toudert. This redemptive act of killing Toudert brings justice to the family, but then the whole family is brought before the colonizers' tribunal in which Arezki is sentenced to twenty years in prison for his previous actions.

Mammeri, forced to leave Algeria during the Algerian war after three members of his family had been arrested, returned in 1962 and became the Berber section chair at the University of Algiers during which he published his third novel, *L'opium et le bâton*, in 1965.¹⁰ *L'opium et le bâton* tells the story of Bachir's transformation from nonparticipant bourgeois to full participant in the Algerian war for liberation in the Kabyle region, Wilaya III. As well as Bachir's story, this narrative includes the stories of his brothers, Ali and Belaïd, and his boyhood friend Ramdane. Mammeri, with these four very different characters, provides a vast description of Algerian society during the war period. The novel begins with Bachir, a bourgeois doctor living in Algiers, and Ramdane, a professor with tuberculosis who consistently preaches Marxist

¹⁰ In 1970 a film adaptation of *L'opium et le bâton* directed by Ahmed Rachedi appeared and found great success among the Algerian population.

theories. After fateful events rope Bachir into choosing a side in the war, he returns to his native village of Tala where he is reunited with his mother Smina and his brothers, Ali and Belaïd. His two brothers fulfill different roles in Mammeri's depiction, as Ali at a young age devoted himself to fight for the Algerian cause, whereas Belaïd closely aligned himself with the French colonial government in Tala. In this novel, Mammeri uses a realist technique to provide the readership with facts regarding the war, including actual events and actors, to portray the atrocities and suffering inflicted upon the colonized during the liberation movement; he discusses the issues of violence and torture in excruciating detail, which invokes distrust toward the colonial regime. The novel ends before the conclusion of the war, but acknowledges the Algerian fighting spirit, implying success, even after figureheads such as Colonel Amirouche had been killed in combat.¹¹

Mammeri's literary corpus, four novels and a handful of short stories and plays, appears limited compared to other Maghrebin authors, yet his significance in this literary movement described by Memmi remains no less vibrant. In 1989, Mammeri died in a car accident while returning from a conference in Morocco where he had just discussed his and other Francophone writers' logic for publishing in French, along with the reason for their ethnographic façade. His conference presentation "Faut-il écrire spécifique?" was published posthumously in *Culture savante, culture vécue*, a collection of his essays. Mammeri describes the process of writing in French in the 1950s as an adventure because "les auteurs ne pouvaient être publiés que s'ils reproduisaient très fidèlement les canons, les valeurs, les modes, les voies et les voix de la

¹¹ Alistair Horne in *A Savage War of Peace* describes Colonel Amirouche as "[a] skeletally tall *montagnard* from the Djurdjura with wide-set eyes and a heavy moustache...He swiftly imposed an iron discipline and amazed a somewhat dubious Krim by his ability to extract from his men forced marches of seventy kilometres a day. Within six months, he had under his command eight-hundred well-trained and exceptionally mobile men and had firmly established himself in the Soummam region of eastern Kabylia, which had not previously been pro F.L.N., by a reign of sheer terror" (131). Colonel Amirouche died in battle in March 1959. All of these historical details provided by Horne are likewise, in part, demonstrated in Mammeri's novel.

littérature occidentale, et plus précisément de la littérature française du temps, avec l'obligation supplémentaire de se faire pardonner d'être des Algériens" (*Culture savante* 224).

Born in 1929 to a scholarly family, Kateb Yacine, the youngest of these four, became a militant supporter of the Algerian cause after his imprisonment as a direct result of the massacre at Sétif in 1945. Yacine describes his stay in prison as a crucial turning point in his life; he states: "C'est à ce moment-là aussi que j'ai accumulé ma première réserve poétique. Je me souviens de certaines illuminations que j'ai eues... Rétrospectivement, ce sont les plus beaux moments de ma vie. J'ai découvert alors les deux choses qui me sont les plus chères : la poésie et la révolution" (qtd. in Déjeux, *Littérature* 212). He, thus, began writing at a young age and in 1946 published his first work of poetry. Kateb Yacine's œuvre consists primarily of poems and theatrical plays, yet his first novel, *Nedjma*, found great success and is widely considered as the premier Algerian novel due to its use of myths and symbolism along with its nonlinear, circular narration. It tells the story of four young men, two half-brothers Lakhdar, Mourad and their cousins Mustapha and Rachid who unknowingly incestuously desire their cousin Nedjma, the center of the novel, the sun around which the narration revolves. The majority of the plot takes place after the massacre at Sétif on May 8, 1945; and subsequently two of the characters, Lakhdar and Mustapha, are imprisoned. Violence and injustice push the characters to disperse, and then the novel tells each of their stories and adventures as they wander the countryside in search for work, with a circular narration replete with flashbacks,

His other novel, *Le polygone étoilé*, stands in between his poetic works and his theatrical plays, with prose turning into verse and back into prose. It is a reversion to the colonial past through a narrative present in which Yacine opens up a new criticism of the colonial system not previously engaged in *Nedjma*. He does this through the colonial education system, as well as the

injustices of colonialism suffered by the indigenous population. Yacine's discussion of the colonial past essentially acts as a form of exorcism which rids him of the guilt that plagues his postcolonial present.

1.2 Methodology and Theory

In order to analyze these authors and their works, this dissertation will use methodological devices based on a historical and sociological reading, which is revolutionary by nature and inherently linked with the historical and social milieu of the time. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o recognizes this link, declaring that, "The novel, like the myth and the parable, gives a view of society from its contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror-like, but also reflecting upon it simultaneously" (*Globalectics* 16). He likewise goes on to argue that the novel "mimics, contemplates, clarifies, and unifies many elements of reality in terms of quality and quantity. It helps organize and make sense of the chaos of history, social experience, and personal inner lives. As a creative process, it mimics the creation of the universe as order from chaos" (17). Abdelkader Aoudjit similarly quotes Mouloud Mammeri as having said that "novels cannot pretend to be exhaustive, yet through their selections, they enable readers to gain a richer and more truthful understanding of life than through a book of historical fact. Novels help readers see common and familiar truths in new ways" (26). It is through the novel that the chaos and trauma of the colonial experience and Algerian war can come to make sense, rather than through the history book.

Because of the social milieu of this literature, Mouloud Mammeri declares: "je considère qu'écrire un roman, c'est raconter une histoire et à travers l'histoire racontée, avoir des choses à dire, quelles que soit ces choses" (Payette 59). Likewise, Mohammed Dib argues that, "Je suis écrivain dans la mesure où j'ai quelque chose à dire. Je ne voudrais pas devenir fabricant de

livres” (qtd. in Déjeux 169). The literature of the time, especially for Mouloud Mammeri and Mohammed Dib, has something to say, a voice to be heard, a story to tell and a history to be understood; it is a *littérature engagée* in the historical and social realm. Rabah Soukehal argues that,

L'écrivain doit subir une fonction sociale ; du moment qu'il devient écrivain, qu'il choisit librement de l'être, il doit assumer un rôle, une fonction ; il cesse d'être un individu « normal » au sein de la masse ; il possède une arme redoutable : la parole ; il doit s'en servir pour défendre les plus démunis au nom des droits les plus fondamentaux de l'individu. (22)

The authors of this corpus fulfill, as Soukehal argues, a social function. They possess the weapons, the ability to put pen to paper and write words, which allow them to be spokesmen for society. Aoudjit agrees that,

Feraoun's, Dib's, Mammeri's and Kateb's novels are more than historical or sociological documents. Literature does not provide just information; it can do a great deal more. In addition to describing the objective conditions that prevailed in Algeria in the fifties, these Algerian novels reveal how Algerians experienced colonialist oppression and how they responded to it from a subjective, insider's perspective, as no historical or sociological report could do. (158)

The thematic elements and motifs used by the authors in this literature are inherently linked to the representation of society, including the demonstration of the cultural, political and social milieu which encompasses the literary movement for “[n]ovels do not work in isolation” (Aoudjit 69). The inclusion of these elements demonstrates, as Thiong'o argues, the interplay of history, society and literature.

Edward Said argues that a literary analysis “isn't, as in the case of the New Critics, just to turn up wonderful figures for their own sake, like metaphors and ironies, and so on, and so forth (although, certainly, one should be aware of those aspects of a literary text), but always observe these things functioning in a setting and a locale that, so to speak, is commanded at the top” (*Culture* 193). The methods used here look through a historical lens in order to fully comprehend

the role of this literature and thematic elements in the social and historical setting which through realism represents the milieu of the time.

The theoretical approach used here derives from primarily anticolonial theory and the beginnings of postcolonial theory. I will use the theories developed in the works of Frantz Fanon, including *Les damnés de la terre*, as well as *Pour la révolution africaine*, with a minor emphasis on *Peau noire masques blancs*; Albert Memmi's *Le portrait du colonisé précédé de Portrait du colonisateur*, Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* and finally Michel Foucault's *Discipline & Punish, Society Must be Defended* and *Security, Territory, Population*.

Frantz Fanon's political theories apply to this literary analysis, as it is a politically engaged literature. His first and most important work, *Les damnés de la terre*, had been completed while in Algeria during the Algerian war and discusses the ever present theme of violence in the colonial period, as well as the decolonization movement. He addresses the issue of violence in the first chapter, as he argues that the colonial Manichaean machine is none other than a violent one. The colonial regime derives its power through violence, and as a result, the colonized are continually surrounded by violence. Fanon goes on to argue that the violence exhibited by the colonial regime will be proportionally matched by the violence of the colonized's resistance because violence is the only means by which they know how to revolt. An integral part of violence in this literature comes from torture, a topic with which Fanon was all too familiar. In his case studies at the conclusion of *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon looks at the role and methods of violence for the colonists. *Pour la révolution africaine* continues the discussion on torture, as Fanon quotes the torture methods outlined by Lofrédo and Podevin. Fanon similarly discusses the psychological nature of the inferiority complex, as he argues that although the colonized have been subjected to this inferiority, they do not accept it, but wait for

the right moment to pounce on the colonizer. It is through violence that the colonized rid themselves of the inferiority complex.

Albert Memmi in *Le portrait du colonisé précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* discusses the complex issues present in the colonial sphere for the colonized as well as the colonizer. He addresses the following elements: the situation of the colonized, the colonized child, colonial education, as well as the language of the colonizer. In regards to education, Memmi views the colonial education system as a method of transferring the cultural heritage of the colonizer into the mind of the colonized. Memmi also argues that the colonized try to imitate the colonizer as a means of rising above his inferior class in the social hierarchy.

Aimé Césaire vehemently condemns the colonial endeavor in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, going so far as to call a colonizing country a sick and dead civilization. He argues that colonialism merely creates objects out of the colonized body, introducing the term *chosification*. He believes that it is a good thing to place different cultures and civilizations in contact with each other for the benefit of a cultural exchange. However, the use of colonialism to place these opposing cultures in contact does in no way provide for a positive cultural exchange; it results in the denigration of the colonized culture. Césaire similarly argues that colonization is a decivilizing movement which brutalizes the colonized. Césaire provides a plethora of examples on how France had denigrated and dehumanized the colonized and continued to do so while the metropolitan population ignored the facts.

Michel Foucault stands out among these theorists as he does not focus on colonial nor postcolonial theory, but his concepts revolve around the genealogy of power.¹² Michel Foucault begins this genealogy of power in *Discipline & Punish* with a demonstration of the sovereign's

¹² Foucault argues that he does not provide a theory of power, but just an investigation of mechanisms and sites of power (*Security, Territory, Population* 16). He looks at how the mechanisms of power have shifted over the years from the spectacle of torture to prison timetables and panopticism.

power over the body through extremely physical means including torture and its accompanying spectacle. The power over the body later moves from the spectacle of the scaffold into private chambers but does not become less significant. The power over the body, according to Foucault, then, no longer focuses on vengeance, but on punishment for the crime. The aim for this discipline and punishment is to create docile bodies, which for Foucault are those that are malleable and may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. A docile body is one that has minimal risks of revolt but still produces maximum productivity. The four methods Foucault provides for creating docile bodies includes: drawing up timetables, prescribing movements, imposing exercises and, finally, arranging tactics.

In his genealogy of power, Foucault moves from the physical control of the body to what he terms as “biopower” and “biopolitics” in *Society Must be Defended*. He argues that biopower is seen as the ability to make live or let die rather than the sovereign’s authority to kill or let live. The control over the body changes and transforms its tactics and now looks at man as a living, breathing being which can then be controlled by biological means at the hands of the State. With this change, the technology of power transforms from disciplinary to non-disciplinary in what Foucault defines as biopolitics. This non-disciplinary form of power looks at man-as-species, rather than man-as-body, and, therefore, looks to control the body through birth, death, production and illness (243). This dissertation will use Foucault’s theories to demonstrate the means which the French used to oppress and inflict suffering upon the Algerians in order to maintain and uphold the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

I have attempted to provide a primarily Francophone theoretical baseline as the reference points remain in the same sphere. This baseline provides a starting point to which other theoretical tools will be added such as the newly emerging field of trauma studies and

postcolonial theory. I have chosen Fanon, Memmi and Césaire, as their theoretical paradigms align with the anticolonial movement, a central element in this literature.

With these theoretical tools, this dissertation will look at the body as a target and receptacle of suffering through violence and poverty. The body acts as a complex component in literature and history, as it contains multiple meanings: a culturally constructed body, a male/female body or a conglomerate of individual bodies creating a larger unified body. In her article “Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions” Judith Butler argues that: “The body is a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves, a nodal point or nexus for relations of juridical and productive power” (601); the body through this inscription becomes a constructed body. Butler argues further that “the body is understood as a medium, indeed, a blank page, an unusual one, to be sure, for it appears to bleed and suffer under the pressure of a writing instrument” (604). Colonialism has metaphorically acted as this sharp writing instrument and through its power relations, has created a colonized body, one that has been inscribed upon and molded, one that suffers and bleeds through the mechanisms of the colonial system.

1.3 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief chapter outline and general context of the format and logic of this project. Chapter one looks at the plague of violence in the colonial Francophone Algerian novel and asks the following questions: To what end do these authors portray violence? What is the role of violence in the narration of the novels? And, finally, how do the characters deal with this suffering? In looking at these questions, this chapter explains the pivotal role of violence, not only as a byproduct of colonialism, but as a crucial thematic element in this literature. The primary role of violence from the perspective of the colonizer here is to maintain and uphold the status quo in the relationship of power. Violence, however, is a

multifaceted sword which not only encompasses physical acts but, as Martin Thomas argues, it might be cultural, social or psychological (xiii). This chapter looks at not only the physical forms of violence which affect the body, but the cultural, social and psychological forms of violence ever present in the life of the colonized population.

The colonial system itself by nature is as Aimé Césaire argues neither an evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor an aid system to combat systems of ignorance, sickness and tyranny (*Discours* 8). It is, at its simplest form, a system of oppression and denigration which aims to create a system of power reminiscent of the ancient feudal system in which the king, perceived to be appointed by divine right, demonstrates his sovereignty through the application of violence in its various forms. Foucault begins his genealogy of power with an introduction to the sovereign's techniques of discipline and punishment. Although Foucault remains rather quiet concerning the issue of colonialism and postcolonialism, the comparison between the sovereign's methods and those of colonialism demonstrates the archaic system of power enacted and preserved by the colonial regime. Frantz Fanon argues that "Les rapports colon-colonisé sont des rapports de masse. Au nombre, le colon oppose sa force. Le colon est un exhibitionniste. Son souci de sécurité l'amène à rappeler à haute voix au colonisé que : « Le maître, ici, c'est moi »" (*Les damnés* 37). Fanon's theory and Foucault's genealogy further elaborate the complex relationship of power present in the colonial system.

The colonizer in these novels uses violence through psychological complexes, the violence of the classroom and torture, to maintain the power relations. In reaction to this violence, the colonized exhibit mimetic violence, as well as a resistance against the colonizer. The youth in colonial Algeria grew up with colonial violence surrounding their everyday activities, resulting in the commonality and banality of violence which no longer possesses any

shock and awe, its traumatic effect. They in return, began to mimic that violence as they perceived the outcomes of the colonizer's violence to be beneficial for the colonizer. The youth create their own colonial-like society in which they redraw the lines and establish their own system of power based on the theory of violence. This chapter shows the role of mimetic violence among the youth and the extent and prevalence of this violence acted out among the colonized while ignoring the colonizer. This section also looks at the role of physical violence against the colonizer as a form of resistance against the colonial regime. The complication with violent resistance is that it is met by even more violence from the colonizer who possesses greater power. It is not until the nation becomes unified, moving from its tribal identity to a national identity, that a true violent resistance can play out efficiently. The violence escalates and transitions from among their community to find a common, exterior enemy, the real colonizer.

In discussing the violence through psychological complexes, this chapter looks at the role of the inferiority and superiority complexes of the colonized and colonizer, respectively, and how they came to being and its effects on the body and narration of the novel. The inferiority complex as imposed upon the colonized forms part of what Thiong'o defines as the cultural bomb, a means of annihilating the culture of the subjugated body while replacing that newly created void with the colonizer's culture. It contributes to the petrification¹³ process of the colonized's status as a subjugated body, which in turn forces them to believe that "[n]otre malheur est si grand qu'on le prend pour la condition naturelle de notre peuple" (Dib, *La grande maison* 117). In opposition to the inferiority complex this section looks at its binary opposite, the superiority complex, the supposed paternalistic behavior exhibited toward the colonized.

France's *mission civilisatrice* advocated that France's intentions in the colonial world required

¹³ The term is used by both Memmi and Fanon in connection with assimilation. Douglas Ficek defines petrification in reference to Fanon's work as "essentially a sociocultural stasis, a counterproductive stasis that hinders both anticolonial and decolonial efforts—and thus the project of humanization itself" (76).

the improvement of the impoverished countries, and, thus, the colonial regime's decisions toward the colonized in relation to this mission demonstrates the superiority complex of the colonizer. This section looks at these psychological complexes primarily in the following texts: *Le fils du pauvre*, *Les chemins qui montent* and *Le sommeil du juste*.

The violence of the classroom in colonial literature proves to be monumental as the authors' first works generally consist of an autobiographical account of their childhood. This violence includes the colonial education and language as a form of propaganda directed at the youth, the future generation. After the violence of the sword came the violence of the classroom, a way to solidify the physical colonial presence. This violence attempts to indoctrinate the youth to the colonial perspective and European knowledge through concepts such as patriotism toward France and "nos ancêtres les Gaulois." This education alienates the individuals who pass through the colonial school's doors; it is not overly physical but plays an essential role in the formation of the generation that would later turn to violence as a form of resistance. Colonial education, as well as its insufficient reach among the colonized rural population, affects not only the psychological aspect of colonized's well-being, but their physical well-being through economic means.

The final thematic element in this chapter focuses on the most violent descriptions in the colonial novel, those of torture. Foucault outlines at least two different forms of torture: that of the spectacle of the scaffold and the hidden punishment. The hidden form of punishment still possesses the qualities of the spectacle; the publicity shifts, as Foucault argues, to the trial. However, no such trials occurred in the colonial system, and, thus, the publicity shifted to the arrest of the colonized. Torture becomes a spectacle even when behind closed doors and in secret chambers; Foucault argues that punishment, torture, "will tend to become the most hidden part of

the penal process” (*Discipline* 9) but still incites fear among the general population in this literature, especially the women who begin to mourn openly. The spectacle with its accompanying fear possesses nearly as much influence on the population as the physical act of torture. Concerning the necessity of torture in the colonial sphere, Fanon argues that, “Le colonialisme ne se comprend pas sans la possibilité de torturer, de violer ou de massacrer” (*Pour la révolution* 73). This section uses the prime example of Hamid Saraj, the rebellious character in the Algerian trilogy, to demonstrate the French colonial forms of torture. The violent acts which constitute torture, then, mark the physical body with signs of colonial power and dominance. To the rest of the population, these markings become a sign of what happens when one goes against the colonial power system.

Chapter two transitions from the plague of violence to that of poverty in the colonial system as demonstrated through the colonial literature. As a result of colonization, the colonized were forced to live destitute lives filled not only with violence, but with rampant poverty as well. The underlying theme of poverty in this literature is catalyzed by the unjust colonial regime’s careless attitude toward the inferior colonized population’s well-being. In the discussion of poverty, this chapter looks at it as a general theme, as well as the expropriation of land, hunger, starvation, famine, colonial welfare, labor and workforce.

The expropriation of land began the economic downfall for the colonized as they lost the only valuable resource through which to earn money and the purchasing power needed to buy or trade goods. The French inflicted suffering on the colonial population through laws enacted which allowed the French farmers to acquire the indigenous farmland with the justification that the French technology and know-how would yield better harvests. The autochthonous population was then forced to smaller, less-arable land that could not produce sufficiently for their needs.

This expropriation impoverished the *fellahs*, eventually forcing them to move to the urban centers and take up begging as an occupation or be forced to become a reserve of cheap labor in the fields of the colonizer. The hardship and suffering of poverty is expressed in this literature through the difficulty surrounding labor and workforce. As the land holdings of the colonists increased, the opportunities to till one's own land diminished, as well as the ability to find labor on one of the colonizer's fields, due to the use of modernized technology (Horne 62). This created an errant unemployed class of vagrants who wandered the countryside continually looking for employment but unable to find anything steady. The urban center would not be spared from this unemployment, as the lack of proper education and training for the entirety of the colonial body resulted in an overabundance of low-skilled laborers flooding the urban centers looking for work in the concrete jungle. The urban center, as a result, became plagued with mendicants whose suffering eventually became the suffering of an entire city.

Without the possibility of employment, it becomes difficult for the colonized to provide food and other goods essential to their survival. As a result, the indigenous population became subjected to further suffering through hunger, starvation and famine. This section separates these three themes by the degree of intensity imposed upon individuals. All can experience hunger if they have not eaten for a long period of time, even the most affluent of individuals. Hunger is easily appeased by consuming a meal. Starvation, however, differs in degree and suffering, as it is a prolonged form of hunger which causes greater suffering, with the possibility of death. Starvation does not affect all parties similarly because it signifies that one individual group does not have access to food; it does not, however, indicate that food on a national level is unavailable. For this reason, the colonizer may still fill his stomach, while the colonized die of extreme hunger. On the other hand, famine is a direct result of a lack of food due to natural and

man-made causes. Famines generally affect a larger population, often resulting in death, such as the potato famine in Ireland. This suffering becomes directly involved in the narration of the novels of this corpus.

With the starving colonial population, the colonial government came up with a method of grain distribution as a form of welfare to help alleviate the extreme suffering.¹⁴ This effort, however, becomes complicated as the colonial system contemplated what Foucault would later discuss in his genealogy of power as biopower and biopolitics. The colonizer through expropriation and grain distribution control the colonized through their stomach, creating a relationship of power over the physical body. The contradiction of biopower and biopolitics with the *mission civilisatrice* demonstrates the difficult decision faced by the colonizer as he must determine whether to maintain the power relations or aid the colonized. Even with biopower and biopolitics, the dominating force must keep the colonized subjugated and docile. Such is the case in these novels as the colonizers provide a *distribution de blé*, supposedly to supplement the diet of the colonized. The colonizer makes the impression that he is helping the colonized by issuing food rations which, however, are not sufficient and only manage to keep the colonized in a temporary docile state while still suffering.

The third chapter discusses the implications and effects of colonial trauma on Francophone Algerian postcolonial literature by Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri and Kateb Yacine. Sharanya Jayawickrama emphasizes the impact of colonialism on postcolonial literature as she argues that, “those who seek to engage with the concept of trauma in relation to postcoloniality investigate how traumatic experiences of colonial racism and

¹⁴ Albert Camus in *Misère de la Kabylie* recounts his first-hand experience by stating that, “A la distribution de grains, organisée le jour où j’arrivais dans ce centre, j’ai vu près de 500 miséreux attendre patiemment leur tour de recevoir quelques litres de blé. [...] Chaque indigent recevait environ 10 kilos de blé. A Borj-Menaïel, cette charité se renouvelait tous les mois, dans d’autres localités tous les trois mois” (36).

oppression return and recur in the psychological, social, and material conditions of the postcolonial world” (106). She also affirms the aims of this chapter as she attempts to “theoriz[e] colonization in terms of the infliction of a collective trauma and reconceptualiz[e] postcolonialism as a post-traumatic cultural formation” (Jayawickrama 106). The four postcolonial novels used here illustrate the role of suffering in the colonial sphere and its residual effects on the thematic elements of the postcolonial literature. Similarly, this chapter asks why there is such an insistence on looking at the colonial past in order to move forward in the postcolonial present. In doing so, it looks at representation, memory, neocolonialism and the plagues of colonialism: violence and poverty in the postcolonial.

Representation and memory are key to answering the questions of this chapter. The methods of representation demonstrate the importance placed on the colonial past and its implications on the postcolonial novel; representation and memory, thus, become inextricably linked in this context. Through narration the authors of this corpus demonstrate the trauma of the political events on the memory of the colonized while ignoring the implications of these events on the memory of the colonizer.¹⁵ Each novelist provides a different approach to portray the implications of the colonial trauma in his novels. Mohammed Dib uses symbolism and surrealist imagery while Mouloud Mammeri uses hyper-realism. These methods differ greatly, but the subject matter of both novels, nevertheless, resembles each other. Kateb Yacine decides to represent the colonial past, rather than focus on the Algerian war. Meanwhile, Mouloud Feraoun’s unfinished novel only acknowledges the traumatic events of the war in passing. The author’s choice of representation suits the novels’ individual outcomes.

¹⁵ This however is not a shortcoming but an opportunity for the Algerians to tell their story without concern for the colonizer’s perspective. The memory of the colonizer has already received great attention in the academic circles especially in Lorna Milne’s *Postcolonial violence, culture and identity in Francophone Africa and the Antilles* published in 2007 and Todd Shepard’s *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* in 2008.

The section, on violence in the third chapter shows that postcolonial literature, just like its colonial counterpart, is obsessed with and surrounded by violence. The majority of violence in this literature, however, does not come from psychological oppression, with the exception of Kateb Yacine's novel which focuses on the colonial past, but from physical acts of violence predominantly associated with the Algerian war. This section also looks at the residual effects of violence and its permeation into the postcolonial in the form of resistance. The primary elements of this section consist of the influence of the colonial education system, torture¹⁶ and the liberation war.

The following section of this chapter looks at the plague of poverty and its effects in this postcolonial literature looking at the themes of labor and workforce, hunger, starvation and famine. The primary character, Lakhdar, in *Le polygone étoilé* and a secondary character, Belaïd, in *L'opium et le bâton* both spend considerable amounts of time in France as a means to avoid colonial suffering and live a better life. Their experiences in France have a lasting impact, both positive and negative, on their individual characters, as well as on the plot and narration. Belaïd, after ten years in France, could not envision himself leading the miserable life rampant with suffering that he had previously led; he, therefore, aligns himself with the French contingent in his local village upon his return to escape suffering. The labor and workforce in the postcolonial literature emphasizes the role of labor in France and its effects on both the suffering of the collective and the individual.

Hunger, starvation and famine occur in direct correlation with the ability to earn a stable income along with frugal living. This section looks at the role of continued colonial poverty on the physical well-being of the colonized in the postcolonial novel. The pains of starvation are not

¹⁶ The use of torture reached new heights during the Algerian war and Mouloud Mammeri dedicates in excess of twenty pages to the realist description of the horrors and suffering of the victims.

alleviated or forgotten through modes of sleep or dreams of happier places as they are anchored in the colonial subconscious demonstrative of the seemingly inescapable nature of this suffering. This section also looks at the suffering of the inhabitants of the village of Tala during the Algerian war as a direct result of colonial rule and oppression.

The concluding section of this chapter examines the threat of neocolonialism after the conclusion of colonial suffering. After the French have left newly independent Algeria, the threat of neocolonialism comes from all directions. It is only through a system of government which does not resemble colonialism that Algeria will begin to flourish and move on from its colonial past. However, as Fanon argues, the colonized desire not only to uproot the colonizer, but to take his place through an inversion of the social hierarchy rather than a dissolution of that hierarchy. The colonized, in fact, become preoccupied with this neocolonialism in the colonial literature, which can only perpetuate the physical and psychological suffering, not eliminate it. In addition to the colonized's desire to form a neocolonialist state, communism circles the liberation war like a hawk. Communist states contribute militarily and medically to the liberation movement so as to create and improve relations with the colonized population. The formation of these supposed relationships, then, allows for the possibility of turning the liberation movement into a proletarian communist revolution. Similarly, religion acts as a form of neocolonialism through the declaration of a state religion which becomes a dominant ruling force in society, imposing its religious laws on a secular state. Neocolonialisms simply act as a continuation not only of colonial rule, but also of colonial suffering. Neocolonial resistance is, therefore, a necessary means to continue the fight for self-determination, even through violence.

The conclusion, then, brings all of the works by each author together, colonial and postcolonial, for an analysis of the effects of colonial suffering and trauma in this literary

movement which began in 1950 with *Le fils du pauvre*. It looks at the results of these elements on the narration and character development, as well as compares and analyzes the direct effects of colonialism in the postcolonial novels, by looking at the modes used by each author in the transition from colonial to postcolonial.

CHAPTER 2: VIOLENCE IN COLONIAL ALGERIAN LITERATURE

This chapter will analyze the role of violence in the literature of colonial Francophone Algeria in the corpus of this study. The first part of this chapter will provide an introduction to the historical use of violence in the colonial system through the theories of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, Frantz Fanon in *Les damnés de la terre* and Aimé Césaire in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, referencing Pierre Bourdieu, Martin Thomas and Peter Dunwoodie as well. This chapter will then look at the trauma and suffering of the colonized through the different forms of violence, whether explicit or allegorical, as enacted by the colonizer on the colonized. It will, therefore, discuss violence among the colonized, violent resistance against the colonizer, the violence of the classroom, the inferiority and superiority complex and, finally, torture.

This chapter also looks at the following questions: To what end do these authors portray violence in this literature? What is the role of violence in the narration of the novels? How do the characters deal with this trauma? In looking at these questions I explain the pivotal role of violence not only as a byproduct of colonialism, but also as a crucial element in this literature and through effects on character development and narration.

2.1 Forms of Violence

The body has been the target of conquest and control by governments and individuals alike throughout history. It is through violence, whether physical, emotional or psychological, that the control of the body takes place. Martin Thomas argues the multiplicities of violence by declaring that it “might be cultural—the denigration of established ways of life or particular ethnicities or religions, for instance. It could be social—and here one thinks of the destruction of customary practices, communal bonds, and economic relationships. And it was sometimes psychological—creating insecurity as a form of coercive practice” (xiii). Thus, according to

Thomas, violence exhibits social disruptions, as well as breeding fear, along with physical violence, which creates instability to traditional order. Pierre Bourdieu argues that colonization produces inevitable disturbances when two distinct and different civilizations come into contact with each other; in his view, no true cultural exchange can exist through the colonial system. In addition to social, political and cultural disturbances, there are “disruptions...knowingly and methodically produced in order to ensure the control of the dominant power and to further the interests of its own nationals” (Bourdieu, *The Algerians* 120). Through the use of violence, the colonizer intentionally subjected the colonized in order, as Bourdieu and others argue, to maintain power relations, as well as to further his own, primarily economic, interests.

In order to augment these power relations, the colonizer, referred to as the sovereign in Foucault’s terms, provides sporadic disruptions in the daily lives of the subjects to avoid any disruptions caused by the subjects. The colonizing power attempted to use violence to create docile bodies, ones that would, according to Foucault, produce increased economic utility while decreasing political instability. Docile bodies are subjugated bodies, controlled by a dominating force and upheld through forms of violence which ensure their subject status in the relationship of power. According to Foucault, a docile body is one that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (*Discipline* 136); it is malleable and fits into whatever mold the sovereign places it. Foucault argues that the docile body is created through discipline,¹⁷ but in the colonial context, the desired end result comes about through violence, coercion and torture. Docility, in short, results from formulas of domination, either mental or physical. The colonial endeavor, according

¹⁷ “Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that the disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination” (Foucault, *Discipline* 138).

to Frantz Fanon, is none other than “a gigantic business concern and all perspectives must be related to this basic fact. The first requirement is the enslavement of the people in the strictest sense” (*Racism* 123-24). The enslavement, including the docility, of the autochthonous population is the primary target of the colonizer after the initial territorial conquest; docility cements the colonizer’s standing as the superior entity in the complex relationship of power. The creation of docile bodies remained the underlying aim of the colonial conquest even though “[i]n 1890 texts declared that ‘France does not wish to make the Arabs resigned subjects, but citizens who recognize her authority’” (Dunwoodie 19). The requirements permitting the Muslim population to become citizens were, however, strict and restrictive, forcing them to renounce their religion, among other things. The intent was merely to dupe the international community in to believing that France had Algeria’s best interests at heart.

Violence in the colonial situation enforced and upheld colonial power in the short run, while at the same time destroying the colonial status quo in the long run; Martin Thomas argues that, “Violence could silence opposition, but it was an insecure foundation on which to build a supposedly better society” (xiv). Within power dynamics present in the colonial system, the dominating forces, the colonizer, used violence as a means of establishing and preserving order. The use of violence in this instance does not provide a sustainable means of maintaining order and often proves ineffective due to its byproduct: the boomerang effect. This effect explains the use of violence by the colonized as a form of resistance against the colonizer’s violent means of sustaining order; it is the only method the colonized know. Violence acts as a mimetic device, imitating colonial violence learned from the colonizer. According to Fanon, “La violence du régime colonial et la contre-violence du colonisé s’équilibrent et se répondent dans une homogénéité réciproque extraordinaire” (*Les damnés* 62). This form of violence, from the

perspective of the colonized, is simply a reactionary movement against the oppressor. The oppressor views these actions as rebellious, criminal behavior. The colonized, on the other hand, view violence as an opportunity toward liberation from an oppressive regime, an outlet to alleviate suffering inflicted by the colonizer. Violence is used by those who wish to overthrow the existing order and by those who wish to maintain the status quo. Fanon's explanation of the proportionate exhibition of violence by the colonizer and the colonized demonstrates the contradictory and ironic nature of violence as a means of liberation, as well as a means of securing order.

The disruptions previously advanced by Bourdieu are intentionally employed as a means to maintain power and, as I argue, are enacted through different forms of violence. As colonization begins with the sword, it often endures through other forms of violence, whether physical or emotional. Colonialism intentionally inflicts suffering upon those who have become subjects to the colonizer. Bourdieu explains that "The European gradually created an environment that reflected his own image and was a negation of the traditional order, a world in which he no longer felt himself to be a stranger and in which, by a natural reversal, the Algerian was finally considered to be the stranger" (*The Algerians* 131). Not only has the indigenous now become alienated in his country, but this alienation comes about through violent means. In his preface to Fanon's text *Les damnés de la terre*, Sartre argues that, "La violence coloniale ne se donne pas seulement le but de tenir en respect ces hommes asservis, elle cherche à les déshumaniser" (Sartre 11). The colonial system has relegated the indigenous to stranger/other status and in order to do so, it uses violent means.

As Césaire writes, the colonial system, by nature, is "ni évangélisation, ni entreprise philanthropique, ni volonté de reculer les frontières de l'ignorance, de la maladie, de la tyrannie,

ni élargissement de *Dieu*, ni extension du *Droit*” (*Discours* 8). It is a system of repression which uses violence in its “economic foundations, its institutions, and its governing precepts” (Thomas xviii). Césaire sums up the colonial system by declaring that: “We may note in passing that no poet has ever yet been inspired by the modern colonial system; never has one hymn of gratitude resounded in the ears of modern colonialists. And that in itself is a sufficient condemnation of the colonial system” (Césaire, *Culture* 200). The colonial endeavor used violence in all of its arenas, from physical violence in the maintenance of power relations to the psychological violence of the classroom. Physical violence appears as the most widely observed form as it occurs on the outside, inflicting the exterior visible parts of the body. Although this form of violence is the most recognized and simplest to observe, it is only the beginning as it opens up channels for other forms to take root. Without the physical violence which began the colonization of North Africa, neither the psychological violence of the classroom nor the colonial power relations would have taken hold.

2.1.1 Violence among the Colonized

Violence in colonial Algerian literature mimicked that of the historical and societal milieu. This violence was prevalent in two main forms: against the colonizer and amongst the colonized, both of which derive from the actions of the colonizer. Violence among the colonized exists primarily through the youth who have observed colonial violence their entire lives. Just as the colonizer uses force to uphold the relationship of power, colonized youth view this as the only means to acquire what they desire. Their acts of violence are not merely contained fights, but disturbances that last for days, with bloody results. The narrator in *La grande maison* describes one such event: “A onze heures, aux portes mêmes de l’école, une bagarre s’engagea à coups de pierres. Elle poursuivit encore sur la route qui longeait les remparts de la ville” (Dib

23). The narrator continues by describing these youth as “une bande de chacals” (23), terrorizing the rest of the population as they continue their quarrels even to the city center. Through their displays of violence, youth begin to imitate the colonizer by inspiring fear in the general population.

Violence in the colonial context has become routine, and Mouloud Mammeri notes the oddity of a lack of violence among the youth in *La colline oubliée*. As a result of what Mokrane, the primary character of the novel, describes as a “maladie étrange, insaisissable” (31), later partially described as a famine, the youth no longer fight among themselves but sit around talking, just as the elderly of the village. In his journal Mokrane describes this peculiarity by stating,

ils ne jouaient pas, comme nous jadis, aux chacals, aux sangliers, aux jeux aventureux qui nous menaient jusqu’à Aourir et plus loin; il n’était jamais question parmi eux de batailles à coups de pierres; et les vieux qui nous les interdisaient à cause des blessures et des ravages que les deux camps faisaient dans les champs, finirent par regretter que nulle troupe jamais ne couchât les moissons dans sa course rapide. (32)

Here, Mokrane openly explains the adventures that he and his friends would have, which inevitably included the same activities as described by Dib in *La grande maison*. However, the younger population no longer participates and, therefore, becomes what Mokrane considers as lazy in relation to their predecessors.

Violence among the colonized often resulted from having to fight for what was theirs, as they had done in Algeria since the landing of the French at Sidi Ferruch. Menrad Fouroulou,¹⁸ the principal character in *Le fils du pauvre*, learns at a young age that certain things are granted unto him due to the customs of Kabyle society, but at the same time he must often fight for these

¹⁸ The first part of the novel refers to Menrad Fouroulou merely as Menrad, whereas the second part refers to him as Fouroulou, as well as Menrad. In this case, Menrad is actually the family name and, for this reason, is employed to show respect for the man who eventually becomes a teacher. For simplicity, I will refer to him by his first name, Fouroulou.

things. Fouroulou encounters Boussad at *la place aux musiciens*, fashioning a basket out of olive twigs. Fouroulou, curious to learn, approaches Boussad who immediately reproaches him for encroaching on his space, although at a young age Fouroulou knows that he has a “*place à la djema comme tous les autres*” (36). Realizing this, he stands up for himself without the use of violence, but things change drastically as Boussad’s knife slips and cuts him above the eyebrow. This power struggle between the old man and the young boy could end no other way than through violence, demonstrative of the violence between the supposedly wise colonizer and the young childish colonized. This, however, is not the end to this event; Fouroulou’s reaction to the slip of the knife pulls in the members of his family and other members of society until all are involved, except the *amin*. The two parties walk away full of hatred and wounded as a result of this nonsensical violence derived from Fouroulou’s childish behavior. Although Fouroulou and Boussad come from rival tribes, the violence resulting from this feud arises from tensions in society as World War II erupts and colonial oppression reaches its peak; all the world now knows violence, which seems a reasonable and logical response to such actions. Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim argue that violence is always unique, but after time, becomes routine and no longer gives an aura of shock and awe. After time “One no longer seeks to eliminate it, nor even understand it. Episodes of violence may flare up in different places, but each is contained in its local context, where it risks becoming normal” (Lawrence and Karim 5).

Violence as representative of power acts as a means to create and solidify relationships of power. The colonized has learned this from the colonizer who has become a specialist in violence. In *Le sommeil du juste* Toudert, the father’s cousin, attempts to use the powers of the colonizer to inflict suffering upon the unnamed father and his family. Toudert does not see eye to eye with the father as he aligns himself with the colonizers, whereas the father supposedly raises

his children against France. As a result, he manages to convince the *komisar*, the local French authority, to strip the family of their food rations. This action causes the family much grief, and in order to find a rational reason for Toudert's actions, the father looks to the past, over 300 years ago. The father tells the story of Hand and Azouaou, Toudert's ancestor and the father's respectively, who had violent interactions among themselves. The ensuing violence among the ancestors predates any notion of French colonialism, but does, in fact, go back to power struggles. The father believes that his current family situation derives from the curse of Hand, who after the death of his son Ali had promised to exact revenge on Azouaou and his future generations. The father believes that Toudert is attempting to exact this revenge on his family as a result of the death of Ali.

Toudert continues to inflict suffering upon the family throughout the novel. The eldest son Mohand, who is dying of tuberculosis which he contracted in France while working at the Renault factory, decides to make a final stand for his family. He does so by the only means known to him, violence. The novel nears its end as Mohand, on his death bed, exacts revenge on Toudert. With barely enough energy, Mohand reaches for his gun, as he sees the cousin off in the distance, and pulls the trigger with the gun aimed towards Toudert's head on his brow; Toudert screams as he falls to the ground, blood pooling around his head, but no one is around to hear him. Prior to his death, Toudert has a moment when he realizes the follies of his ways and desires to turn his life around. It is at this moment when he "porta sur son front une main appesantie" (Mammeri 229), this same hand at which Mohand aims his gun. Minutes after the murder, the assailant falls into a coma and dies shortly thereafter and, thus, cannot be apprehended.

The culminating event of the novel, the death of Toudert, unfortunately is not the only event of violence among the colonized. The beginning of the novel portrays another act of violence between father and son. Arezki, the intellectual son, argues against the existence and nature of God. The father feels betrayed by these blasphemous remarks, and in a fit of rage, reaches for his gun. Arezki flees, bounding between rocks, but he eventually trips and falls to the ground. As he does so, he hears the buzz of a bullet by his ear, at which point he realizes his father could have killed him. Although this act did not result in any physical harm, the father quickly resorted to violence as a means of expressing his discontent, an action he later regretted. Violence among the colonized is a negative response to a negative social situation, an expression of emotions regularly committed by the colonizer and observed by the colonized. These actions, however, define the character's development throughout the novels.

2.1.2 Violence/Resistance against the Colonizer

The violence committed against the colonizer may act as a form of resistance against the colonial regime. The colonized reject the authority of the colonizer in a reactionary movement, which inevitably turns violent. According to Marnia Lazreg, the natural tendency of the colonized to rely on violence is derived from the existence of constant violence in their daily lives; "Colonized people know violence intimately: They are born into it, grow up with it, and are surrounded by it" (218). The use of violence by the colonizer to secure order often backfires as the colonized eventually react violently.

The violence of the *fellahs* in the fields, for example, is a direct consequence of the violence enacted by the colonizer. Sliman, in *Le sommeil du juste*, reacts to the beating of a young sheep herder who has momentarily lost a sheep, considered a commodity in the colonial system. He initially acts as a mere observer, but cannot contain his emotions as he rushes into

battle. The narrator writes, “Sliman ne sut jamais ce qui l’avait poussé. Il se jeta tête baissée dans le groupe et comme un forcené distribua des coups à droite et à gauche, devant” (Mammeri 68). But without the power of the government behind him and the colonial justice system against him, Sliman becomes a captive, a victim of the *gendarmes*. This, unfortunately, is the lot of the colonized in his reactions against the colonizer.

In *La grande maison*, before the *incendie*, Omar wonders why no one revolts against the injustices of the colonial system. In his naiveté, he does not understand that a *prise de conscience* must occur in the mind of the colonized, which has yet to occur; the *prise de conscience* of the colonized will lead him intentionally to resist the power of the colonizer. He becomes aware of his situation and no longer accepts his inferiority; he moves to revolutionary actions such as the fire in *L’incendie*. The *incendie* acts as a rupture in the narrative of the first two novels in the Algerian Trilogy. Prior to this point, the Algerian people, whether in the urban center of Dar-Sbitar or the *fellahs* in the countryside, focused strictly on surviving the present, without concern for the future. They could not move past their insupportable suffering which they viewed as being the natural state of their people and land. The critical change which occurs with this rupture is the alteration of the mental state of the *fellahs*, a *prise de conscience*. The *incendie* is the demonstration of an outer action, a symbol, which helps to understand the inner emotions and desire of the characters.

Prior to this rupture, the *fellahs* when gathered together at the end of a hard day’s work, moan and gripe about their suffering. While they are all in agreement over their miserable lot in life, they in no way find or blame the source of this suffering. In frustration with this lack of concern, Bensalem Adda, a *fellah*, states:

Pourquoi ne parlez-vous pas des colons ? Tout ce que vous dites est avisé et sage. Mais à quoi cela sert-il ? Vous ne prononcez pas un mot de ceux qui sont là pour notre malheur.

C'est d'eux que vient notre mal ! Si vous nous parlez du mal et que vous ne dites rien des responsables, vous ne faites qu'user votre salive. Nous sommes tristes, je me le dis aussi dans ma tête ; c'est que nous nous intéressons trop à notre mal, et pas assez à son origine. (Dib, *L'incendie* 90)

After Bensalem Adda's brief discourse, the narrator describes the *fellah* as finally experiencing a *prise de conscience*. This dialogue and the ensuing *incendie* create a rupture in the mental state of the Algerians. Rather than spiraling completely into madness as a result of suffering, the *fellahs* awaken and are transformed from a darkened to an illuminated state. They move from being on the verge of madness to a sense of awareness, which brings with it hope. As a result of this rupture, hope acts as the redeeming element that pulls the Algerian out of the pit of despair. Hope historically grows in the African colonies as a result of a *prise de conscience* as described by Basil Davidson: "African cultural responses after 1945 were as varied as one might expect from so many peoples and perceived interests. But they were above all inspired by a vivid hope of change, scarcely present before, certainly never felt before with any such intensity or wide appeal" (200).

Before hope illuminated the path towards liberation from suffering, Omar's mother Aïni sees death as the only escape. She calls death "la couverture d'or" and continues by stating, "Mais si cette mort n'arrive pas, ne veut pas de nous, et si, ne pouvant plus abattre de la besogne, nous continuons tout de même à vivre, voilà la calamité" (Dib, *La grande maison* 137). She has lived a life full of despair in which the injustices of colonialism have bound her and put her on the brink of madness. Unlike others, she has lost sight of what the future may hold even after the *incendie*; the only joy she finds is in the company of her sister.

In contrast to Aïni, the *fellahs* finally see a light at the end of the tunnel, as they now have hope for a brighter future. The immediate future may not appear bright, but a fire has awakened the people from a deep slumber. In discussing the arrests of the supposed guilty parties involved

in the fire with Omar, Comandar states, “aujourd’hui, c’est affreux. Demain sera différent” (Dib, *L’incendie* 143). The characters have interpreted the events surrounding the fire as a monumental step in overcoming the colonial oppression, even though it will not arrive quickly but through a series of difficult events. The rupture and *prise de conscience* continue to affect *Le métier à tisser*, even though back in the urban center of Tlemcen, the city dwellers have not witnessed the *incendie*. Likewise, they have engendered the revolutionary spirit as a means of hoping for a new beginning as a way to find inner peace and happiness after witnessing the vagrant immigration into the city as a result of colonial agricultural policies. The trilogy ends with the arrival of the Americans who they hope will liberate them from the bonds of colonialism. Thus, a change in the outlook of the Algerian comes about through a progression beginning with dialogue and climaxing with action leading to hope.

The arrival of the Americans and the possibility of the end of World War II in the Algerian Trilogy provide a great sense of hope for Algerians. The hope for a new beginning, however, does not occur until the middle of the Algerian Trilogy, as a result of the social and historical context of the novel.¹⁹ With the arrival of the Americans, in the closing lines of *Le métier à tisser* Omar hears loud jubilations. In describing the emotional state of Omar following the news, the narrator states, “Le cœur d’Omar sauta dans sa poitrine sous l’effet d’une joie insensée. Un impossible espoir l’étreignit, sa gorge se contracta et il crut qu’il allait pleurer” (Dib 203). Likewise, in *Le sommeil du juste* the arrival of the Americans brings great hope as displayed through the dialogue between Lounas and Sliman. Lounas states: “Il y a trois jours à Alger les troupes américains ont débarqué. Notre destin avec l’aide de Dieu va changer. Nous avons assez bricolé, assez travaillé pour que les autres vivent. Nous allons maintenant travailler

¹⁹ It is not until the third book in the Algerian Trilogy with the arrival of the Americans that the end of World War II is finally in sight.

pour nous. [...] Bientôt nous aurons fini de souffrir” (Mammeri 78-79). Lounas remains optimistic regarding the future and has instilled a sense of nationalism, a belief in the unification of Algeria for the good of the indigenous population, in Sliman that similarly provides Sliman the hope to endure the trials and tribulations that are placed before him.

The theory of resistance in the colonial sphere defends hope as the antithesis to madness and as a conduit towards revolution; resistance in the colonial situation is engendered and derived from hope. As an outward, physically violent action, resistance is the result of a cause, which, in the case of this literature, is suffering. Suffering as a result of the colonial situation not only hinders but destroys the colonized. In order for suffering to result in resistance, there must be a *prise de conscience* as demonstrated by Mohammed Dib in *L’incendie*. The process by which he arrives at resistance begins with an acknowledgment of suffering which, then, leads to dialogue. Once the *fellahs* have come together as one, a glimmer of hope appears which enlightens them to a state in which they understand the origins of their misery. This enlightenment pushes them to an action of resistance, violence, for the colonized know no other ways of resistance, according to Frantz Fanon. He discusses this process towards violent resistance in his pivotal text *Les damnés de la terre*; he describes the pre-resistance violence as “violence atmosphérique [...] violence à fleur de peau” (49). He goes on to state the method by which the colonized arrive at a *prise de conscience*: “le colonisé identifie son ennemi, met un nom sur tous ses malheurs et jette dans cette nouvelle voie toute la force exacerbée de sa haine et de sa colère” (49-50). This atmospheric violence will soon erupt, filling the country, and the colonizer realizes this as the *fellahs* go on strike. Fanon describes the colonizer’s awareness in perfect detail as he states: “Le colon qui ‘connaît’ les indigènes s’aperçoit à plusieurs indices que quelque chose est en train de changer. [...] Les partis nationalistes s’agitent, multiplient les

meetings et, dans le même temps, les forces de police sont augmentées, des renforts de troupes arrivent. Les colons, les agriculteurs surtout, isolés dans leurs fermes, sont les premiers à s'alarmer" (*Les damnés* 50). In order to subdue this resistance, the colonizer gathers those presumed to be guilty and attempts to obtain information through interrogation or torture. This repression momentarily discourages any notion of hope and resistance, but in the long run, instead of minimizing this, it fuels a fire that has been lit which cannot be extinguished.

Fanon's description of resistance is derived from his theories on violence. He argues that armed resistance is the only method known by the colonized. He believes that: "Lui à qui on n'a jamais cessé de dire qu'il ne comprenait que le langage de la force, décide de s'exprimer par la force. En fait, depuis toujours, le colon lui a signifié le chemin qui devait être le sien, s'il voulait se libérer" (*Les damnés* 58). Thus, suffering leads to an initial phase of hope but then moves on to resistance, whether through dialogue, action or symbols; this provides a form of hope for the downtrodden colonized, moving them to armed revolution, rather than mental instability.

2.2 Violence through Psychological Complexes

The colonial power dynamic situation requires the subjugation of the Other. Memmi demonstrates this in regards to the methods of dehumanization conducted by the colonizer who, "dénie au colonisé le droit le plus précieux reconnu à la majorité des hommes : la liberté" (105). Memmi continues to explain the subjugation by stating, "Quel devoir sérieux a-t-on envers un animal ou une chose, à quoi ressemble de plus en plus le colonisé" (105). This subjugation naturally creates a superiority complex in the colonizer while creating an inferiority complex in the colonized. These complexes become petrified as they are upheld through time; after years, the colonized becomes resigned to the fact that he is inferior and will never rise above his current situation and social status. The colonized, in fact, come to believe that "Notre malheur est si

grand qu'on le prend pour la condition naturelle de notre peuple" (Dib, *La grande maison* 117).

The colonizer makes the colonized question his worthiness and his ability to contribute productively to society.

In his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Césaire develops the equation that colonization is nothing other than *chosification*; the colonizer creates mere objects of the colonized. This *chosification* naturally creates the inferiority/superiority complex between the colonized and the colonizer. In defending his equation Césaire declares that, "Je parle de millions d'hommes à qui on a inculqué savamment la peur, le complexe d'infériorité, le tremblement, l'agenouillement, le désespoir, le labyrinthe" (Césaire, *Discours* 22). These individuals are intended to feel inferior, not only about themselves, but also about their society, culture and history as a whole; this *chosification* includes the denigration of their own culture. Culture gives us our humanity and defines us, it is "our refuge, our protection; it is what we can claim and use and understand as truly our own" (McWhorter 610). The imposition of this inferiority complex denigrates culture and inevitably results in the destruction of identity and humanity. Frantz Fanon argues, "The undertaking of de-culturation shows itself as the negative side of a more gigantic work of economic, and even biological, enslavement" (*Racism* 122). This complex, therefore, creates subjects and slaves out of man.

These two complexes, binaries, go hand in hand, for without the superiority complex, an inferiority complex could not exist just as the colonizer. As is the case of colonialism, the colonizer has intentionally created the inferiority complex through insistence on assimilation, rather than by chance. Césaire argues that "it must be clearly understood that the famous inferiority complex that they are pleased to find in the colonized is not just a matter of chance. It has been deliberately created by the colonizer" (Césaire, *Culture* 205). These complexes, which

have been forced upon the players in colonialism, play an instrumental role in the novels of this corpus as they dictate the characters' actions. The supposed inferiority of the colonized affects mental stability and, thus, acts as a form of violence on the mind to which the only escape is revival of nationalism with its concepts of cultural superiority to combat the notion of inferiority.²⁰

2.2.1 Inferiority Complex

Mouloud Feraoun's first novel, *Le fils du pauvre*, eloquently addresses the inferiority complex through the eyes of the character Menrad Fouroulou. The narrator introduces the events to come in a type of preface that constitutes the first chapter of the novel. The narrator introduces the main character, Fouroulou, as a "modeste instituteur du bled Kabyle," who "à la ferme conviction qu'il n'est pas un génie" (Feraoun 9). The narrator continues this simple description of Fouroulou by quoting him as stating "Lorsque je rentre en moi-même et que je considère ma situation en fonction de ma valeur, je conclus amèrement : je suis lésé, le manque de moyens est un obstacle bien perfide" (9). The conditions of the colonized as imposed by the colonial powers, whether by mental or physical means, instill in individuals like Fouroulou an inferiority complex; his value has been decreased because of his economic status in relation to the colonizer. He also understands that, in his position, he will never be able to soar like an eagle, but is destined to "patauger davantage comme un canard" (9). Nevertheless, he attempts to overcome this sense of inferiority as he, like Michel de Montaigne in his *Essais* published in 1580, decides to paint his own portrait and to tell his own story.

²⁰ Aimé Césaire, along with his wife Suzanne and René Ménil, founded the journal *Tropiques*, an attempt to bring Martinique back to its cultural apogee. In doing so, they attempted to disprove the colonial idea that the West Indian culture proved inferior to that of the colonizer. The review ran from 1941 until September of 1945 when Césaire found the necessity of open warfare replaced that of cultural stimulation. The ethnographic novels of the early 1950s similarly attempted to renew Algerian culture and identity and in doing so valorize the cultural production of Algerians at the same level of the French. These novels, thus, act as a form of resistance against the inferiority complex, just as *Tropiques* had done in the West Indies.

Fouroulou, in order to denounce his inferiority, decides to imitate great French thinkers and writers. The first chapter of *Le fils du pauvre* mimics Montaigne's opening essay to the readers which acts as a preface to *Les essais*. Montaigne in his preface, "Au Lecteur," argues that, "C'est ici un livre de bonne foi, lecteur. Il t'avertit dès l'entrée, que je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin, que domestique et privée" and continues by stating, "Je veux qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contention et artifice : car c'est moi que je peins. Mes défauts s'y liront au vif, et ma forme naïve, autant que la révérence publique me l'a permis. [...]" Ainsi, lecteur, je suis moi-même la matière de mon livre" (Montaigne 24). Likewise Feraoun in this preface argues that Fouroulou "voulait tout simplement, comme ses grands hommes, raconter sa propre histoire. [...] il comptait seulement leur emprunter l'idée, « la sotte idée » de se peindre" (Feraoun, *Le fils* 10). This imitation does not stop at the narrator's explanation of Fouroulou's desire to merely portray himself, but, just as Montaigne declares that his works are intended for his kinsfolk, the narrator declares the same; "Il croyait que sa vie valait la peine d'être connue, tout au moins de ses enfants et de ses petits enfants" (Feraoun, *Le fils* 10). Montaigne's declaration that his essays are merely for his kinsfolk is not entirely true; there is universality to his works that portray humanity and human nature. By invoking Montaigne, Feraoun in this novel likewise implies that this is not only a portrait of the character Menrad Fouroulou, but a portrait, a microcosm, of Algerian life under colonial rule.

Fouroulou's honorable endeavor to paint himself just as Montaigne had done falls short. According to Memmi, the colonized desires to mimic the colonizer as a form of equality, a way to destroy the inferiority/superiority complex. He argues that, "L'ambition première du colonisé sera d'égaliser ce modèle prestigieux, de lui ressembler jusqu'à disparaître en lui" (Memmi, *Portrait* 137); thus, in imitating Montaigne, Fouroulou tries to equate himself with the colonizer.

The plight of the colonized is eloquently portrayed in Fouroulou's effort and failure at such a grandiose project. If this is his attempt to demonstrate the error in the colonizer's superiority, he supposedly fails, as he has not finished his own story. He encounters difficulties throughout the process as described by the narrator who declares : "Devant les innombrables obstacles qui se dressent à chaque tournant de phrase, à chaque fin de paragraphe, devant les mots impropres, les tournures douteuses et les adjectifs insaisissables, il abandonne une entreprise au-dessus de ses forces, après avoir rempli un gros cahier d'écolier. Il abandonne sans esprit de retour, sans colère" (Feraoun, *Le fils* 10). These obstacles figuratively represent the difficulty within a colonial society for the oppressed to pave their own path, to rise above their situation and to surmount the inferiority complex.

Feraoun intentionally includes passages that demonstrate the inferiority of the indigenous population vis-à-vis the colonizer, as well as the indigenous acceptance of that inferiority. A prime example is shown through the narrator in *Le fils du pauvre* who comments, "Nous sommes des montagnards, de *rudes* montagnards, on nous le dit souvent. C'est peut-être une question d'hérédité. C'est sûrement une question de sélection...naturelle" (68). The colonizer is constantly reminded of his inferiority until one day he accepts it. He comes to believe, as does Dib's narrator, that the misfortune of the colonized is a natural condition determined at birth; so too does the narrator in Feraoun's third novel, *Les Chemins qui montent*, as he concludes that, "Mais à quoi servent les prières lorsqu'un destin malheureux s'attache à vous dès la naissance" (98). The use of these passages in Feraoun's novels outlines the modes Feraoun uses in order to demonstrate the suffering, physically and mentally, of the indigenous population. The suffering inflicted by the inferiority complex is not active; it is a passive form of violence that becomes slowly petrified over time. Fouroulou finally overcomes the inferiority complex which had

sapped him of his talents once he realizes that those he viewed as superior are no different from him.

The colonized's inferiority is more concrete as represented in Feraoun's *Les chemins qui montent* which addresses the issue of *métissage* through the main character, Amer. Amer, just like his lover, Dhabia, does not fit in the molds created by colonial society. Amer is born of a Kabyle father and a French mother while Dhabia is of Kabyle origin, but a Christian. These characteristics place these two characters in subcategories, coming close to the colonizer through lineage or religion, but as a result become more alienated; they belong neither to the French nor to the indigenous. Pierre Bourdieu compares the colonial society with the caste system as he declares:

It is, in point of fact, composed of two distinct, juxtaposed 'communities' which have not united to form a larger group. Membership in each of these communities is determined by birth; the badge of membership is one's physical appearance or sometimes one's clothing or family name. The fact of being born within the superior caste automatically confers privilege, and this tends to develop a feeling of natural superiority in the person benefiting from these advantages. (Bourdieu, *The Algerians* 133)

Amer recognizes the sufferings and inferiority of those around him in the colonial system as a result of this caste-like system. Rather than accepting his inferiority Amer asks "est-ce bien vrai que notre destin est d'être malheureux?" (Feraoun, *Les chemins* 206). He does not believe this to be the case as believes everyone to be equals. He does not himself desire to be rich, but desires for everyone to be rich; he "voulait changer la face du monde" (38) and blur the lines between the rich and the poor, the colonizer and the colonized. In his journal Amer confirms the means by which one can overcome a sense of inferiority: "Il faut bien tenir à son pays, être fier de son origine, ne pas se renier" (121).

The inferiority complex reinforces the subjugation of the colonized body through a psychological complex; opposition to this subjugation is not merely a mind game, but a form of

resistance against the power structure in place. It is a reclaiming of the mind and body because once the colonized has realized that he is not in fact inferior, he no longer allows himself to be subjugated. According to Frantz Fanon the inferiority complex links back to violence as the colonized is “infériorisé, mais non convaincu de son infériorité. Il attend patiemment que le colon relâche sa vigilance pour lui sauter dessus” (*Les damnés* 37). It is through violence that the colonized rids himself of the inferiority complex, acting as a cleansing force (66); psychological violence is, therefore, according to Fanon, combatted by physical violence rather, than by knowledge.

2.2.2 Superiority Complex

According to Bourdieu, the superiority complex of the colonizer supposedly exudes paternalistic behaviors that coincide with the *mission civilisatrice*. Jules Harmand, the French advocate of colonialism, stated in 1910 that, “It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return” (qtd. in Said, *Culture* 17). These strict obligations given to the colonizer, who view their culture, economy, military and morality as superior to that of the colonized, require that he direct the rest of humanity. The paternalistic nature of the superiority complex makes the colonizer responsible for the enlightening of the dark-minded and dark skinned populations, but this idealistic notion in reality hardly comes to fruition. Pro-colonialists, like Toudert in *Le sommeil du juste*, will argue the contrary by denouncing cultural practices and traditions while praising the colonial administration. Toudert, before the *komisar*²¹ criticizes a traditional practice of the *amin* to help the poor and needy by declaring that it is “un usage de

²¹ The *komisar* is a French administrative figurehead for the colonial system who essentially acts as the mayor or leader of the village.

vieux temps d'ignorance et de barbarie. L'administration est venue depuis, l'administration généreuse et..." (Mammeri 96).

The *komisar* in *Le sommeil du juste* takes on this superiority complex in order to dehumanize, rather than enlighten the father. Technically in a position of authority, the *komisar* figuratively and literally exudes characteristics of a superiority complex as he revokes the family's food rations. This act further impoverishes the family accused of treason against France. The *komisar* in this sense invokes paternalistic behaviors towards a rebellious child, as is the case with the other novels in this corpus. He chooses to degrade, rather than to enlighten. These twisted notions of paternalistic behavior are rebuffed by Aimé Césaire as he declares: "Entre le colonisateur et le colonisé, il n'y a de place que pour la corvée, l'intimidation, la pression, la police, l'impôt, le vol, le viol, les cultures obligatoires, le mépris, la méfiance, la morgue, la suffisance, la muflerie, des élites décérébrées, des masses avilies" (*Discours* 21). According to Césaire the relationship between colonizer and colonized is not a human contact, but one of domination and submission, hence rebuking any concept of paternalism which could be found in colonialism.

The superiority complex does not always attempt to exude paternalistic desires, but tries to give value to an individual or community by degrading others. The narrator in *Le fils du pauvre* explains that "les Français des petites villes sont fiers et distants. Ils méprisent l'indigène — parfois avec raison — ils veulent à toute force fournir une caste à part et ne pas les voir. Fouroulou, encore jeune, s'est aperçu de ces choses. Il finit par les admettre et par croire qu'une loi naturelle veut qu'il y ait des supérieurs pour détester des inférieurs" (157-58).²² The

²² The currently published French version by Seuil is a truncated and revised edition. James D. Le Sueur writes: "First printed in a limited edition in France by Les Cahiers du Nouvel Humanisme in 1950, *The Poor Man's Son* sold out quickly and drew wide critical acclaim. [...] *The Poor Man's Son* was then reprinted in 1954 by a major Parisian publishing house, Editions du Seuil, but only after significant truncation and revision, under the supervision

supposedly superior individual creates inferiors. In this situation, it is not only the colonizer who is capable of placing himself in a superior status, but the colonized do so as well, over other less fortunate individuals; he finds value in the denigration of others. In the untruncated version of *Le fils du pauvre* Akli N'douk is in charge of the distribution of daily bread to the suffering souls who rely on the government for help. He uses his position of authority, granted unto him by the colonizer, to extort and degrade the miserable poor. He recognizes their dependence upon him and, therefore, places himself on a figurative pedestal above them, threatening to halt the distribution at the slightest pretext. The colonized, who aligns with the colonizer, thus exploits his brothers for power.

The superiority complex, as a psychological attack on the colonized population, continues the degradation of the colonized in connection with the inferiority complex. It is a psychological attack on the mind with repercussions on the physical body. To reiterate Fanon's theory, it is through physical violence that the colonized become liberated from the psychological violence of colonialism. This, in fact, then links the psychological complexes with colonial violence and colonial resistance, which affect the characters' development and choices.

2.3 Violence of the Classroom

As previously discussed, physical forms of violence are apparent to the observer's eye, as they affect the exterior body. The violence of the classroom extends beyond physical suffering as it imposes restrictions upon the interior, the mind. Thiong'o argues that the colonization of Africa "was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and blackboard. The physical violence of the

of Paul Flamand and Emmanuel Roblès, Feraoun's editors at Editions du Seuil from 1951 to 1962. [...] For the 1954 edition the seventh and final chapter was entirely rewritten, and approximately fifty pages were deleted from the end of the novel" (ix). This quote comes from the original 1950 publishing of the seventh chapter.

battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom” (*Decolonising* 9).²³ In 1910 Governor General Jonnart, declared, “The primary school, which in France is the cornerstone of the Republic, is in Algeria the foundation of our dominion” (qtd. in Marston 35). Albert Memmi argues the importance of education by asking the question: “Par quoi se transmet encore l’héritage d’un peuple?” to which he responds, “Par l’éducation” (*Portrait* 122). The cultural heritage, whether of the colonizer or the colonized, derives from the education provided. Therefore, in the absence of an indigenous education, the colonial school forces the colonizer’s history and traditions upon the colonized at a young age; this replacement eventually leads to a historical and cultural amnesia. Said demonstrates the significance of this by arguing that the construction of identity partly originates from the character and content of education (*Orientalism* 332). Thus, the use of colonial education on the colonized subjects, in fact, creates subjugated powerless individuals. The master, according to Hegel’s dialectic, is in control of the physical and mental space of the slave, the colonized, and the master having control of these spaces, thus, “has the monopoly of education, the content, the form, the space, and the order of its delivery” (Thiong’O, *Globalectics* 28).

This section will discuss the violence enacted after the initial colonization through the colonial education and language imposed upon the colonized. It will primarily look at the following novels from the corpus: *Le sommeil du juste*, *La grande maison*, *Le fils du pauvre*, *La colline oubliée* and *Nedjma*. The theories developed by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o will play a vital role in this analysis, as will the works by Aimé Césaire, Fanon, Memmi and Said. These theoretical works help to explain the imposition of the colonial education system, as well as its language, in the colonial endeavor.

²³ Francophone novels outside of the Maghreb attest to this role of education as the extension of war. In his well-known novel *L’aventure ambiguë* the Senegalese author Cheikh Hamidou Kane argues that, “le combat n’a pas cessé encore. L’école étrangère est la forme nouvelle de la guerre [...]” (47).

2.3.1 Violence through Colonial Education

Colonial education initiates a form of suffering at a young age with its propagandistic notions of patriotism towards France, invoking the infamous phrase “nos ancêtres les Gaulois.” This educational policy adhered to the Third Republic’s commitment to its altered *mission civilisatrice*²⁴ attempting to do what Marie-Paule Ha describes as a “social and cultural re-fashioning” of colonized subjects and the “imposition of French hegemony” (102). This *mission civilisatrice* did not aim to make French citizens out of the natives, as the colonizer may have claimed, but to “alter and reshape the cultural, linguistic, and economic practices of the people, inculcating in them the precepts and symbols of republican culture” (Ha 102).

Starting in 1848, the Ministère de la Guerre took over full control of the colonial education system for the indigenous population, underlining the political aspect of education under the colonial regime. This theoretically ended in 1883 after Jules Ferry’s notable educational policies went into effect both in France and Algeria. Schooling would now become compulsory and free for both sexes of the indigenous population; however, the application of this process would be directed by the Governor General still under the direction of the military. Towards the end of the 19th century, educational policy would move under full control of the Ministère de l’Instruction Publique. Although this move had taken place, the goals and objectives of the colonial educational system had not been altered:

Under the aegis of a remarkable group of French educators and politicians interested in education (for example, Ferry, Emile Combes, Paul Bert, Alfred Rambaud, Albin Rozet), the teacher began to assume a heightened role both in France and in the civilizing mission

²⁴ In 1890, the French government officially declared: “France does not wish to make the Arabs resigned subjects, but citizens who recognize her authority” (qtd. in Dunwoodie 19). This would be attained through education. In 1892, Emile Combes declares, “Yes, more than power, more than self-interest, more than material satisfaction, education for the natives, by which I mean primary education for the mass population, will effectively bridge the gap and, by helping them to live with the same concepts, will teach them to see themselves and to act as members of the same human family, of the same nation” (qtd. in Dunwoodie 20). This was the initial idea of the *mission civilisatrice*, not that of submission and domination or refashioning.

abroad. Following the soldier and the settler/farmer, the teacher was now seen as the ultimate ‘conqueror’ in the scheme of colonization [...]. (Marston 12)

The role of teachers as the “ultimate conqueror” is demonstrated by the education received by indigenous populations, which did not often reflect higher education, but merely practical and technical training. According to Thiong’o, “The very order of knowledge, what is included and left out of the curriculum, reinforced the view that Europe was the center of the universe” (*Globalectics* 36). This process perpetuated the social hierarchy of colonialism as the indigenous population simply became educated in the process of how to better perform manual labor for the colonizer. The curriculum, however, would change slightly at the beginning of the 19th century, when educational programs would include, in addition to technical training, similar instruction to that of the colonizer’s educational experience.

The classroom is a complex space in colonialism and this literature. Historically, it has been a place of domination and control, perfected through the Third Republic, while supposedly being a place of enlightenment.²⁵ It is here that colonialism attempts to take root after the physical weapons of war have been laid down. The role of education in France’s colonies consisted essentially of a two-part system with violence at its roots: First, through indoctrination and then, second, through demonstrating the superiority of the colonizer’s intellect and the inability of the indigenous to assimilate “European” knowledge. Through indoctrination, the colonizer grabs ahold of the indigenous population’s belief system and replaces it with the colonizers’, as with the story of Omar and the concept of “Nos ancêtres les Gaulois”. Memmi likewise declares that due to assimilation and cultural amnesia “[l]es quelques traces matérielles, enfin, de ce passé s’effacent lentement, et les vestiges futurs ne porteront plus la marque du groupe colonisé. Les quelques statues qui jalonnent la ville figurent, avec un incroyable mépris

²⁵ All forms of education, whether in the colonial system or in France, are essentially masked forms of domination. The aims of colonial education, however, differ from those in metropolitan France.

pour le colonisé qui les côtoie chaque jour, les hauts faits de la colonisation” (122). This blatant form of violence does not necessarily hinder the select few indigenous individuals who have access to colonial education, demonstrated through Arezki’s desire for knowledge.

Education in the colonies consisted primarily of what was considered by the indigenous as the “new school,” referring to the colonial schools, run by the French. In addition to these colonial schools were the Koranic schools, which taught religion. Koranic schools were also the only places where one could receive an education in Arabic. In order to attain education beyond theology, the native must leave the Koranic school to attend the colonial school.²⁶ However, not every village contained a school, and, most often, the school age children would either not attend school or have to travel great distances. This meant that either the children in the villages where a colonial school was located or the elite were the only ones able to obtain an education.

The violence of the classroom contributes to the suffering of the indigenous population as it alienates them from their cultural heritage, clouding their minds with European concepts. Through this violence, the colonizer blatantly states that “Your past must give way to my past, your literature must give way to my literature, my way is the high way, in fact the only way” (Thiong’o, *Globalectics* 38). This declaration of intents and the superiority of the colonizer’s intellectual prowess delineate and fortify the terms of the colonial relationship. The modes used by the authors in this corpus demonstrate the complexity of the situation. The educational formation of the principal characters in these novels does not merely provide ethnographic

²⁶ “Genty de Bussy concurred with the prevalent view among the French that those Koranic schools still in evidence were little more than a form of “mutual deafening”; and when he tried to gain information from the Muslims regarding the availability of qualified native teachers, he had no success. Therefore, concluding that the Algerians were without education of their own and had lost what traditions of higher studies once possessed, he could see only bright promise ahead for the French efforts to fill this void” (Marston 3).

background information, but acts as an integral part in the progression of the novels. It is this education that forms and molds the characters of the novel, whether directly or indirectly.

The theme of education seeps into almost every colonial novel as school is one of the first personal, direct exposures to the workings of the colonial system for the colonized youth. The authors in this corpus had all been formed under and through this colonial educational system and played their role in it as they became instructors and educators themselves, with the exception of Kateb Yacine who did not become an educator. They share, through literary works, the difficulty with assimilating and accepting the colonizer's status as a dominating force through education. While doing this, these authors also find a way to praise those who paved the way for them to become beacons of hope and spokespersons for an underrepresented population, stifled under the oppressive colonial regime.

Arezki in *Le sommeil du juste* sees colonial education as a benefit, bringing the indigenous out of savagery. In a letter to M. Poiré, Arezki's philosophy and pedagogy professor, he declares:

Car avant vous je n'existais pas. Vous savez que je suis né dans un petit village d'une montagne perdue, où les élans de nos esprits sont à la mesure de nos horizons qui rencontrent tout de suite le ciel. [...]

Et puis vous êtes venu, mon cher maître, et je vous ai connu. Vous brisâtes les portes de ma prison et je naquis au monde, au monde qui sans vous se fût écoulé à côté de moi, sans ce moi dont fallait l'aimer comme la plus irremplaçable des choses.

Plus rien ne pouvait user mon émerveillement qui, comme le savon mousse à être frotté, allait se nourrissant délicieusement de votre verbe et de lui-même. Plus votre parole me révélait d'horizons nouveaux et plus j'apprenais à en découvrir moi-même avec émerveillement, plus de portes s'ouvraient devant moi. [...] (119-20)

This pro-colonialist sentiment reflects the author's view towards the education he received; he pays homage to his intellectual formation rather than denounce it. This is, in part, due to the higher qualifications placed upon the teachers who were to represent the colonial system in the rural communities. Marston emphasizes this as she argues that the majority of these instructors

came from France and were required to be proficient in Arabic among other qualifications; they would, therefore, be compensated with higher wages (13). She goes on to state that “The French school teacher in remote areas often became an invaluable link between the Muslim population and the government, the only representative of the French administration and a general jack-of-all-trades teaching agriculture and hygiene as well as Molière” (13). Just as Mammeri does through Arezki, Mouloud Feraoun praises these educators by stating, “Que Dieu leur réserve une place au paradis” (Feraoun, *Jours* 131). In addressing his former schoolmaster, Arezki openly declares that before the colonial school he did not exist. This pre-existence for Arezki is a savage one, a prison, where the indigenous are merely beasts of the wild, living in an archaic system of values, surrounded by closed doors. With the colonial education, this figurative rebirth, these closed doors are now swung wide open, but Arezki fails to realize what lies behind these open doors. Ha describes this double-edged sword of colonial education as “getting the colonized to recognize the superiority of French culture, yet all the while blocking their free access to it” (114). Although Arezki has received an education arguably similar to the colonizer, he is still defined as a colonized body. Said elaborates upon this as he declares, “The great colonial schools, for example, taught generations of the native bourgeoisie important truths about history, science, culture. Out of that learning process millions grasped the fundamentals of modern life, yet remained subordinate dependents of an authority based elsewhere than in their lives” (*Culture* 223). Césaire, likewise, states, “wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, ‘boys,’ artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business” (*Culture* 42).

The choice to send Arezki to the colonizer's school resulted from his inability to be productive in a society based on manual labor. He is described as having "des traits de petite fille, un grand corps qui grandissait trop vite" (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 14). He is sent by his family to live with an aunt in Tasga "pour se débarrasser de cette petite fille qui ne servait à rien et qui, quand on lui confiait quatre ou cinq brebis à faire paître, revenait les yeux rouges d'avoir pleuré: c'était trop pénible" (14).²⁷ In order to obtain an education, Arezki then had to leave his native village of Ighzer as "[i]l n'y avait pas d'école à Ighzer naturellement, mais il y en avait une dans le lointain village de Tasga [...]" (14). The emphasis of this statement focuses on the term *naturellement* which denotes the acceptance of the inaccessibility to and insufficient provisions of the French colonial school system for the colonized.

Arezki, in his youth, is mocked and belittled by those around him for his participation in the colonial education system, insomuch that when he returns home for vacations, he is treated as belonging to an inferior race. At the colonizer's school, Arezki develops an understanding of the French language which proves quasi useful in later years where he would read and write letters for the inhabitants of Ighzer. Arezki's newfound métier, that of scribe, is described by the narrator as "presque de métier utile" (14). Arezki's father gradually comes to accept this métier as a mediocre source of pride now that his unproductive son can contribute something to society. Arezki, thus, finds a form of escape from the constant mockery through education. For this reason, he has found it in his heart to praise M. Poiré. It is as though now Arezki has a purpose in life, as if he were born again.

Though Arezki praises his mentor, M. Poiré, this is not the only view of education expressed in this novel. The character of Arezki as used by Mammeri stands in opposition to

²⁷ Female characteristics being attributed to young males is an attack on their masculinity and, therefore, their value and self-worth in a society which places importance on manual labor as a primary form of income.

Sliman, the younger idealistic brother; Sliman, in contrast to Arezki, did not attend the colonial school in Tasga and remains unaltered by the colonial educational system. Sliman receives a different type of education, one that is taught to him by Lounas, one at the opposite end of the spectrum. The nationalist, borderline Marxist, education provided by Lounas calls upon individuals to put aside their individual and tribal identities in order to unite as one. The younger brother believes that a redistribution of goods and reversal of order must occur as he considers it time for the miserable to be happy. Sliman begins to support and represent a nationalistic identity, which Arezki fails to perceive as he has been altered by the colonial education system. Education, from Arezki's perspective, has brought him out of the clouds as he becomes more realistic and aligns his opinions with the colonizer; whereas Sliman and the father think that this education has clouded Arezki's mind; the father in confusion declares, "C'est cet instituteur de Tasga qui lui tournait la tête" (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 17). The acquisition of education by Arezki shapes who he has become and affects those around him, just as Sliman's education has done.

The educational experience of young Omar in *La grande maison* contrasts with that of Arezki as Omar rarely attends school, spending the majority of his time in the streets. Omar, unlike Arezki, does not develop a profound admiration for his educators, as he finds it difficult to grasp the material when he actually attends school. M. Hassan, the educator at the Franco Arabe school in Tlemcen, propagates the mindset of the Third Republic with the notion of "nos ancêtres les Gaulois" as he teaches the youth about *La Patrie*, implying that France "est notre mère Patrie" (Dib, *La grande maison* 18) which must be defended at all costs. Omar and the other young children in the school cannot comprehend the notion of France as being their motherland, a place where they have never been, a place so far away. In describing his educational experience

during colonialism Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o states: “English language, literature, history, and geography first. Any Kenyan of my generation will tell you that they knew many natural, historical landmarks of London they had never seen long before they knew a single street of their capital, let alone the major rivers of their country” (Thiong’O, *Globalectics* 39). Memmi, likewise, argues that, “La mémoire qu’on lui constitue n’est sûrement pas celle de son peuple. L’histoire qu’on lui apprend n’est pas la sienne. Il sait qui fut Colbert ou Cromwell mais non qui fut Khaznadar ; qui fut Jeanne d’Arc mais non la Kahena” (122-23). M. Hassan attempts to indoctrinate, an integral part of the colonial education system, the children of Tlemcen by forcing the concept of France as their motherland upon the young malleable minds of the youth; this indoctrination, in turn, erases the cultural heritage of the colonized. Through these precepts the colonial regime attempts to cement its dominion over the Algerian population. Omar copes with this trauma, the beginning stages of a *prise de conscience*, by rejecting the propagandistic notions employed in the colonial education system.

With Omar, the colonial education system, the pacification through education, seems to have failed. The narrator describes the situation by declaring that Omar “continuait d’aller à l’école franco-arabe, manquant assez régulièrement les classes et recevant pour cette raison, sur les paumes, les jarrets, le dos, la baguette du maître ; elle cinglait comme pas une” (Dib, *La grande maison* 69). He does not take this education seriously, except when confronted by his aunt who calls him a *femelle* and declares that “une fille vaut mieux que lui” (82). Just as Arezki found a way out of mockery through education, Omar now believes that his education will elevate him out of his current status as he declares, in opposition to Tante Hasna, “Je vais à l’école [...] Et j’apprends des choses. Je veux m’instruire. Quand je serai grand, je gagnerai beaucoup d’argent” (82); Omar has now found value in his colonial education. This

representation of primary education by Dib is, in fact, a rarity among these novelists who choose to pay homage to their intellectual formation, rather than overtly attacking the colonial education system.

Education in Algeria prior to colonization revolved around the Koranic schools; the educators and the education received were of a spiritual nature. Thus, colonial education did not often take root amongst the indigenous population who viewed education and religion as intertwined and could not find utility in a secular form. For this reason, secular instruction did not hold a priority in one's life as an Algerian, which is partly demonstrated through Aunt Hasna's rant against Omar's optimistic view towards education:

Renonce à tes idées, dit Lalla avec humeur. Il te faudra travailler comme une bête si tu veux seulement vivre. Ceux qui n'ont pas mis les pieds dans une école meurent de faim ? L'instruction, ce n'est pas pour toi, ver de terre. Qu'est-ce que tu te crois pour prétendre à l'instruction ? Un pou qui veut s'élever au-dessus de sa condition. Tais-toi, graine d'ivrogne. Tu n'es que poussière, qu'ordure qui colle aux semelles de gens de bien. Et ton père, lui, a-t-il été à l'école ? Et ton grand-père, et tes aïeux ? Et toute ta famille, et tous ceux que nous connaissons ? Tu auras à être un homme, ou tu seras écrasé. Il te faudra supporter la dureté des autres, être prêt à rendre dureté pour dureté. N'espère pas le bonheur. Qui es-tu, qui es-tu, pour espérer le bonheur ? N'espère pas vivre tranquille, n'espère pas. (Dib, *La grande maison* 82-83)

Aunt Hasna provides a contrasting perspective in which access to colonial education impedes rather than aids the family structure. She believes that the only way Omar and others can survive in these circumstances is through hard work, however, education removes Omar from laboring like his ancestors have done for many years; according to her, he becomes soft and weak. Rather than working alongside his figurative brothers and bearing their burdens, Aunt Hasna argues that Omar distances himself from them.

Likewise, in *Le fils du pauvre* Mouloud Feraoun demonstrates the general population's view towards the colonial education system; instead of praising Menrad Fouroulou for his achievements, he is heckled with insults: "Tu es idiot. Au lieu d'aider ton père, tu vas le ruiner"

(Feraoun, *Le fils* 143). Fouroulou, destined to become a *berger*, uses the tools of colonialism as a means of rising above his current circumstances, demonstrating the superiority of the French colonial education and the cultural capital he has now acquired. As a child, Fouroulou receives multiple educations: the colonial education of the colonizer and a virile education provided by his uncle. The masculine education, however, does not truly provide Fouroulou with any useful knowledge or cultural capital; it merely results in widespread violence among the colonized.²⁸

Fouroulou remembers the day he found out that he would be attending school; this was a special day because only a select few boys were able to attend the colonizer's school due to lack of space. His mother had prepared an abnormally large breakfast for him, which is one of the only memories he retained of this day. Although his education had changed his life, he remembers very little as he writes: "Ma première journée de classe, ma première semaine et même ma première année ont laissé dans ma mémoire très peu de traces" (Feraoun, *Le fils* 56). As he searches his memory, he comes to remember a few important elements of his education. Eleven o'clock was his favorite time of day, the time allotted to return home for lunch, but he also enjoyed the games; it is not the instruction, but the escape from it that he enjoyed the most. He discovered different methods of instruction as he explains,

Évidemment, il y avait aussi les jeux, mais on n'avait pas besoin d'aller à l'école pour jouer. J'ai su par la suite qu'on peut donner dans les écoles un enseignement attrayant, qu'on peut instruire les enfants en les amusant, qu'il y a des méthodes pour diminuer l'effort de l'élève, pour éveiller son attention. [...] Je crois finalement qu'un petit Kabyle de sept ans n'a pas besoin de tout cela. Il est attentif par crainte et par amour-propre. Il s'agit d'éviter les coups du maître et les moqueries du voisin qui sait lire. Plus tard, bien sûr, l'intérêt s'éveille et remplace la crainte. Alors on commence à comprendre. (59-60)

Fouroulou was one of those students who paid attention to the teacher through fear and pride but later came to gain an appreciation for education. He initially did not take his education seriously

²⁸ This scene of violence was previously presented in the section regarding violence among the colonized in which the young Fouroulou perceives his rights as a man to observe Boussad fashion a basket out of olive twigs.

as he believed that “Nos parents et nos maîtres ne paraissaient pas attacher une grande importance à ce que nous faisons à l’école” (60), and he questions “Les pères de famille qui passent leur temps à essayer de satisfaire les petits ventres peuvent-ils s’occuper également des petites cervelles ?...” (62). However, Fouroulou comes to take his education seriously after his father addresses his lackadaisical attitude towards school after a discussion with the schoolteacher. Fouroulou learned that the schoolteacher had informed his father that he was a bad student. His father told him that, “Je ne m’étonne plus que ton maître se plaigne de toi. Je le vois bien, tu es dissipé. C’est à cause de ta paresse qu’il ne t’a pas changé de division” (61). It is this small reprimand which changes Fouroulou’s view towards his education as he finally realizes that his father is truly concerned for his learning.

As Fouroulou continues his education, his utility, in economic terms, is called into question as he acknowledges that he could serve his family better as a shepherd. While in the colonial school, the family must support him monetarily, but during this time, he does not directly contribute to the economic well-being of the family unit. The colonial education, if advanced enough, can provide a better life for the colonized, but if the student quits before receiving a diploma, he, in effect, hurts his family and society. Instead of wasting the family’s money, he could be working for the family on the farms, harvesting olives and hunting fowl. Fouroulou’s father fluctuates between supporting Fouroulou or mocking him for his desire to become educated at the colonizer’s school. He argues that “Nous sommes pauvres. Les études, c’est réservé aux riches. Eux peuvent se permettre de perdre plusieurs années, puis d’échouer à la fin pour revenir faire les paresseux au village” (Feraoun, *Le fils* 128). While at the same time, he believes his son “n’aboutirait à rien. Mais, en ville, Fouroulou serait nourri mieux que chez lui, il grandirait loin de la dure existence des adolescents de chez lui. Puisque l’Etat voulait bien aider à

l'élever, Ramdane ne s'y opposait pas. L'essentiel était de voir son fils devenir vite un homme afin qu'il partageât avec lui le soin de nourrir la famille" (130). His father does not fully support Fouroulou's education, but acknowledges that it will momentarily shield him from the harsh realities of agricultural life and, at the same time, expose him to the educational violence of the colonial system.

Fouroulou comes to the decision that he must continue his education, but in order to do so, he must compete for a scholarship to pay tuition and fees. Part of this competition requires writing an essay according to the following prompt: "Votre père, ouvrier en France, est ignorant. Il vous parle des difficultés qu'y rencontrent ceux qui ne savent ni lire ni écrire, de ses regrets de n'être pas instruit, de l'utilité de l'instruction" (Feraoun, *Le fils* 119). Requiring the colonized student to respond properly to this question propagandistically indoctrinates him, essentially degrading the traditional Algerian agrarian society in which a knowledge of books serves no purpose. Fouroulou does, however, acknowledge the difficulty his father would have in France without a proper education. After writing this essay, he later learns that he has been awarded a scholarship to continue his studies. Once at *collège* Fouroulou feels a sense of estrangement,

Il entre en classe, ouvre comme les autres un cahier pris au hasard dans son cartable, se met machinalement à suivre le cours, imite tous les gestes. Heureusement, on ne s'aperçoit pas de sa présence. Il n'est pas inquiet. Le supplice dure une heure. Il suffoque, il se dit qu'il n'est pas à sa place. Allons donc, l'ex-gardien de troupeau ! Est-ce pour lui, cette grande classe aux larges baies vitrées, aux tables neuves et brillantes, toute cette propreté qu'on craindrait de souiller même à distance ? Est-ce bien pour lui, cette belle dame qui parle, qui explique, qui interroge avec politesse, qui dit « vous » à tout le monde ? A-t-il enfin la mine d'un camarade pour tous ces garçons bien vêtus, bien élevés, à l'air si intelligent ? Il lui semble être un intrus dans cette nouvelle société qui l'éblouit. (133-34)

Unaware of how to act in this new environment, he mechanically imitates those around him without being noticed. In this new setting, not only does he feel estranged, but he feels inferior to those around him, as if his mere presence would pollute the air. The other schoolmates do not

look upon him with disdain, yet this is how he perceives himself through their eyes, feeling unworthy and out of place. For once in his life, he is not being treated as an inferior, and it is at this moment he realizes his inferiority. Fouroulou had been indoctrinated for so long to believe that he would live a miserable life as the son of a poor man destined to be a shepherd; however, with his entrance into the *école normale*, his life and lot would change. Although Fouroulou eventually succeeds in the colonial education system and becomes a teacher, he has experienced and endured the violence of this system. He copes with this trauma through perseverance and slowly begins to realize that he can succeed as he pushes away the inferiority complex with which he has been indoctrinated his entire life; he realizes that the other students are not stars and that he is capable of thriving in this situation. Ironically, it is the colonial education which facilitates his *prise de conscience* and recognition of his self-worth.

Violence through colonial education consumes *La grande maison* and *Le fils du pauvre* through indoctrination and alienation; it similarly plays a large role in *Le sommeil du juste*. The education of Omar and Fouroulou drives the narrative of their respective stories. Meanwhile, Arezki's education acts as a subplot, not the focal point of the novel, but nevertheless plays an important role in the narrative of *Le sommeil du juste* and formation of Arezki as a character. This education affects the characters' thoughts and actions; it brings them closer to the mindset of the colonizer while still keeping them at a distance. While at the colonizer's school, the colonized acquire a certain amount of cultural capital, assets which stimulate social mobility beyond financial means, which only matters to the colonizer; they gain a knowledge of books that changes their character and actions. This knowledge of books, however, does not promote the indigenous culture, but that of the colonizer; Memmi views education and language as

cultural catastrophe as the books in no way resemble the colonized's culture and "le maître et l'école représentent un univers trop différent de l'univers familial" (123).

2.3.2 Language

Inherently linked with colonial education, language provides another form of suffering imposed by the colonizer; language substitution reinforces the destruction and denigration of the indigenous' cultural heritage. Both Fanon and Césaire argue that language and culture are inextricably linked together. Fanon simply states that, "Parler, c'est être à même d'employer une certaine syntaxe, posséder la morphologie de telle ou telle langue, mais c'est surtout assumer une culture, supporter le poids d'une civilisation" (*Peau* 13). Aimé Césaire, likewise, declares that culture "indelibly bears the mark of that people or nation," and in order to describe culture from the outside, "one might say that it is the whole corpus of material and spiritual values created by a society in the course of its history, and by values we mean, naturally, elements as diverse as technics and political institutions, things as fundamental as language and as fleeting as fashion, the arts as well as science or religion" (Césaire, *Culture* 194). Thiong'o pushes this further as he states that, "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (13); he also goes on to declare that, "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world" (16). The colonizer, in order to maintain the subjugated status of the colonized, attempts to debase and replace the indigenous language as an attack on cultural heritage, leading towards assimilation and petrification.

French is imposed upon the colonized primarily through two avenues: the classroom and the judicial system. Language, in both situations, aids or hinders the individual. The knowledge²⁹ of the language of the colonizer is required to find any success in the judicial system, but it is in the classroom where language possesses the means to alter individuals. The imposition of the colonizer's language is effected through what Thiong'o calls the cultural bomb: "The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (Thiong'o, *Decolonizing* 3). This cultural bomb not only obliterates the indigenous culture, but the language of the colonized as well, declaring the inferiority of indigenous languages, in this case, Arabic and Berber. As regulations and prohibitions are placed upon the way of life of the colonized, the colonized individual is destined to forget his customs, traditions and language. Thus, the imposition of the colonizer's language on the colonized along with the prohibition of the indigenous language forces upon the colonized a cultural and linguistic amnesia; Memmi reiterates this as he argues that, "*Le colonisé semble condamné à perdre progressivement la mémoire*" (121).

Language and education in the colonial experience comes to light in the realist, ethnographic novels of the beginning of the 1950s; rather than romanticizing the colonial education, the authors use seemingly banal events to depict this society. In *La grande maison* M. Hassan attempts to explain the notion of *La Patrie* to Omar and the rest of the class; through this process, M. Hassan becomes frustrated and lashes out at the students in Arabic. Not only do the students witness first hand the violence of the classroom as imposed by the colonial regime, but the instructor himself reacts violently toward the students in their native tongue. This lashing out

²⁹ Power and knowledge are intertwined as presented by Foucault who states that, "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (*Discipline* 27).

further compounds the violence of the classroom. Omar finds this as a complete shock, where he “entendit le maître parler en arabe. Lui qui le leur défendait!” (Dib 20). This example illustrates the pivotal role of language in colonial education. The colonizer, through education, imposes French and forbids the use of Arabic while in the colonial school. M. Hassan not only indoctrinates the students concerning the concept of *La Patrie*, but the educators in the colonial system are expected to propagandize them with the French language. M. Hassan, who is clearly Muslim according to Omar, speaks to the class entirely in French insomuch that Omar “n’aurait même pas su dire s’il lui était possible de s’exprimer en arabe” (20).

Mammeri depicts this linguistic amnesia, borderline linguistic death, not only on an individual level, but on a societal level. Mokrane, the homodiegetic narrator in *La colline oubliée*, observes that “Il n’y avait plus à Tasga d’orateur qui pût parler longuement et dignement; les vieux, parce qu’après le cheikh et mon père, ils n’avaient rien à dire, les jeunes parce qu’ils étaient incapables de prononcer en kabyle un discours soutenu [...] car les discours des jeunes ressemblaient aux conversations d’épiciers” (Mammeri 34). This form of linguistic death affects the linguistic competence of the youth, the future generation. If the youth have lost the ability to hold a “discours soutenu” in the native language, then the colonization of the mind has successfully taken root. The linguistic amnesia of the colonized places them in a complex situation, one in which they are no longer able to carry a fluid conversation in their native tongue and, meanwhile, are unable to understand the language of the colonizer. In contrast to the supposedly widespread employment of French by the colonized, Meddour, in *La colline oubliée*, later uses French in addressing Menach, and, to his astonishment, no one has understood; the colonizer’s language has not taken its stronghold and become petrified in the colonized in the outlying areas of Algeria.

Kateb Yacine uses a historical background, a realist mode, to demonstrate the injustices and suffering imposed upon the Algerian population. Yacine uses the massacre at Sétif and Guelma as the background for *Nedjma*. The characters, like Lakhdar, look at these massacres as a transition between reconciling Algeria and France towards nationalistic ideals. While on a train on the way to Bône, Lakhdar encounters a French sailor and thinks to himself:

...Le 8 mai a montré que la gentillesse de ce marin peut faire place à la cruauté ; ça commence toujours par la condescendance...Que fait-il dans un train algérien, ce marin, avec son accent marseillais. Évidemment le train est fourni par la France... Ah ! si nous avions nos propres trains...D'abord les paysans seraient à l'aise. Ils n'auraient pas besoin de se trémousser à chaque station, de crainte d'être arrivés. Ils sauraient lire. En arabe encore ! Moi aussi j'aurais à me rééduquer dans notre langue. Je serais le camarade de classe de grand-père... (Yacine, *Nedjma* 70)

The French sailor had just helped another couple with their luggage, such a banal event, which Lakhdar contrasts with the cruelty of the events of May 8, 1945. Lakhdar then continues, demonstrating the effect of colonialism on everyday life, inflicted through the imposition of the colonial language. The indigenous constantly live in a state of fear, even with the simplest of things such as riding the train because of the inability to comprehend the colonial language. Lakhdar dreams of Algeria having its own trains with stops and other information in Arabic, to dispel this fear. Lakhdar, most of all would reeducate himself in what he calls "notre langue." For Lakhdar, French is not his language as is the case with Joyce's Stephen Dedalus who declares:

The language we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (qtd. in Said, *Culture* 223-24)

Though seemingly simple, the suffering of the indigenous people as a result of language moves Lakhdar to nationalistic thoughts, to a return to his maternal language, one that is his own.

Throughout the novels of this corpus, characters openly declare that this language being employed is not their own, a language “qui lui était foncièrement étrangère” (Yacine, *Nedjma* 131).

As a symbol of the nascent nation of Algeria, Nedjma represents the *métisse* nature of the country; she, like Algeria, was born of a French mother and an Algerian father. Nedjma, although she rarely speaks, also represents the hybridity of the indigenous population through language. The narrator informs the reader that her dialogue has been conducted in the language of the colonizer by simply stating: “Nedjma parle en français” (Yacine 257). As a representation of Algeria, Nedjma relies heavily on the colonizer and his language as she, as well as the indigenous population, has yet to put off the yoke of colonialism. They carry the burden of colonization on their tongues and around their necks. In order to liberate themselves from this yoke the colonized must, as Lakhdar states, “[se] rééduquer dans notre langue” (70). Just as the injured body must undergo physical therapy to return to its healthy state, the mind must do the same, especially since language is “psychology petrified” (Césaire, *Culture* 197); the depetrification process requires much work which is evidenced in postcolonial literature which still exhibits the trauma of colonialism. Lakhdar attempts to cope with the trauma derived from the imposition of the colonizer’s language through nationalistic ideals.

During the colonial period and through the initial phases of decolonization, the colonized become forced to utilize the language of the colonizer to plead the nationalistic cause to an international audience. Similarly, the colonized must use the language of the colonizer in the colonial judicial system. In this situation without proper language and knowledge of the language of the administrator, one is voiceless. Such is the case with the father in *Le sommeil du juste* who goes to the *komisar*, the colonial administrator, in order to resolve an issue with Arezki’s primary

school teacher, as well as to request a pension for Mohand, the eldest brother, from the administrator.³⁰ The father, having no knowledge of French or Arabic, requires a translator to communicate with the colonial administrator. As the father walks in to his office, the *komisar* spouts out something in Arabic, which the father does not understand. At this point, a translator walks in and tells the father that “L’administrateur te demande si tu sais parler français?” to which he replies “Non plus, dit le père. Je suis d’Ighzer : il n’y a pas d’école chez nous” (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 21). This simple dialogue evokes a fundamental issue with colonialism, education and language. The *komisar* complicates the issue further as he, through the translator, angrily asks if the father “ne pourrai[t] pas parler français comme tout le monde” (22).³¹ The father in *Le sommeil du juste* openly declares that “le Kabyle est la langue de mes pères” (22), an open act of resistance and a demonstration of the failure of assimilation through education and language to take effect due in part to the lack of available colonial schools. Supposing that everyone in the colonial situation can speak the language of the colonizer emphatically declares superiority over the indigenous culture and language. Lounas, Sliman’s nationalist friend in *Le sommeil du juste*, declares that the colonizer’s language is not his own, but acquiring the basics can prove beneficial : “Quand tu sais demander du pain et dire merde au patron, disait Lounas, tu connais toute la langue, le reste c’est du remplissage” (64). Lounas believes that a basic understanding of French is all that is required to survive day to day.

The violence resulting from the imposition of the colonizer’s language portrays the impossibility of assimilation in the Algerian colonial context. The suffering from this violence similarly affects and interrupts the narration of the novels as the narrator constantly reminds the reader of the language used by the characters. The indigenous languages have become repressed

³⁰ Mohand had gone to France and worked at the Renault factory in Paris where he caught tuberculosis.

³¹ According to Alistair Horne, the Algerian illiteracy rates in French for males in 1954 was 94% and 98% for females (61).

through colonialism but at times of high emotions, these languages come bubbling to the surface, contributing to the narration and development of the characters.

2.4 Torture

The use of torture during the Algerian war for independence caught the attention of the international community and, as a result, has been the center of political discourse concerning torture for decades. However, torture had been going on in Algeria since the French invasion in 1830 as a means of policing and maintaining the colonial status quo.³² Marnia Lazreg defines torture as “the deliberate and willful infliction of various degrees of pain using a number of methods and devices, psychological as well as physical, on a *defenseless*, and *powerless* person for the purpose of obtaining information that a victim does not wish to reveal or does not have” (6). The acquisition of information, however, is not the only goal of torture. The spectacle of torture also aims at demonstrating the power of the sovereign, that is, the colonizer in the colonial context. This emerging literature of the 1950s, especially Mohammed Dib’s Algerian trilogy and Kateb Yacine’s *Nedjma*, exemplifies the attempt to maintain the status quo of colonialism through torture.

In his genealogy of power, Foucault demonstrates that as the end of the 19th century approached, the presence of public torture, as well as public execution, slowly disappeared. Torture later occurred behind closed doors, but maintained its public aspect as marks and scars could be seen in public. These scars were also spectacle and aimed to warn and impede any further disturbances while demonstrating the power of the sovereign over its subordinates. Foucault argues that torture is a technique and forms part of a ritual which “must mark the

³² Marnia Lazreg further argues that, “Torture was intimately linked to colonial history and to the nature of the colonial state. It had been used in the aftermath of the invasion of Algeria in 1830 when rape, beatings with *matraque*, exposure of naked bodies, and starvation were frequent. Thereafter, it was not uncommon at the hands of colonial policemen and gendarmes [...]” (3).

victim: it is intended either by the scar it leaves on the body or the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy” (*Discipline* 34). The marking of dissident individuals in society may destabilize that individual’s mental and physical health.³³

Elaine Scarry argues that the absolute pain of torture then translates into absolute power through a self-conscious display of agency where the agent displayed is the weapon (27). The individual to be tortured, upon entering the torture chamber, observes the instruments of pain which will eventually be used upon him. Scarry goes on to state that, “torture is a process which not only converts but announces the conversion of every conceivable aspect of the event and the environment into an agent of pain” (27-28). Once in the place of torture, the interplay between pain and interrogation begin. Scarry argues that the infliction of pain rarely occurs without the act of questioning but, as will be shown with the torture of Hamid Saraj in *L’incendie*, the French torturers often inflict great amounts of pain before posing the first question. The result of torture for Scarry is the conversion of real pain into the fiction of power which occurs with the translation of pain into power, which ultimately comes down to “a transformation of body into voice” (45). Torture is a demonstration of the relationship of the power of colonizer over the colonized and is acted out upon the body.

Fanon argues that “La torture en Algérie n’est pas un accident ou une erreur, ou une faute. Le colonialisme ne se comprend pas sans la possibilité de torturer, de violer ou de massacrer” (*Pour la révolution* 73). Through the spectacle and the scar torture completes the subjugation process as it finalizes the inferiority of the colonized by “reconfiguring their bodies

³³ Like torture, The Star of David worn by Jews during World War II acted as a means to mark the body in order to identify those whom the Third Reich considered as dissident outcasts, branding the Jews with infamy. Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel *The Scarlet Letter* likewise uses outward markings to identify Hester Prynne as a dissident member of society who has betrayed its norms through adultery. These examples demonstrate the method by which the sovereign uses the physical body as a means of establishing its power over the population while dehumanizing nonconformists.

through pain, penetrating their flesh and bones, remolding them into disfigured forms and warped psyches” (Lazreg 214). The use of violence, especially torture, in order to maintain the relationship of power may initially provide success, but in the long term, collective suffering moves the population towards resistance and eventually revolution.³⁴

Even for the onlooker, those not behind closed doors or in secret chambers, torture still possesses power over imagination. Thus, the trauma of torture affects not only its victim but the family members, as well as the community. Fanon aptly describes the effects of torture in the colonial situation on the family as he declares:

Femme emmenée par les militaires et qui revient huit jours après, et on n’a pas besoin de l’interroger pour comprendre que des dizaines de fois elle fut violente. Mari emmené par l’ennemi et qui revient le corps couvert d’ecchymoses, la vie chancelante et l’esprit inerte. Enfants éparpillés, orphelins innombrables qui circulent hagards et affamés. Quand un homme accueille sa femme qui a séjourné deux semaines dans un camp français et qu’il lui dit bonjour et lui demande si elle a faim, évite de la regarder et courbe la tête, il n’est pas possible de supposer que la famille algérienne ait pu demeurer intacte et que la haine du colonialisme ne se soit pas démesurément dilatée. (*L’an V* 106)

Fanon explains the physical and emotional effects of torture in family relations by describing the silent understanding of events; it is of no use to ask what happened while either the husband or wife has been removed from society for a period of time. It is especially with the return of the wife that family relations are strained. The man feels ashamed for what has happened to his wife and is, therefore, no longer able to directly address her without shame. As long as colonial torture is a daily occurrence, the family will continue to fall apart.

The torture and its residual effects on individuals and families are portrayed in the Algerian trilogy with Hamid Saraj and Lakhdar in *Nedjma*. When the police arrive at Dar-Sbitar in *La grande maison*, the narrator refers to them as *les agents de l’ordre*, exemplifying their role as government agents assigned with keeping the colonized in order, a task accomplished through

³⁴ This is the boomerang effect brought out by a *prise de conscience*.

torture. Meanwhile, the entrance of the police into the courtyard symbolically represents the invasion of the colonizers into Algeria. Once in the courtyard, the police begin searching for Hamid Saraj, a revolutionary. The presence of the police, rather than a supposed criminal in the eyes of the colonial regime, instills fear in the house; this results from the aggressive and violent nature of the police force. Fatima, Hamid Saraj's sister, worries for her brother's safety, as she is aware of the excessive use of torture in the colonial justice system. The public exhibition of physical torture no longer exists, but the police process of apprehending suspects has replaced that spectacle in this literature, a transformation has occurred.

In *La grande maison* the reader does not witness the torture, but rather the trauma experienced by the women. While in Dar-Sbitar, the women begin to quarrel one with another until the landlady appears, and all attention moves toward her. She insults the women and curses them, even going so far as to question their standing as *honnêtes gens* because of the apprehension of Hamid Saraj. The women, unaware of the arrest, are informed by Zhora, a daughter and resident of Dar-Sbitar, who had not seen but heard of the events. The narrator exclaims that “Zhora raconta ce qu'elle avait appris—et non vu de ses propres yeux—chez sa sœur, à Bni Boublen. Elle redescendait de là-haut, quand la nouvelle circula : Hamid Saraj venait d'être appréhendé avec plusieurs fellahs. On ne parlait à la campagne que de ces arrestations” (Dib, *La grande maison* 103). Another woman goes on to describe the events surrounding Lekhal Mohammed:

Lekhal Mohammed n'était-il pas un homme que tout le monde connaissait en ville ? N'a-t-il pas été arrêté dans la rue le mois passé sans qu'on en sache la raison ? Et quelques jours après, sa femme n'est-elle pas allée à la maison de la Sûreté ? Elle voulait prendre de ses nouvelles et lui porter à manger. Quelle ne fut pas sa surprise de voir sortir le vieux médecin Vertuel—elle disait Bertouel. Et Bertouel n'est-il pas le médecin des morts ? L'après-midi un cadavre était transporté à l'hôpital militaire. Lekhal n'avait jamais eu affaire à la justice jusqu'à ce jour. Il est arrivé dans les locaux de la police en bonne santé. Il en est ressorti trois jours après, mort. (103)

The apprehension of Lekhal fulfills the role of the public spectacle of torture while the physical acts of violence are hid behind closed doors; there is, therefore, a public and a private aspect to torture in these novels. Lekhal, who before this date had no run-ins with the police unlike Hamid, turns up dead three days later. After hearing this story, Fatima once again laments the future of her brother Hamid Saraj. Torture and the threat of torture become a form of collective suffering for the inhabitants and especially the women of Dar-Sbitar. The women do not directly experience the physical pain from torture first hand, but they experience the collective trauma nonetheless. The womens' imagination of the torture is just as powerful as if they had witnessed the physical events.

Torture in *La grande maison* takes an abstract form and is not personally witnessed by any of the characters. In contrast, the torture of Hamid Saraj becomes one of the important elements of *L'incendie* which Dib describes in detail. *L'incendie* is a continuation of Omar's story in *La grande maison*, but instead of taking place in the urban center, the narration occurs in the countryside. It is here where revolutionary talks emerge amongst the *fellah*, who "ont commencé à parler du poids des injustices, à comprendre que les salaires offerts par les colons sont une misère" (Dib, *L'incendie* 30). Hamid is partly responsible for inciting these discussions and as a result is apprehended and tortured along with others. These events confirm the speculation of the women in *La grande maison*.

Fanon summarizes the torture methods used by the colonizers as outlined by Lofrédo, the police superintendent in Algiers, and Podevin, the head of police in Blida, by stating:

1) Plusieurs témoignages et des rapports convergents d'indicateurs désignent un Algérien comme jouant un rôle important dans l'organisation locale du F.L.N. Le patriote est arrêté et conduit dans les locaux de la P.J. On ne lui pose aucune question car, à ce moment de l'enquête, « nous ne connaissons pas la direction que doit prendre l'interrogatoire et le suspect ne doit pas se rendre compte de notre ignorance ». Le

meilleur moyen consiste à briser sa résistance en utilisant la méthode dite de « mise en train par l'exemple ».

Quelques jeeps quittent la P.J. et ramènent une dizaine d'Algériens ramassés au hasard dans la rue ou, plus fréquemment, dans un douar environnant. Les uns après les autres, en présence du suspect qui, seul, intéresse la police, ces hommes vont être torturés jusqu'à la mort. On estime qu'après 5 ou 6 assassinats, le véritable interrogatoire peut commencer.

2) La deuxième méthode consiste à torturer d'abord l'intéressé. Plusieurs séances sont nécessaires pour casser son énergie. Aucune question n'est posée au suspect. L'inspecteur Podevin, qui a largement utilisé cette méthode à Blida puis à Alger, avoue qu'il est difficile de ne rien dire lorsque le torturé demande des explications. Aussi faut-il se dépêcher de briser sa résistance.

A la sixième ou septième séance, on se contente de lui dire : on t'écoute.

Ici l'interrogatoire n'est absolument pas orienté. Le suspect, en principe, doit dire tout ce qu'il sait. (*Pour la révolution* 75-6)³⁵

The torture of Hamid Saraj occurs in similar fashion to the methods of Lofrédo and Podevin. The essential element in this method is that the individual is not questioned and then tortured if information is not provided, but rather is immediately tortured. The torture scene of Hamid opens with the police entering a room, surrounding Hamid. He recognizes something interesting in the faces of these individuals; it is as if they are dead inside. Rather than begin the interrogation with questions, these men begin by beating Hamid with their hands. The first quasi-question then comes as the leader asks "Pourquoi agissez-vous ainsi?" (Dib, *L'incendie* 108), but he has neither the answer nor the time to respond before the beating resumes. After each session, the narrator takes note of Hamid's injuries: "Il les laisse frapper, essayant seulement de se garantir pour qu'ils ne l'abîment pas tout à fait. Les coups sonnaient dans sa tête, dans son corps ; l'engourdissement l'envahissait. Il ne sentait plus son nez, ses yeux ; mais les oreilles lui brûlaient. Humide et chaud, son sang ruisselait" (108). Finally, after multiple sessions, the questions finally come, to which Hamid still does not answer; he refuses to break and the torture continues even to the point of his unconsciousness. When a victim refuses to break "[h]e denies

³⁵ Fanon does not provide the source for this information but states that Lofrédo and Podevin had defined their methods through technical briefings for new colleagues (75).

his torturers the power to transform a resister into a traitor, a man into a *sous-homme*, a free mind into a mound of mortified and bleeding flesh pleading for mercy” (Lazreg 214). Hamid denies the torturers their power, an ultimate form of resistance.

The tortures of other *fellahs* systematically occur after the fire, the pivotal event of *L’incendie*. The authorities feel that it is their responsibility to find who is responsible for the fire, but rather than form an investigation, they immediately resort to rounding up the *fellah* by the truck load. The proceedings are held behind closed doors, “dans une chambre secrète” (Dib 177). As a result of these tortures, the *fellah* are left with the scars and traces that follow them wherever they go. After releasing them, the authorities declare “qu’ils étaient marqués à l’encre rouge” (178). Their physical body, being marked, speaks of the suffering endured; the body becomes the mouthpiece of the victim, an external display of interior events.

Lakhdar, a principle character in *Nedjma*, becomes the victim of torture as a result of revolutionary actions and his involvement in the demonstrations on the eighth of May 1945. This form of torture differs slightly from that experienced by the characters in the Algerian Trilogy, but, nevertheless, both forms mark the body in such a way to demonstrate the suffering of the victim. Once Lakhdar is arrested and taken to prison, he awaits further interrogation in a room with nineteen other men. While waiting, Lakhdar hears the screams of Si Khelifa, the barber, and he notices another man, Tayeb, has not returned but hears gunshots outside of the prison.³⁶ Others, like the farmer, had their bones broken by gun butts and could not move when the police entered the room. Although the torture of these men occurs behind closed doors, a form of imagined spectacle has been created to insight fear in the hearts of those waiting. This tactic

³⁶ For those such as Tayeb and Lekhal Mohammed, their unresolved deaths would be covered up by European doctors who would “délivrer à l’autorité judiciaire un certificat de mort naturelle pour un Algérien décédé sous la torture, ou plus simplement, froidement exécuté. De même, il est constant que la défense ayant demandé une autopsie l’obtienne, mais que les résultats soient négatifs” (Fanon, *L’an V* 125-26).

initially breaks down even the strongest of men as they begin to panic before entering the torture chamber.

Lakhdar is the next one to be summoned by the police and is thrown in the same room as Si Khelifa who is no longer screaming but gasping. The narrator describes Si Khelifa's condition as: "Son long torse ruisselant apparut, courbé, traversé de zones bleues qui enflaient les tatouages. Il claquait des dents, puis soupirait, comme s'il sortait d'une étuve" (Yacine, *Nedjma* 65). Lakhdar, having witnessed the degraded state of the barber, had decided prior to his torture that "Il ne nierait pas sa présence à la manifestation. Il ne dirait pas un mot du vieux revolver qu'il avait enterré devant la rivière. Comme planche du salut, il avait prévu, si la torture devenait insupportable, de prononcer des noms de collégiens pro-français dont l'enquête révélerait d'ailleurs l'innocence" (66). His premeditated responses signify his resistance to the torturers as he intentionally denies them any useful information.

Just as with Hamid, Lakhdar's torture instantly begins with nonsensical beatings before the torturers ask any questions. Lakhdar is subjected to multiple forms of torture described in great detail by Yacine, but none of which are intended to leave any physical scarring. The last form of torture to which Lakhdar is subjected to is foot whipping, which aims at inflicting extreme pain while limiting any physical injury.³⁷ Unlike Hamid and others in *La grande maison*, Lakhdar walks away without any instantly recognizable physical scarring. This form of torture aims at solidifying the docility of the population while creating a façade that emulates the supposed *mission civilisatrice*. The physical marks may be hidden, but the memory of excruciating pain and suffering is still visible.

³⁷ Foot whipping, also known as bastinado or falaka, involves strokes applied to the arch of the foot with a whip or another instrument. If the subject is rendered immobile then the accuracy of the strokes ensure maximum pain with little physical evidence. This part of the body contains a large amount of nerve endings and also does not become numb after multiple strikes. Lakhdar was familiar with this form of torture as he instantly understood why they focused on the soles of his feet. As a result, Lakhdar immediately bent his knees and dove to the ground.

After being released, Lakhdar decides to travel to Beauséjour, the location of an unknown aunt and Nedjma. During his voyage, the narration changes perspective from that of Lakhdar to that of Mourad, Rachid and Mustapha. These three men, upon seeing Lakhdar, refer to him as a traveler or a madman and recognize that something is not quite right with him. The omnipresent narrator describes Lakhdar thus:

[...] il se remet en marche, avec un masque de patient fuyant sur un tranchant de lame quelque passé d'enchantement et de cruauté, savane de chloroforme poussant sur un jeune corps insensiblement attaqué, de même que la rosée corrompt le métal ; prunelles dures se mouillant à la grêle lumineuse en une brume d'insomnie, cornée envahie par le sang, iris ternis et survoltés ; regard sombre, splendeur qui s'égare au-delà de la montée, en dépit des rencontres, regard ancien, pur et secret entre tous ; le voyageur avait ce même regard, il y a trois mois, en marchant au supplice ; il va, de sa démarche oblique avec l'ubiquité des animaux, pour qui le chemin n'est plus de l'avant, tant ils ont accompli de périples, à contrecœur, et sans rien discerner ; peut-être le voyageur doit-il à ses origines paysannes cet œil rapproché de l'oreille comme celui d'un taureau ; à moins qu'il ne doive la bizarrerie de son visage à un accident, à une querelle ; ainsi les boxeurs quand ils se font ouvrir les arcades et gonfler les yeux ; les traces du combat sont abolies, mais quelque chose a disparu avec les ecchymoses, et le boxeur délivré de ses bouffissures apparaît alors avec un visage anachronique, affligé de la platitude d'un champ de bataille une fois les décombres ensevelis [...] (Yacine 81)

Lakhdar still carries the traces of his torture after three months; the narrator remarks that his body is as a battlefield where violent actions have occurred and although the bruises have disappeared like those of a boxer, the memory remains. Lakhdar appears as a broken man, not only physically but emotionally, who tries to hold on to every form of pride possible; his description demonstrates the lasting overall effects of torture on the body as a whole.

The marks on the body, whether visible or not, become a text that tells of the suffering endured. This reading of the body creates a method by which the reader can come to understand the suffering. Elaine Scarry argues that another person's physical pain has no reality; it is invisible, and whatever it achieves, it does through its unsharability; Lakhdar and Hamid can share their pain with the reader only through the imagination of the community. Scarry goes on

to argue that pain is resistant to language, that words cannot aptly describe suffering. Virginia Woolf, states that the English language which “can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear has no words for the shiver or the headache....The merest schoolgirl when she falls in love has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her, but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry” (qtd. in Scarry 4). The body as a text, thus, acts as an outlet or a means to attempt to tell an unspeakable story, to bring this suffering into the realm of shared social discourse.

The scenes of torture are not mere events which occur in passing. These events touch the lives of those involved as evidenced by the narrator’s description of Lakhdar, roaming like a zombie, upon his arrival in Beauséjour. This suffering contributes to the formation of the characters, whether contributing to their docility or sparking resistance. Suffering, thus, causes the characters to speak and act in a particular way; it changes their behavior.

2.5 Conclusion

Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim argue that, “At its first eruption, violence is always experienced as unique. If given time and repetition, however, it becomes routine, part of the air, and one learns how to breathe it without being asphyxiated. One no longer seeks to eliminate it, nor even understand it. Episodes of violence may flare up in different places, but each is contained in its local context, where it risks becoming normal” (5). Violence in the colonial system became an everyday occurrence and, therefore, overlooked as a byproduct of colonialism. Violence, whether explicit or allegorical, became part of the everyday life of the colonized because “coercion, punishment, and degradation are socially necessary to reproduce not only the identity and self-worth of the colonist, but also the system itself” (Lazreg 217).

The suffering of the colonial Algerian population as a result of violence plays an integral role in this literature as the trauma of violence affects not only those directly involved, but the community as a whole. Simply because individuals have lost their lives or experienced extreme pain does not lead to collective suffering; it is the storytelling of that suffering which transforms trauma from individual to collective. Through their novels, the authors have brought to the forefront the pains of their brothers and in so doing have created a collective memory for all to observe. Everyday violence plagues the characters of these novels as it directly influences their development and actions. The modes used by the authors of the corpus to narrate trauma differ, but, nevertheless, create an aura surrounding misery and suffering. Dib and Yacine use social realism and allegory to give life to the suffering of the colonized, while Mammeri uses contradicting views to create an emphasis on the trauma of suffering. Meanwhile, Feraoun uses personal, heartfelt emotions through his characters.

Building off colonial violence, the following chapter will discuss the issue of poverty, another plague of colonialism in the Francophone colonial literature of Algeria. It will focus on the physical and emotional effects of poverty on the colonized body as a result of the injustices of the colonial system.

CHAPTER 3: POVERTY IN COLONIAL ALGERIAN LITERATURE

This chapter moves from the violence of the colonial system to another great plague of colonialism: poverty. The aftereffects of the colonial regime inflict many kinds of suffering on the native population; one primary problem is the poverty that results when the means of providing for their families are removed from the people who had been independent agricultural producers. The case of poverty outside the colonial realm primarily results from natural and economic means. Meanwhile, the suffering from poverty in this corpus is derived directly from the colonial administration's lack of concern for the needs of the colonized subjects. This oversight creates seemingly insurmountable difficulties for the colonized in their struggle to survive. Without money or a means to acquire money, the colonized in this literature inevitably suffer while the colonizer capitalizes on this suffering. In the previous chapter, the issue of the superiority/inferiority complex was discussed in detail, and these complexes continue to have an effect on the well-being of the colonized in relation to poverty in this corpus.

As a young journalist for the *Alger Républicain*, Albert Camus received the assignment to detail the suffering of the Kabyle population. He published his findings from June 5th to June 15th 1939; these articles have been collected and published as *Misère de la Kabylie*. Camus' introduction to these articles provides economic explanations for the suffering of the Kabyle population. Camus initially criticizes the Kabyles as he argues that they consume more than they produce; they have similarly overpopulated the habitable land available. They are a grain-consuming people but only produce enough grain for an eighth of their needs; they, thus, rely on the sale of olives and figs in order to purchase grain. The colonial government at the time of Camus' observations had, however, inflated the price of grain without adjusting that of olives and figs. This problem was further compounded as the workforce diminished as a result of

France's involvement in World War II, and families could no longer rely on their sons to work and acquire the resources needed to purchase grain at an inflated price. These unilateral adjustments forced the Kabyle either to starve or to rely on a charitable distribution of grain by the colonial government to meet the rest of their needs. Camus' initial explanation for the poverty of the population was a critical one, denouncing the practices of the Kabyle, but at the end of his introduction he states, "Pour aujourd'hui, j'arrête ici cette promenade à travers la souffrance et la faim d'un peuple. On aura senti du moins que la misère ici n'est pas une formule ni un thème de méditation. Elle est. Elle crie et elle désespère. Encore une fois, qu'avons-nous fait pour elle et avons-nous le droit de nous détourner d'elle ?" (Camus 40).

After Camus' initial reaction to the suffering of the people, he continues his report by writing about salary, education, the political future, as well as the social and economic future. After discussing the inability of the population to produce enough food for survival, Camus looks at the compounding factors of unemployment and wages. People who are dying of starvation typically have one way out of this suffering: employment and the income that follows. Camus argues that this, however, is not the case due to the insufficient wages paid to the colonized; he is, in fact, appalled by the wages colonized workers receive. He writes, "On m'avait prévenu que les salaires étaient insuffisants. Je ne savais pas qu'ils étaient insultants" (Camus 40). Colonialism resembles a form of modern slavery with its practically nonexistent wages and long working days. In order to justify the insufficient wages of the colonized, the colonist accuses the colonized of providing inferior manual labor, a belief stemming from the superiority complex of the colonizer. Camus notes that in some cases the manual labor of the colonized was, in fact, inferior to that of the colonizer due to the colonized not having sufficient strength because they had not eaten in days. Camus points out the irony, as he writes, "Et l'on

nous met en présence d'une logique abjecte qui veut qu'un homme soit sans force parce qu'il n'a pas de quoi manger et qu'on le paye moins parce qu'il est sans forces" (55). Camus' findings provide a point of departure for an analysis of suffering through poverty and its consequences in this literature.³⁸ Camus, published his observations in 1939, the same year in which Mohammed Dib's trilogy takes place; *Misère de la Kabylie* also provides outside confirmation of Dib's social realism. Likewise, Mammeri's novel *La colline oubliée*, as well as Feraoun's *Le fils du pauvre*, takes place during this historic period.

This chapter will discuss the literal and allegorical suffering endured by the colonized through poverty, hunger, famine, manual labor, unemployment, and the expropriation of land. The same questions found in chapter 1 will be asked: To what end do these authors portray poverty in this literature? What is the role of poverty in the narration of the novels? How do the characters deal with this trauma? In looking at these questions I will explain the pivotal role of poverty as a crucial element in this literature and as a driving force. This chapter will use the works of Albert Camus and Pierre Bourdieu to provide cultural and historical context. Although the publication of Bourdieu's findings postdates these novels, his insights and research are linked with the context of colonial Algeria. His research, therefore, reinforces the realistic social depictions used by the authors of this corpus.

3.1 Poverty

Like violence in all its many forms, poverty plagues the colonized, and the suffering resulting from poverty not only affects the physical body, but also the mental state of the individual and the collective. Poverty is a complex issue, caused by various factors implemented by the colonial regime and through natural economic causes. However, in contrast to natural

³⁸ Although Camus focuses centrally on the Kabyle region of Algeria, the effects of colonialism discussed in *Misères de la Kabylie* are not confined to this area. Unemployment and insufficient wages abound in colonial Algeria, and the general disdain towards the colonized was widespread.

causes the colonizer inflicted great suffering by intentionally manipulating elements relating to the economic well-being of the colonized. Lazreg eloquently declares that “Expropriations, unemployment, education policies that denigrated and dismissed local cultures and history, police brutality, and rampant poverty were all manifestations of colonial force” (218). The colonizer continues his demonstration of power, through means other than physical violence, which subjugates the colonized and disrupts his society. Bourdieu argues that:

By reason of their functional interconnection, the economic and the social structures were doomed to a similar, parallel disintegration: the emigration of the uprooted, poverty-stricken proletariat to the towns and cities, the destruction of the economic unity of the family, the weakening of the ancient solidarities and of the restraints which had been imposed by the group and which had protected the agrarian order, the rise of the individual and of economic individualism which shattered the community framework, were all so many breaches in the coherent fabric of the social structures. (*The Algerians* 139)

Sliman, the younger brother of Arezki in *Le sommeil du juste*, argues with Arezki at the beginning of the novel over what becomes known as the discourse of the dominos. The novel takes place during World War II, which Sliman believes to be the godsend of the unhappy. Sliman grows discontented in his family’s current situation. Meanwhile, he believes that everyone has the right to be happy. He argues with his brother, declaring, “Quand tout brûlera, quand tout sera détruit, quand la tempête, l’avalanche et l’ouragan auront tout emporté ou englouti, la terre de nouveau sera vierge. Tout sera remis en question. Ce sera comme aux dominos : on fera une distribution nouvelle” (Mammeri 7). Sliman hopes that the end of the war will bring along with it the end of colonialism and suffering at the hands of the colonizer.

Ironically, while the colonized were unable to fight for their collective freedom from the oppressive French colonial regime, the colonized population gave its sons to France to fight for liberty from the Germans. As the leader of the Free French during WWII, De Gaulle promised to fight for the liberation of the colonies, if they supplied soldiers to fight against Nazi Germany

and the collaborationist Vichy regime. Sliman had believed that De Gaulle would fulfill his promises to the colonies and, therefore, saw the war as a means to an end as he declares, “c’est assez pour nous de souffrir, c’est au tour des pauvres d’être heureux” (7). Sliman’s older brother, Arezki, did not see this change coming to fruition, as he declares that even after the war, Sliman would be a “gueux comme devant” (7).

As Sliman declares that it is time for the poor to experience happiness, he openly criticizes the colonial hierarchy with the colonized at the bottom, unable to provide the basic necessities of life. His concern for happiness highlights the link between poverty and suffering in the colonial system. Sliman desires an inversion of that hierarchy with a new distribution of wealth. Frantz Fanon similarly declares this inversion in biblical terms as he writes, “les derniers seront les premiers” (*Les damnés* 26).

The colonized have suffered for over a century at the unjust hands of the colonizer; Sliman sees himself as having suffered this fate, whereas Toudert argues that, “Il faut souhaiter la victoire de ceux-ci, disait Toudert (ceux-ci c’était les Français). Avant eux nous n’avions pas de médecins, pas de route, pas d’école; nous vivions comme les animaux de la forêt : le plus fort mangeait le plus faible” (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 8). Toudert believes that before colonialism and the *mission civilisatrice*, the Algerian was a savage beast, and that thanks to colonialism there are now doctors, roads and even schools. However, in contrast to Toudert’s belief, the colonized are now treated as inferior savages by an outsider, the colonizer. The colonizer has imposed his economic superiority over the colonized and has figuratively eaten the weak.

With the end of the war, lives have been lost or altered forever. So much in the world has changed, yet nothing improved socially for the colonies. Arezki notes that change has not occurred; the inversion so desired by Sliman has not come to fruition, as he declares, “Et puis la

guerre s'est terminée et rien n'avait changé. Et comme ils avaient été plusieurs à croire que la guerre allait tout changer...plusieurs à qui la guerre n'avait rien changé...des comme lui...des...des... enfin des enfants de la misère de Dieu...ils se sont montés la tête les uns aux autres et..." (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 180). The colonized continued to suffer from the plagues of colonialism, even after aiding in the liberation of metropolitan France. Although he never believed life would be like a game of dominos, Arezki, nevertheless, laments this thought. As a soldier in France he had met a young lady, Elfriede, with whom he had grown close. One day, she calls upon him to celebrate the anniversary of the liberation of Paris where crowds gather along the Champs-Élysées to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. At this moment Arezki realizes the joy of freedom as the narrator declares, "Dans les yeux, les gestes et les paroles, dans la joie sereine de tous ceux qu'ils coudoyaient, qu'elle était belle, la liberté, la liberté retrouvée des autres, celle-là même qu'Arezki avait contribué à leur rendre" (177).

The suffering and unhappiness of poverty plagued the colonized, but they remained optimistic; they had hope for a better future, a hope rooted in religion. The father in *Le sommeil du juste* discusses the future of Sliman with his eldest son, Mohand. The father suggests addressing the *komisar* regarding Sliman's future, as he desires that he go to an apprentice school for masons. Mohand mocks this idea as well as the inability and lack of desire of the *komisar* to care for the poor over whom he has been placed. The father then asks poignantly, "Les fils du pauvre, il faut bien que quelqu'un pense à eux" (19), to which Mohand half mockingly and half seriously replies, "Dieu ! Ils ont Dieu, les fils des pauvres" (19). The father senses a form of blasphemy in this statement but acknowledges the positive role of God in the lives of man. He remains hopeful as he believes that:

ceux qui Dieu a préposés au gouvernement des hommes sont là justement pour faire le bonheur des enfants des pauvres. C'est la chance de leur destinée. Il est si beau, si bon de

faire le bonheur des hommes, de tous les hommes. C'est tellement plus beau que de labourer ou de travailler à l'usine. Quel plus merveilleux destin que d'être préposé au bonheur des hommes ? (19).

The colonizer, as well as the indigenous members in the government system, should support the downtrodden and bring them joy. The colonial system, contrary to the father's beliefs, does not look after the joy and well-being of the colonized: instead, it seeks to denigrate them; therefore, the only one who looks out for the poor is God. While the father has great faith in the colonial system, it swiftly changes after his visit with the *komisar* who has taken away the family's food rations.

Ibrahim in *La colline oubliée*, another novel by Mammeri, expresses disdain towards the colonial system and its injustices, after a similar action has taken place. Ibrahim desired a loan in order to buy food and spend time with his wife who had just given birth to their fifth child. The narrator describes the event by stating that, "Le chef était devenu arrogant avec lui. Il l'humiliait sans raison, lui faisait faire devant tout le monde les besognes les plus sales" (122). This scene and the emotions displayed by Ibrahim help to portray the unjust nature of the colonial powers. One cannot help but feel sorrow for this man who is merely attempting to provide for his family but is unable to, not because he is incapable of working, but because "les temps sont si durs, mais le gouvernement est si puissant" (123).

Ibrahim's lot is further complicated by the necessity to pay road taxes. As he is unable to monetarily pay these taxes, he, therefore, provides manual labor for four days as a form of payment. This, however, means that he is to work for four days without his meager pay or food. Things quickly get worse for Ibrahim as he loses his job three days later and begins to wonder: "Qu'allaient-ils devenir maintenant que cette pitance leur était enlevée?" (123). Ibrahim's constant suffering as a result of poverty however does not stop here. Later, his wife falls ill and is

required to spend two weeks in the hospital, a financial hardship difficult for him to bear. Not wanting to lose his lands to pay the bills, he plans to go work in the mines in the Sahara, but in order to leave his district he needs a *laissez-passer* from the Akli, the caïd. Unfortunately for Ibrahim, in order to acquire a pass, a bribe was expected to be paid to the caïd which he could not afford. Davda, however, convinced her husband Akli, the caïd, to allow Ibrahim to obtain a *laissez-passer*. The novel ends with Ibrahim and Menach leaving together, after Ibrahim is heard saying his prayers.

Ibrahim, then, like the father in *Le sommeil du juste*, turns to religion as he is encouraged by his mother to pray regularly toward Mecca. After the eruption of World War II at the end of *La colline oubliée*, life becomes more difficult economically, but a reliance on God may be the only way to endure this suffering. The narrator declares:

Avant la guerre, on avait déjà assez de mal à vivre, mais maintenant on ne tenait plus que par la grâce des saints qui gardaient encore le pays par l'effet de leur pouvoir surnaturel.^[39] Passe encore pour les habits, on peut toujours revenir à la mode des ancêtres qui portait hiver comme été une djellaba de laine, mais pour la nourriture comment faire ? Les distributions de blé étaient insuffisantes et tout le monde ne pouvait payer 2 500 francs un double de blé. Mais Dieu nous voit et nous juge et dans l'autre monde chacun recevra la rétribution de ses actes. En attendant, dans ce monde-ci, transitoire mais réel hélas! c'était la misère, la noire misère, pire mille fois que la mort, et si notre prophète n'avait interdit comme péché de se tuer soi-même plusieurs se seraient hâtés d'atteindre le pardon de Dieu. (205)

A belief in God and the supernatural thus provides a means of hope and escape from poverty and suffering. A natural end to this mortal suffering may not come as quickly as suicide, which has been forbidden in Islam,⁴⁰ but a belief in another world after this life may help one endure the tribulations of mortality; knowing that all men will receive retribution for their acts provides a

³⁹ Saints in Islam are mystical figures whose relation to the Prophet grants them supernatural powers. The belief in saints relates to the superstitious nature of the Berber population.

⁴⁰ The Quran states "And do not kill yourselves, surely God is most Merciful to you" (An-Nissa' 4:29).

glimmer of hope. The lack of food and the inability to buy an additional allotment led the population to see their lot in life as the darkest and most miserable of all.

Not only God, but resistance against the colonizer, can provide hope. Some, however, like Aïni, the mother of Omar in *La grande maison*, are too lost in despair to see the light at the end of the tunnel; they have become too docile. Aïni accepts her inferior status and refuses to resist the powers that subjugate her. She easily declares “Nous sommes des pauvres” (112) without any desire to change or question her lot. Omar, on the other hand, asks the simple question: “Mais pourquoi sommes-nous pauvres?” (112). No response is given to this seemingly simple question other than “C’est notre destin” or “Dieu sait” (113); these responses provide no logical reason for the suffering of the poor. Omar is befuddled by the abundance of poor, like his family and those who live in similar places like Dar-Sbitar, who do nothing to change their situation. He declares: “Et personne ne se révolte. Pourquoi ? C’est incompréhensible. Quoi de plus simple pourtant ! Les grandes personnes ne comprennent-elles donc rien ? Pourtant c’est simple ! simple !” (113). The docility of the indigenous population as a result of colonialism prevents them from recognizing the causative agent of their inferior economic situation. This, however, is not the case for the colonized body as a whole, for the *fellahs* in the following chapter discuss their discontent with the insufficient wages. The discontent begins to bubble to the surface and changes the tone of the trilogy, leading to the strike and *incendie* in the second novel.

The discussions of the *fellah* leading up to the *incendie* openly attack the unjust colonial system that has placed the colonized in inferior economic standing. Slimane Meskine expresses his discontent as he argues:

Bon messire Kara, bon messire, dans les vieux temps... cela n’est pas vrai... tout n’était pas mauvais. Peut-être y avait-il mauvais, mais tout ne l’était pas. Aujourd’hui, que

voyons-nous ? La fin du monde pourrait venir. Les temps sont bons pour les riches et les étrangers. Peut-être cinq ou six familles... Certainement pas plus d'une dizaine. Et les pauvres ?... Que leur nombre est grand ! (Dib, *L'incendie* 69)

Just like Omar, Slimane Meskine recognizes the abundance of the poor in relation to the rich. He does not come out directly and declare that colonialism is the source of this disparity, but he argues that not all was bad in the old days. *Les vieux temps* of which he speaks predate this rampant suffering of the poor due to colonialism, a time when suffering did exist but to a limited extent. Poverty in this novel, among other factors, pushes the *fellah* beyond their breaking point. It is a catalyst that ignites and accelerates the *incendie*. Poverty plays an integral role in the Algerian Trilogy, as it is a driving force which affects the characters' actions and development.

Although a *prise de conscience* which leads to action comes about in the Algerian trilogy, such is not the case in Feraoun's *Les chemins qui montent*. Rather than an act of open resistance as a result of poverty, Feraoun's novel closes with the suicide of the main character. This act, however, may be read as a form of resistance; Amer can no longer be forced to suffer at the hands of the colonizer nor be subjected to its rule. Poverty, although contributing to suffering, acts as background information in the first half of the novel in relation to marriage circumstances.⁴¹ Such is the case with the daughter of Nana Melha, Dehbia, who was desired by every man but due to her Christian beliefs,⁴² "aucun homme n'en voudrait faire sa femme" and similarly, due to her poverty "aucune mère de famille ne l'accepterait comme bru" (Feraoun, *Les chemins* 23). She suffers in social situations because of the poverty of her family which is considered the poorest of the community. Nana Melha later laments her poverty in relation to

⁴¹ The novel is laid out in two parts. The first focuses primarily on the theme of marriage and acts as a prelude to the second, Amer's journal. The first part forewarns the reader of Amer's death, while the second leads up to this final event, culminating with a *Chronique Régionale* which announces the suicide of Amer.

⁴² Dehbia belonged to a small minority of Christians in Algeria. The narrator explains "Pourquoi était-elle née chrétienne aux Aït-Ouadh, alors que partout il n'y avait que des kabyles musulmans ?" (Feraoun, *Les chemins* 22).

Dehbia as she exclaims, “Être fière, oui, mais non ambitieuse, parce que lorsqu’on vise haut, il faut flatter, et que la flatterie ni la bassesse ne peuvent faire oublier qu’on est pauvre. Or, aux yeux des épouses, seule compte la situation matérielle de celle qui veut se marier ” (48-49). It is the material aspects of society that provide an opportunity for marriage, rather than beauty and love.

The end of the first part of *Les chemins qui montent* foretells the death of Amer, as well as the misery and suffering of those around him as a result of poverty. Meanwhile, the second part recounts the story of Amer through his writings. The narrator describes Amer’s writings declaring, “Toutes ces misères des autres qui font la matière de sa confession, qu’il a décrites comme s’il les avait subies, il a essayé de les soulager” (38). Suffering through poverty not only provides descriptive background information on the cultural and economic milieu of this literature, but dictates the actions of the characters. Before his death, Amer acknowledges the rampant suffering around him as he writes, “Les chemins montent raides devant moi, devant tous. Nous sommes de pauvres gens dans un pays très pauvre. Mais est-ce bien vrai que notre destin est d’être malheureux ? Pourquoi sont-ce tous des chemins des misères, ceux qui se dressent devant moi ?” (206). This insurmountable suffering dictates his mood as he questions whether the colonized population’s destiny is none other than abject misery. He continues this tone for the next several pages as he questions the colonizer’s actions in the marginalization of the colonized. He argues that Algeria is no longer his country; it has been overrun and nothing belongs to the colonized anymore.

Poverty inevitably leads to suffering. Aïni, Omar’s mother, tries to teach her children the value the colonizer places upon her work, as the narrator introduces the scene by stating “Aussi, l’argent qu’elle touchait en fin de semaine, le montrait-elle à ses enfants. Elle voulait qu’ils

voient le salaire de sa peine. C'était peu? Ils savaient maintenant ce que valaient la force de leur mère, sa santé, sa vie..." (Dib, *L'incendie* 147). The amount that she is paid for her work can barely provide the necessities of life. The insufficient wages paid to the colonized laborers barely keep them alive and do not shield them from misery; it is, in fact, another form of misery recognized by the *fellahs*, in *L'incendie*, when they become aware that "les salaires offerts par les colons sont une misère" (Dib 30). During the meeting in *La grande maison*, the orator, later recognized as Hamid Saraj, exclaims, "Les travailleurs de la terre ne peuvent plus vivre avec les salaires qu'ils touchent. Ils manifesteront avec force" (115). He continues, "Des salaires de 8 et 10 francs par jour. Non, ce n'est plus possible. Il faut une amélioration immédiate des conditions de vie des ouvriers agricoles. Il faut agir résolument pour atteindre ce but" (116). Camus, in his *Misère de la Kabylie*, demonstrates the insufficiency of the wages paid to indigenous manual laborers, which Ibrahim, after having worked those long four days to pay for the road taxes, emphasizes as he declares, "pas même ces 50 francs qui faisaient que la misère n'était pas la mort" (Mammeri, *La colline* 123).

In their analysis of poverty, Newman et al. note that through colonialism, the European powers disrupted traditional agricultural society. The colonizer integrated the local economy with the European world economy, which consumed the majority of colonial goods produced. Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist, declares in his *Introductory Essay on the Anthropology of Changing African Cultures* that "We do not share the main part of our wealth and our economic advantages with the natives. The metal that comes from the African gold and copper mines never flows along African channels, apart from wages that are in any case always inadequate" (qtd. in Césaire, *Culture* 201). Such is the case with textiles in *Le métier à tisser* as the narrator explains, "Quelle qu'elle fût, toute laine était arrachée des mains des vendeuses. Une subite prolifération

de manufactures et d'ateliers se déclarait, pendant que sans arrêt, des tapis, des couvertures partaient pour la France" (17). The colonist owners of these shops in *Le métier à tisser* would sell the goods to buyers in France. This, however, only benefited the owners who would reap the profits derived, meanwhile only providing, as Bourdieu argues, inadequate wages to the workers; this colonized labor resembled that of workers in sweat shops.

In demonstrating the harsh realities of life under an oppressive colonial regime, the authors of this corpus use poverty as a fact and trope to display the trauma of colonialism. Poverty as a thematic element in this literature not only provides essential background information, but at the same time, pushes the characters to action or inaction; the trauma of poverty affects the plot and narration of these novels insomuch that without it, characters like Sliman, Ibrahim, Amer, Omar, Aïni and the *fellahs* would be pushed in different directions.

3.2 Expropriation of Land

Pierre Bourdieu argues that the colonization of Algeria achieved its success through the expropriation of land through the Senatus Consulte of 1863 along with the Warnier law of 1873. These laws allowed for the constant transfer of lands to settlers under a legalistic façade. To the unassuming eye, the Senatus Consulte of 1863 appeared to be pro-Arabe as the first article states, "Les tribus de l'Algérie sont déclarées propriétaires des territoires dont elles ont la jouissance permanente et traditionnelle, à quelque titre que ce soit" (Dareste 240). What made the Senatus Consulte pro-French was the transformation of communal property into private property, a commodity available for sale or purchase, that disrupted the traditional tribal society. This transformation also allotted settlers land which was often the most arable. With the distribution of private property came the inequalities of a capitalist society, creating a class distinction between rich and poor. The Warnier Law of 1873 further complicated the issue as it legally

allowed the systematic spoliation of the rural communities. Mahfoud Bennoune states that, “since this law stipulated that unproductive and uncultivated lands must be claimed by the French office of colonisation as belonging to the state, the *Commissaires-Enquêteurs* in charge of these operations considered innumerable hectares of fallow field as uncultivated or vacant, and thus assigned them arbitrarily to the *Domaine*” (46). These laws achieved the colonial endeavor’s penultimate goal through the “destruction of the fundamental structures of the economy and of the traditional society” (Bourdieu, *Le déracinement* 120). Oyamad Noriko similarly argues that the ultimate objective of the land policies was to establish private landownership, but in order to do this, it was necessary to “dismantle the tribal organizations of natives who resisted colonization and weaken the resistance of the tribe by annihilating communal landownership while at the same time ease the transition of land to European settlers by establishing private landownership on tribal areas” (17).

As a result, the colonized experienced a collective trauma through expropriation, a trauma that is a “*blow* to the basic tissues of social life that *damages* the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (qtd. in Alexander 4). The initial colonization of Algeria in 1830 disrupted society; before the colonization of Algeria by the French, Algeria consisted of many tribal entities which at the time were attempting to fight off the Turks. As the French came in, they either dispossessed or killed off the tribal chiefs who acted as the guardians of tradition, as well as the keepers of treasures. In doing so, the newly instated colonizers expropriated the former chiefs’ land. The expropriation of land by the colonizer began with the initial colonization, but progressed further with the arrival of a larger

European settler population. This proved to be one of the only successful elements of assimilation imposed upon the colonized.⁴³

Germaine Tillion provides a pro-colonialist perspective in the expropriation of land and resources by arguing that, “with its outdated methods of cultivation, the country is capable of feeding between two and three million people” (3) while the population far exceeds nine million. She, thus, argues that the French, in order to theoretically help the Algerian population, expropriated the land to introduce modern methods of cultivation, as well as a more productive labor workforce. This pro-colonialist view fails to take into account the unequal redistribution of wealth which occurred, forcing the majority of the population into poverty, rather than coming to their aid. With the expropriation of land and the French technology to convert untillable land through irrigation and drainage, the colonizer gained a larger slice of the agricultural pie (Horne 62).

The Algerian⁴⁴ population’s holdings of agricultural land paled in comparison to the European’s. It is estimated that the average indigenous Algerian’s farm holding in 1954 was around 11.6 hectares, while the European average holding was roughly 123.7 hectares (Horne 62). This large disparity contributes to the financial well-being of the colonizer and the economic burden of the colonized. Midlarsky argues that this disparity due to land distribution results in a rural class-based revolution (493). Such was the case on the eighth of May 1945 in Sétif and Guelma where a combination of “incipient famine conditions and preferential treatment of settler farmers provoked hostility among Muslim farmworkers and smallholders” (Thomas, “Colonial Minds” 143).

⁴³ It can be argued that assimilation through language was effective as well. Germaine Tillion disagrees and argues, “In 1954 the proportion of illiteracy in French among the Moslem population was 94 per cent of men and 98 per cent for women” (58).

⁴⁴ Alistair Horne refers to the indigenous population as Muslims rather than Algerians.

Expropriation not only removes valuable land from the colonized, but the resources which stem from the possession of that land as well. Expropriation solidifies the subaltern status of the colonized, for without the resources which the colonizer has seized, the standard of living for the colonized diminishes. Albert Memmi describes the colonizer as a *usurpateur*, someone who has illegitimately taken the place of another, an

Etranger, venu dans un pays par les hasards de l'histoire, il a réussi non seulement à se faire une place, mais à prendre celle de l'habitant, à s'octroyer des privilèges étonnants au détriment des ayants droit. Et cela, non en vertu des lois locales, qui légitiment d'une certaine manière l'inégalité par la tradition, mais en bouleversant les règles admises, en y substituant les siennes. (*Portrait* 34)

Because of this vampirism, the colonized become subject to poverty and famine, lacking any other means of survival.

Jean-Robert Henry argues that land is an integral element in the colonial Algerian literature as it is “à la fois comme base de la colonisation [*sic*] et comme lieu du conflit colonial” (157). The theme of dispossession and expropriation are central to the last two novels of the Algerian Trilogy, *L'incendie* and *Le métier à tisser*. The *fellahs* make simple remarks throughout *L'incendie* referring to the expropriation of lands by declaring: “Des étrangers possèdent le pays” (67). Comandar, in speaking of Bni Boublen, argues that only a hundred years before no one inhabited this region, but one by one *les anciens* settled the area because its settlers had been forced off of their old lands by the colonizer. Before the initial establishment of Bni Boublen, the *fellah* had “des terres à orge, à figuiers, à maïs, à légumes et à oliviers,” but through expropriation “elles leur furent enlevées” (64). Bni Boublen is anchored in colonial history; it is demonstrative of the power of the colonizer over the colonized. In this location, the role of colonialism and suffering at its hand reaches a climax; it is, therefore, a choice place for the eruption of an *incendie*.

The narrator aptly describes the expropriation of land in *L'incendie* as he declares: "Des hectares par milliers devenaient la propriété d'un seul colon. Celui-ci ou cet autre, c'était pareil : ils étaient arrivés dans le pays avec des chausses trouées aux pieds. On s'en souvenait encore par là. Ils possédaient à présent des étendues incalculables de terre," which contrasts greatly with the *fellahs* who "de génération en génération, suaient pendant ce temps-là sang et eau pour cultiver un minuscule lopin" (Dib, *L'incendie* 31). The colonizers possess a large portion of the land which they have taken from the colonized, leaving the colonized with plots which are either too small or are infertile, or worst of all, a combination of both. Ben Youb, a *fellah*, slowly begins to recognize the injustices and suffering as a result of the expropriation of land. He comes to the conclusion that "la véritable richesse était rassemblée entre les mains des colons" (Dib, *L'incendie* 31). Ben Youb's unfortunate plot of land does produce, but its location on the foothills leaves much to be desired. Of Youb's land, the narrator states, "Lui, sa terre ne commençait, comme celle des autres cultivateurs de Bni Boublen, que sur les flancs anguleux de la montagne. Cette terre produisait, mais, comme les femmes de ces hauteurs, toutes en gros os, elle donnait un lait rare" (31). Ben Youb, however, is not the only one who has been forced to cultivate "au seuil de la steppe" (31), on the land considered unsuitable by the colonizer and, thus, left to the colonized.

Through expropriation, the colonized feel a sense of *dépaysement*. The colonizers have not only replaced the colonized language and culture with their own, but have taken away the colonized's land. Ben Youb expresses his disgust in this sense of *dépaysement* by declaring:

Ne sommes-nous pas comme des étrangers dans notre pays ! Par Dieu, mes voisins, je vous dis les choses comme je les pense. On croirait que c'est nous les étrangers, et les étrangers les vrais gens d'ici. Devenus les maîtres de tout, ils veulent devenir du coup nos maîtres aussi. Et, gorgés des richesses de notre sol, ils se font un devoir de nous haïr. Naturellement ils savent cultiver ; pour ça, ils le savent bien ! N'empêche que ces terres sont toutes à nous. Travaillées avec l'araire ou même pas travaillées du tout, elles nous

ont été enlevées. Maintenant, avec elles, avec notre propre terre, ils nous étouffent. Ne croyez-vous pas qu'on est tous encagés comme dans une prison, pris à la gorge ? On ne peut plus respirer, frères, on ne peut plus ! (Dib, *L'incendie* 46)

Ben Youb argues that he and other *fellahs* have now become strangers in their own land and the colonizers, the real foreigners, perceive Algeria as theirs. This *enlèvement* figuratively strips the colonized of his flesh and smothers him. Ben Youb cannot bear this suffering and attempts to incite rebellion through his words. His rebellion is a form of resistance against the desires of the colonizer. His declaration here attempts to discourage the *fellah's* emigration to the urban centers, arguing against ceding more land to the colonizers than they have already taken; Ben Youb equates the loss of land with the loss of honor, an integral element in Kabyle society.

Comandar, a *fellah* who “tirait son nom d’une longue carrière militaire” (Dib, *L'incendie* 12)⁴⁵ likewise observes a sense of *dépaysement* among the Algerian population through the laws enacted by the colonial government. In accordance with colonial law, little to no recourse is provided to combat the expropriation of land and resources. Comandar argues that “La Loi leur conteste la propriété de leurs terres” (Dib, *L'incendie* 64) and negates the traditional agrarian society, yielding a vagrant population. Vagrancy as a result of expropriation alters individuals’ choices, opportunities and actions; they become discouraged and disheartened, eventually resigning themselves to work on the colonizer’s land or become beggars. Comandar declares of this vagrant population that: “Maintenant, s’ils découvrent seulement comme ça de terrain où poser leurs corps, non loin des plaines fécondes et arrosées, ils ne vont plus loin” (65). His discourse climaxes as he argues that “c’est comme ça qu’un pays a changé de main, que le peuple de cette terre, pourchassé, est devenu étranger sur son propre sol” (65).

⁴⁵ Comandar plays a very influential role in the life of Omar while in the countryside. He is, in fact, admired by all because “Il était resté trois jours et trois nuits sous un amoncellement de corps. Il avait lutté ; il avait hurlé trois jours et trois nuits. Et il s’était traîné hors du charnier ; seul il avait vaincu la mort” (Dib, *L'incendie* 13). The people link Comandar to his military role, insomuch that they no longer remember his real name and salute him as a greeting.

The expropriation of land affects the colonized economically because it is central in this agrarian society. The *fellahs* link prosperity and land, for the possession of land provides “aisance et liberté. C’est là qu’il trouve la vraie indépendance” (Dib, *L’incendie* 32). The role of land in this literature must not be overlooked as it represents not only a “lieu du conflit colonial” but “la mère nourricière” as well (Henry 159). Without land or the resources derived from the earth, the *fellahs* must become reduced to a life of poverty at the hands of the colonizer.

The description of expropriation used by these authors demonstrates the colonial conflict and injustices between colonizer and colonized. As a historical element in colonialism, its portrayal provides a realist depiction which enables “readers to gain a richer and more truthful understanding of life than through a book of historical fact” (Aoudjit 26). In reaction to this trauma, a direct result of colonial oppression, the colonized still hope for a better future, although their level of suffering continues to increase.

3.3 Hunger, Starvation and Famine

Poverty and hunger are inextricably linked, not only in the colonial realm, but throughout world history. This section will discuss the issues of hunger, starvation and famine in the novels of this corpus and their impact upon character development and narration in this literature. These three terms differ in degree of suffering. Everyone can experience hunger if they have not eaten recently, but starvation and famine occur on a greater level. General hunger can occur at any moment, but starvation differs in that it results from prolonged hunger resulting in suffering and possibly death; it can be understood as extreme hunger. Hunger and starvation can exist with an abundance of food on a national level, but famine is a direct result of a lack of food as a result of natural and man-made causes. Famines generally result in the death of large populations, such as the potato famine in Ireland.

Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and philosopher who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 1998, argues that in order to understand general poverty, regular starvation⁴⁶ or outbursts of famine, it is necessary to look at the forces that lie behind them, forces like ownership patterns and exchange entitlements⁴⁷ (6). Ownership patterns show connections through legitimate means which demonstrate the method by which the owner has possession of the commodity to be sold, traded or transferred. With the expropriation of land by the colonizer, the colonized lose ownership of fertile land and then no longer possess the means to sell, trade, or transfer goods. The loss of ownership naturally inflicts poverty upon the colonized. Although the colonized have been dispossessed of their land, they still, in a concrete sense, have ownership of their physical bodies, their “labour power” (4).

Sen provides five influences that affect one’s exchange entitlement and therefore his ability to avoid starvation:

- (1) whether he can find an employment, and if so for how long and at what wage rate;
- (2) what he can earn by selling his non-labour assests, and how much it costs him to buy whatever he may wish to buy;
- (3) what he can produce with his own labour power and resources (or resource services) he can buy and manage;
- (4) the cost of purchasing resources (or resource services) and the value of the products he can sell;
- (5) the social security benefits he is entitled to and the taxes, etc., he must pay. (4)

Sen addresses the issue in terms of a general economy, but each of these five influences contributes to or diminishes the risk of starvation. If an individual is able to find work and earn sufficient wages, that individual and his family will avoid starvation; however, the opposite is true as well. Likewise, if an individual is able to sell non-labor assets or labor power at a premium while purchasing needed goods at low prices, he then will be able to avoid starvation.

⁴⁶ Sen reduces the impact of the terms starvation and famine. When talking about starvation he makes reference to hunger, whereas, his terminology for famine would be closely related to the term starvation that I have used here.

⁴⁷ Exchange entitlements pertain to the bundles of commodities one can acquire through exchanging what one owns.

Finally, if the benefits paid to the individual are greater than the amount required for taxes the individual will avoid starvation. These favorable circumstances, however, do not generally exist in the colonial system. Typically, the colonized are either unemployed or paid insufficient wages and taxed while receiving minimal to no “social security” benefits.

3.3.1 Hunger

The themes of hunger, starvation and famine persist through the novels of this corpus as a result of poverty and injustices inflicted by the colonizer. Dib’s trilogy opens with *La grande maison*, whose primary theme relies strictly on the hunger of Omar and his family. The novel begins with Omar declaring, “Un peu de ce que tu manges” (7) and, likewise, ends with the narrator explaining, “Omar s’accroupit lui aussi avec les autres, devant la meïda, et surveilla sa mère qui rompait le pain contre son genou” (179). Not only do the first and last lines convey the theme of suffering due to hunger but what lies in between these lines demonstrates the complexity of the issue. Characters are defined by whether they eat or not and by what they eat; the poor have limited means of acquiring food sufficient for their needs and are often left eating roots, while the rich eat couscous with meat and other delicacies. As is the case here, the hunger of the colonized is not necessarily a direct result of insufficient food at the national level, for some have food and others lack. Sen argues that what I define as hunger “is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there *being* not enough food to eat. While the latter can be a cause of the former, it is but one of many *possible* causes” (1).⁴⁸

The narrator explains the means by which Omar procures food: either through begging other students or helping his widowed neighbor, Yamina, who rewards him with food. The fact

⁴⁸ Sen refers to starvation in this quote, which he links closely with hunger rather than a prolonged form of hunger which I define as starvation.

that Omar, as young boy, has to go outside of the house to acquire food for himself, indicates the inability of the family to provide sufficient nutritional assistance. Omar's concern for filling his belly constantly preoccupies him and also the narration of the novel. Following the introductory chapter, Omar's dialogue with his mother opens the second chapter with a concern for the next meal: "C'est le déjeuner ?" (Dib, *La grande maison* 11). Aïni is in the process of preparing cardoons⁴⁹ for lunch, an agricultural product which further illuminates the family's economic status; a meal consisting only of cardoons does not provide sufficient nutritional value. Omar expresses his discontent with this meager meal by declaring: "Maudits soient les père et mère de ces cardons" (11).⁵⁰

Back at school, the narration moves forward with a brief description of the students who attend that place of learning. Among them are the poor like Omar, but also students from wealthier families, such as the sons of merchants, land owners and civil servants. These wealthier students had protectors who generally shelter them from the violence of the school yard. As a result, they would boast of their meals and treats. One of these students, Driss Bel Khodja, not only ate bread, a delicacy in and of itself for Omar, but also cakes and candies. The poor students would follow him around hoping to get a taste of the crumbs that fell behind. In observing this, Omar wonders why such a person would gain the respect of his peers as he thinks to himself, "Était-ce l'obscur respect que leur inspirait un être qui mangeait chaque jour à sa faim" (Dib, *La grande maison* 14). Driss further torments the poorer students every morning by

⁴⁹ Also known as the artichoke thistle, considered as an invasive weed in other parts of the world.

⁵⁰ Albert Camus declares that, "Je crois pouvoir affirmer que 50% au moins de la population se nourrissent d'herbes et de racines et attendent pour le reste la charité administrative sous forme de distribution de grains" (*Misère* 36). Mohammed Dib, through the voice of some wandering *fellahs* in *L'incendie* declares that: "Pour boire, nous puissions l'eau de sources; pour manger, ça n'était pas aussi facile. Qu'est-ce que nous avons mangé ! Madre mia ! De tout ! Des racines de *telghouda* et des mûres sauvages ; de la galette que nous donnaient de bonnes gens qui avaient pitié de nous ; des feuilles de guimauve, des amandes vertes et des fruit de grenadiers" (70). Dib italicizes and defines the word *telghouda* as a wild plant whose roots are often the only food among the poor in the countryside.

recounting his meal from the previous evening, claiming to have eaten “[des] quartiers de mouton rôtis au four, [des] poulets, [du] couscous au beurre et au sucre, [des] gâteaux aux amandes et au miel” (14). Omar’s insufficient meal consisting of cardoons pales in comparison to the copious meals consumed by Driss.

Later, Omar runs away from home after an argument with his mother, and upon returning, he hears her calling for him, but his weary legs are unable to keep up. This simple incident is a jab at the injustices of colonialism, as the narrator explains that he has not eaten anything since morning. Through these opening events, the reader becomes aware of Omar’s inability to acquire his daily bread easily, as well as the inequality among the population. The novel begins many chapters with the descriptions of meals prepared by Aïni which Omar views as insufficient because of a lack of an essential element: bread. The narrator describes such a scene by stating, “Aïni versa le contenu bouillant de la marmite, une soupe de pâtes hachées et de légumes, dans un large plat en émail. Rien de plus, pas de pain ; le pain manquait” (Dib, *La grande maison* 51). Omar shows his unhappiness by angrily arguing with his mother, asking how he is supposed to eat the soup without bread while ignoring the utility of a spoon; meanwhile, in the background, the daughters contentedly lap up the soup with a spoon. However, there is not a sufficient amount of soup to fill their bellies, and for this purpose, Aïni uses cayenne peppers to make the meal spicy, requiring the children to drink a copious amount of water which fills their stomachs, avoiding the necessity of bread and larger meal portions.

The issue of hunger consumes Omar’s thoughts as he notices that “Il y a aussi les riches ; ceux-là peuvent manger. Entre eux et nous passe une frontière, haute et large comme un rempart” (Dib, *La grande maison* 113), but he does not understand the difference between those who eat and those who do not. The narrator describes his confusion as he notes that, “il voulait

savoir le comment et le pourquoi de cette faim. C'était simple, en effet. Il voulait savoir le pourquoi et le comment de ceux qui mangent et de ceux qui ne mangent pas" (Dib, *La grande maison* 163). What Omar fails to understand in his youth is that the issue surrounding those who eat and those who do not is a complex relationship of power. The colonizer intentionally creates a gap between the rich and the poor, which allows the rich, the colonizer, to prosper while forcing the poor, the colonized, into abject misery and starvation. The colonizer, however, does not wish to completely starve the indigenous population, as it would almost immediately result in revolt. Mansouria, Omar's cousin, echoes this as she declares that the colonizers "ont peur de ceux qui ont faim. Parce que d'avoir faim donne des idées pas comme celles de tout le monde" (160).

3.3.2 Starvation

The French, in the maintenance of Algeria, failed to adequately appease the colonized economically, which affected the stability of the colonial system. The colonized, those who could not eat or ate mere rations of roots, were refused their happiness at the hand of the colonizer. If the happiness of the colonized relies on the ability to eat, then discontent arises through hunger, which leads to civil unrest. Alfred Henry Lewis argues that "there are only nine meals between mankind and anarchy" (605). Hunger historically has been a leading cause for discontent and revolution.⁵¹ Realizing this, "the local and colonial governments formulated plans to alleviate the disastrous effects of unemployment and famine on Algerian communities, they took action only in 1934, and even then corruption and fraud reduced the available credits to a miniscule amount" (Kalman 125). Interestingly, it was the Pied-noir who proposed theoretical

⁵¹ The French revolution came about partially because of bread riots caused by bread shortages. Starvation has also caused political unrest in ancient China and in the Roman era as argued by Robert Kates and Sara Millman, who state, "Dynasties fell in ancient China when especially severe famine occurred [...] In the Roman era, government efforts to insure a supply of grain in times of scarcity may be read as a strategy to avoid political upheaval" (402).

improvements, shelter and food, in the life of the Algerians. These propositions were, however, two-fold: one side demonstrated to an international community that the French were truly concerned for the well-being of the colonized, whereas the other aimed at keeping the colonized in a state of docility; for how could one expect the colonized to be loyal to France while suffering from starvation and deprivation at their hands? The actions taken by the colonizer failed to curb the starvation of the colonized, eventually leading to the massacres at Sétif and Guelma which opened up the path towards a revolution.

Suffering resulting from starvation changes individuals, described by the narrator in *Le sommeil du juste*: “quand le cousin Toudert mourait de faim comme tout le monde, c’était un forcené de la bagarre; chaque jour sur la place il appelait les Musulmans à la guerre sainte. On le laissait dire; on savait que c’était insensé et que c’était la faim qui le faisait parler. Toudert, devenu riche, défendait maintenant la cause de ceux que naguère il jetait à la mer tous les soirs” (Mammeri 8). Toudert’s actions change as he transitions from poverty and starvation to prosperity. Similarly, Mammeri declares later that, “La misère peut pousser le pauvre à une action honteuse” (*Le sommeil* 31).

In the Algerian Trilogy civil unrest, specifically the strike leading to the *incendie*, results from the immediate suffering associated with starvation. Ali bér Rabah, a *fellah*, explains the reason for this civil unrest as he declares:

Il y a quinze jours qu’on n’a pas eu une goutte d’huile à la maison. Je dois de l’argent à l’épicier et je n’ai pas de quoi le payer. Nous mourons à petit feu. Nous demandons notre droit à la vie pour nous et nos enfants....

Nous mangeons de l’orge, dit-il ; nous nous couchons sur le sol nu. Nous n’avons pas de vêtements. J’ai ce vieux burnous pour m’habiller et me coucher. Je suis en grève, moi aussi....

Je suis du douar d’Ouchba. Mais j’ai toujours travaillé par ici. Moi, mes enfants et ma femme, nous avons tout le temps faim. Si vous me conduisez chez un gargotier, je suis capable de manger tout ce qu’il a. Mes enfants meurent de faim. Je dis : en avant pour la grève. Nous sommes arrivés au comble de la misère. (Dib, *L’incendie* 126)

With the financial inability to obtain even a drop of oil needed for cooking, the colonized begin to not only experience hunger and discomfort, but starvation. This, along with the lack of basic necessities, leads Ali bér Rabah to participate in the strike just as it has done with others.

Starvation is the most immediate injustice felt, which leads, therefore, to immediate action. He and the other *fellahs* see no other means of reacting than to join the beginning movements of what would eventually become Algeria's liberation war.

The colonized, who barely survive each day, experience untenable suffering while observing the death of those poor who were refused the necessities of life. The poor wandering *fellahs* experience this rejection as they observe, "Nous avons trouvé des pauvres plus pauvres que nous" (Dib, *L'incendie* 70). The colonized, in viewing his neighbor suffering to the point of a miserable death, experiences a *prise de conscience*,⁵² as they realize that they may very well become the next victims. The *fellahs* in *L'incendie* experience much suffering as a result of starvation, which contrasts with the initial experience of Omar in the countryside. Omar and his family have come to spend time in the countryside in Bni Boublen. Omar marvels at the crops and the meal he experiences upon his arrival. He then understands the beauty of life as the narrator explains "Omar s'étonnait que la vie fût belle avec cette facilité" (21). His initial experience in Bni Boublen contrasts starkly with the description of life in the concrete jungle of Tlemcen. This delight, however, is short-lived as Omar slowly becomes aware of the difficult life of the *fellahs* and their discontent for their lot in life as a result of the unjust colonial regime's constant attacks.

The Comandar, an elderly experienced *fellah*, provides an introductory note to the countryside of Bni Boublen and its inhabitants. Of the women, he declares that they

⁵² There is therefore much complexity in the *prise de conscience* and the means by which it is brought about.

ont le teint ensoleillé du miel et sont comme l'or. Toutefois rien de cela dure bien longtemps : la vieille malédiction pèse sur elles. Vite, elles acquièrent des corps de portefaix, et leurs pieds qui foulent la terre portent de profondes crevasses. Certaines traînent des corps maigres qui laissent saillir les côtes. D'une manière ou d'une autre leur grâce se fane en un clin d'œil. Seules leurs voix traînantes restent douces. Mais une redoutable faim hante leurs regards. (28)

The women of the region are greatly affected by the insurmountable suffering which plagues the countryside. Their hunger and starvation shows on their faces and haunts them; their beauty is fleeting. This starvation defines the colonized, male and female, for bread signifies nourishment, life and happiness, and without it, the body decays. The *fellahs* in search of bread only find the source of their misery, the colonial regime and, as a result, continually ask themselves "Aurai-je à manger tout à l'heure, et demain?" (146). As they ask themselves this simple question, they observe the Europeans in their clean and proper clothes, with "leur air de gens qui ne connaissent pas la faim, ce bonheur qu'ils semblaient tous éprouver de vivre, la sensation d'être protégés, défendus" (166).

Starvation plays an important role in the narration of this corpus and causes Omar in the Algerian Trilogy to develop as a character. Omar demonstrates a sense of integrity, as he intentionally avoids violating laws and man in order to obtain food. He holds himself at a slightly higher standard, thus attempting to avoid the humiliation of digging through garbage to find food, even if he is often forced to do so. Others who suffer from starvation as a result of poverty have gone beyond the point of being concerned about the shame of digging through garbage in order to survive another day. The movement from regular hunger to starvation forces the poor to "fourrager dans les poubelles", even to the point where a "nombre de gamins, et même d'hommes, tiraient le plus clair de leur subsistance des ordures de la ville" (Dib, *L'incendie* 164).

3.3.3 Famine

Albert Camus not only remarked on the hunger and meager salaries of the colonized but also on a real famine which affected Algeria. Yacine elaborates as the narrator in *Nedjma* declares, “il pleut rarement sur la plaine de l’est algérien, mais à torrents” (73). Likewise, in his notebook, Mokrane reiterates Camus’ remarks concerning the famine as he writes, “Deux ans de suite toutes les sources avaient tari, et il avait fallu descendre chercher l’eau très bas, dans la vallée. La grêle avait brûlé le blé en herbe; on avait éteint dans le même été quatre incendies à quelques jours d’intervalle dans la même forêt d’Ifra” (Mammeri, *Les chemins* 31). Successive years of little rain, followed by severe flooding when it does rain, complicates an agrarian society. Famines generally occur through uncontrollable means and inflict suffering on a general population. However, “it is by no means clear that there has ever occurred a famine in which all groups in a country have suffered from starvation, since different groups typically do have very different commanding powers over food, and an over-all shortage brings out the contrasting powers in stark clarity” (Sen 43). Thus, what makes famine in colonialism different from that in any other free country, rests on the colonial government’s inaction. Through the supposed *mission civilisatrice*, the French government was duty-bound to aid the colonies by providing proper sanitation, as well as alleviating poverty. The underlying theme of the *mission civilisatrice*, however, contradicted the aims and exploits of colonialism. In the forward to the English translation of *Les damnés de la terre*, Homi Bhabha argues that no “civilizing mission, despite its avowed aims, had ever been free of psychological terror, cultural arrogance, and even physical torture” (xi).

When famine struck Algeria in 1939, the colonial government was at odds with its responsibility to help the needy and the colonial agenda. This literal, historical famine⁵³ which affected the general population becomes unique and turns into starvation among the colonized as the colonial administration provided minimal amounts of aid. Similarly, other French colonies experienced starvation and hunger due to the inability of the colonized to provide a positive exchange entitlement. In his book *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* David Arnold provides an example of France's colonial famine policy through the example of Niger in 1931. Niger's famine resulted from insufficient rainfall along with a plague of locusts but was further complicated due to the colonial tax system. Arnold argues that, "The harvest of the previous year, 1930, had given the peasants little security against their losses because of the high and inflexible nature of the colonial tax demand. Even during the famine grain continued to be levied from the worst-affected areas because officials refused to admit there was a shortfall" (126). Taxation on animals likewise persisted and increased while the actual value of the livestock diminished. Alistair Horne likewise demonstrates that,

For a Muslim average earnings throughout Algeria were estimated at 16,000 francs a year - whereas the European equivalent was 450,000 francs, or nearly thirty times as high. At the same time, the taxes he paid on his meagre pittance seemed unfairly weighted. It was reckoned that the 100,000 most impoverished Algerian families might be milked for twelve per cent of their incomes; while at the other end of the scale the 14,000 best off (of whom 10,000 were European), with incomes five times higher than the average for French families, were called upon to pay only twenty-nine per cent of earnings vastly larger than those of the Muslims. But at the same level in France they would have paid thirty-three per cent. (63)

The income ratio and tax rates differed vastly between the indigenous and European population insomuch that the Europeans benefited while the indigenous struggled to earn a living and pay taxes. Dib elaborates further on this inequality through the narrator in *L'incendie* who declares,

⁵³ The significance of this famine twenty years before the publication of the first novels of this corpus lies in the fact that the subject matter of these first works begin either during or in the aftermath of this famine. Camus points out that, "Au début de 1939, la Kabylie souffrit cruellement d'une sorte de famine" (31).

“Et pour payer les impôts ? Il fallait vendre la bijouterie de la femme, y ajouter ses propres vêtements, déballer la laine des matelas, faire l’appoint avec des peaux de mouton. Vendre autant que possible tout, mais pas la terre” (31); once again, the role of land in this agrarian society comes into play. France’s colonial policies on taxation and poverty contributed greatly to the suffering and starvation of the colonized; it turned hunger into widespread starvation and famine.

3.4 Welfare

The colonial situation concerning welfare, whether in Algeria or elsewhere, can be analyzed in light of Michel Foucault’s theory on biopower and biopolitics.⁵⁴ The colonizer literally creates relationships of power over bodies, and such is the case with the hunger, starvation and famine of the colonial population; however, restricting nourishment, in effect, diminishes the happiness of the subjected body, which in turn creates hostile rather than docile bodies. Through the theory of biopower chronicled by Foucault, the colonizer enacts a form of economic control based on welfare. Such is the case in these novels as the colonizers provide a *distribution de blé*, supposedly to supplement the diet of the colonized. The colonizer creates the impression that he is helping the colonized by issuing food rations in the form of food stamps. This aid, however, is not sufficient and only manages to keep the colonized in a temporary docile state.

Aïni and Omar reveal the mechanics of the distribution of welfare when she asks: “As-tu revu le tableau de la mairie : on n’annonce pas de distribution de farine?” to which Omar replies, “Non, rien. Il n’y a de marqué que l’huile et le savon, que nous avons touchés. Si on compte comme la dernière fois, on aura de la farine dans huit ou dix jours” (Dib, *Le métier* 41). This conversation demonstrates the frequent irregularity of the welfare system on which a large

⁵⁴ Foucault omitted discussing the colonial system in his theories and genealogies. This is, perhaps a result of the aversion to postcolonial studies prior to the late 90s because of a suppression of colonial memory.

population heavily relies. With this distribution, the colonizers have the ability to appease a discordant colonial population, with which Mansouria agrees as she argues, “Pourquoi n’aurions-nous pas, nous aussi, notre part de bonheur ? Et si on pouvait seulement manger. Ce serait notre bonheur. Si ce n’est que cela, le bonheur, pourquoi ne pourrait-on pas manger un peu ?” (Dib, *La grande maison* 160).

Mouloud Mammeri demonstrates that the colonizer similarly possesses the power to confiscate food rations in *Le sommeil du juste* as the *komisar* “enlevait toutes les cartes d’alimentation de la famille” (23). As a result, the father wonders how he and his family are to eat as the government has taken away their ability to sustain life. Restricting and distributing welfare, in effect, creates the power over life which allows the colonizer to maintain the status quo by limiting the growth of the colonial population. This, however, becomes increasingly difficult with such a large colonial population in relation to the colonizer.

3.5 Labor/Workforce

The complication with issues of labor and workforce derive from the previously discussed topics in this chapter, including poverty, expropriation, hunger, starvation and famine. The expropriation of land caused the laborers to relocate from arable lands to untillable ones, eventually contributing “to the creation of a rural proletariat, a mass of dispossessed, uprooted individuals, fit only to provide a reserve of cheap labor” (Bourdieu, *The Algerians* 121). With the complications caused by expropriation, the colonized were thus forced either to move to the urban center, relying on the charity of others to survive, or to find employment on the lands of the colonizer as a reserve of cheap labor. Unfortunately for the colonized, with a growing population and the modern technology employed by the colonizer, it became difficult to find a proper, consistent, wage-earning source of employment. Thus, due to the scarcity of jobs,

especially low-skilled jobs, there would be much competition described as “la forme première de la lutte pour la vie, une lutte qui, pour certains, recommence chaque matin, dans l’anxiété et l’incertitude et qui ne connaît pas plus de règles qu’un jeu de hasard” (Bourdieu, *Le désenchantement* 81). The availability of employment in an overpopulated agrarian society in which a select few possessed suitable land for cultivation was rare. Bourdieu elaborates upon this as he quotes a chauffeur from Oran:

Parfois, je travaille, parfois dix jours, parfois quinze jours, mais jamais comme ça, d’un seul coup, de façon continue. Je suis actuellement dans un chantier comme chauffeur. Il faut du pain pour les enfants. Et pour ça, n’importe quel métier plaît. Mieux vaut ça que de tourner en rond, pour rien, sans rien leur rapporter. Vous voyez mes enfants, ils sont tout nus. Vous voyez ma maison, une écurie, ce n’est pas une maison. Je ferais n’importe quel métier pourvu que je gagne bien pour nourrir mes enfants. Je n’ai pas d’autre métier. C’est ça ma vie, il n’y a que le salaire qui ne va pas. Le reste, nous sommes faits pour ça. (*Travail et travailleurs* 503)

The conditions of the laborer resembled slavery rather than modern-day agricultural labor conditions consisting of low wages and long hours. Likewise, Amer in *Les chemins qui montent* declares:

L’existence, c’est moi et pas autre chose ! Inutile de chercher, je ne cache rien. Tu veux vivre ? Voici la vie. Lutte pour ne pas mourir et tes mains seront calleuses. Marche pieds nus et tu te fabriqueras une semelle épaisse de ta peau. Entraîne-toi à vaincre la faim et tes traits se tireront, s’aminciront : tu prendras une mine farouche que la faim elle-même craindra. Travaille pour vivre, uniquement pour vivre. Jusqu’au jour où tu crèveras. De grâce, ce jour, ne l’appelle pas. Qu’il vienne tout seul ! parce qu’enfin, tu vois bien, la vie est belle. (Feraoun 177)

The issues of labor and workforce are the culminating problems which derive from poverty as imposed through colonialism; therefore, this section will bring together these issues and demonstrate the interconnections, as well as the implications poverty has on this literature. This section will use the findings of Pierre Bourdieu to provide the social context of the milieu of this corpus.

3.5.1 Mendicants

With the expropriation of land, the *fellah*, who have decided to leave the miserable plots of land, the leftovers of the colonizer, immigrate to the urban centers. Through the narration of *Le métier à tisser* the displaced mendicants express through their silence the suffering and trauma of colonial oppression. In this novel, the urban center has become overrun with the vagrant unemployed population from the countryside. Azzedine Haddour describes the historical context as she states that “Eighty-five per cent of a sedentary population was reduced to a nomadic life and many peasants were forced to immigrate to Tunisia, Morocco, or the Middle East” (113) as a result of expropriation. Bourdieu similarly argues that,

The disintegration of the agrarian order has led to an abnormal development of the cities. Life appears to have nothing stable or durable to offer the urban populace, which has been completely and irrevocably cut off from its former environment, lives crammed together in incredible densities in the unsanitary dwellings of the old city districts or of the new shantytowns, and is generally filled with uncertainty as to the future. The misery and insecurity have been made even worse by the distress resulting from the loss of the group ties on which the individuals’ psychological and social stability was based in the old communities. (*The Algerians* 141)

The actual urban effects of the colonizer’s actions in the countryside become evident through the large mendicant population.

These vagrant individuals are like phantoms and zombies; they are the walking dead who haunt the living: “Lentement, leur foule, hommes, femmes, vieillards, enfants, prenait possession de tous les quartiers. La plupart d’entre eux étaient valides” (Dib, *Le métier* 14). These vagabonds as described by Dib are neither invalid nor outcasts to society; they have merely been displaced, comparable to refugees with no place to go. They become beggars, forced to rely on the charity of others or starve as a result of the unemployment rate for unskilled laborers. Day by day the number of beggars who enter the concrete jungle increases with little waiting there for them. The mendicants set up wherever is convenient as Dib’s narrator aptly describes the

situation: “On en découvrait de plus en plus au fond des impasses, sous les auvents, aux abords des remparts, devant les bains publics, sur les escaliers du marché couvert, au pied des murailles turques de Méchouar, contre le porche des fondouks. Dans toutes les rues déambulaient leurs silhouettes mal ficelées, grises et sales” (15).

Dib intertwines the narration of the life of Omar with the introduction of these mendicants as a form of social realism, an illustration of the Algerian identity under colonialism, which then constructs collective trauma. The traumas of colonialism have altered, battered and buried the Algerian identity in irrevocable ways; it has been a form of shock, “a gradual realization that the community *no longer exists* as an effective source of support and that *an important part of the self has disappeared*” (qtd. in Alexander 4). Similarly, the narration of Omar’s story, intermingled with the story of the mendicants, reinforces the collective sharing of suffering as cultural and collective trauma. Initially, Omar and the other city dwellers fail to understand the mendicants, viewing their suffering as individual, not existing outside of the mendicants’ realm. For this reason the narration’s preoccupation with the vagrant population transforms the mendicants’ suffering from individual to collective; “Ce ne sont que les nôtres. Hé! Regardez-les ; comme un miroir, ils vous renverront notre propre reflet. L’image la plus fidèle de ce que nous sommes, ils vous la montrent !” (19). They are a reflection of the general population who suffer under the hands of the colonizer.

The narrator aptly describes these individuals as “des meurt-de-faim” (18) who are no different than Omar and his family. Omar, during the year between working at the *épicier* and being hired on as a *dévideur*,⁵⁵ acts no differently than the mendicants who “vagabondaient un peu de-ci, de-là ; jamais ils n’allaient bien loin. Inattentifs les uns aux autres, ils ne se

⁵⁵ A person who winds up loose string, such as yarn or wool which has already been spun, into a ball that can then be used to easily make clothing or rugs.

réunissaient pas entre eux. Mais quand, quelque part, une distribution de nourriture ou de gros sous avait lieu, ils formaient un cercle qui s'enflait à vue d'œil" (18). After being hired by Mahi Bouanane as a *dévideur*, Omar distances himself from the mendicants, as he can now provide at least minimal amounts of food for himself; he, however, still acts as an observer to objectively portray the growing suffering. As an observer, Omar ventures among the masses of vagrants as the narrator notes that, "Les rues étaient encombrées de mendiants, si bien qu'en maintes endroits, il devait enjamber des corps pour passer" (44). Due to high unemployment and expropriation, these places which were once littered with goats are now replaced by vagrant humans. The replacement of goats with mendicants demonstrates the colonial regime's lack of concern for the displaced, equating them with animals.

Aïni notes the increasing amounts of beggars as she declares that, "Des mendiants arrivent de partout, ces jours-ci" (Dib, *Le métier* 41). They are described as having "des visages brûlés, secs. C'étaient des femmes, à la féminité sacrifiée, assises sur les trottoirs ou les marches des magasins ; des hommes, debout, couchés, pliés en deux, cachant les mains sous leurs guenilles" (44). After having observed these mendicants, Omar decides to interact with them. These hordes of beggars, zombie-like creatures, haunt Omar's conscience, and he decides to share some bread and fish with a little girl among the horde. Once the girl has eaten her share, the father is left standing with the crumbs that remain. All the other beggars stare blankly at the father unsure what to do with the remnants. Omar realizes that he has just stirred the pot; he has momentarily awakened the walking dead, and flees in fear. Omar comes to a realization that with the growing population of these mendicants, it becomes more and more difficult to appease them with such limited means.

With each new description of the city of Tlemcen by the narrator in *Le métier à tisser* comes an update on the status of the mendicants. As the novel progresses, the number of mendicants increases, while at the same time, the general population becomes numb to their presence; the narrator argues that “A bout de patience, les habitants firent comme si ces êtres n’existaient pas, et ne s’occupèrent plus d’eux. [...] Au surplus, des agents de police étaient postés à tous les coins de rue” (Dib 117). Once the horde of mendicants has grown too large, neither the colonizer nor the colonized can help. The colonizer instead attempts to suppress the mendicants through a visible policing force, while the colonized continue on with their daily routine. The mendicants have affected the colonized, causing them to become not only numb to the beggar’s suffering, but their own as well.

3.5.2 Unemployment and Education

Unemployment among the indigenous Algerian population becomes complicated by its inability to receive a proper education, as discussed in chapter one. Bourdieu argues that

On sait que plus l’école est quittée tôt, plus l’éventail de choix est restreint. A chacun des degrés d’instruction correspond un degré déterminé de liberté : dans une société où 87% des individus n’ont aucun diplôme d’enseignement général et 98% aucun diplôme d’enseignement technique, la possession d’un certificat d’aptitude professionnelles ou d’un certificat d’études primaires procure un avantage énorme dans la compétition économique. (*Le désenchantement* 82)

With education only available to a select few, including the children of settlers, the opportunity to gain stable employment rests with those individuals privileged to attend school. Bourdieu’s alarming statistics further illuminate the inability of the indigenous population to receive a proper education, resulting in the economic downfall of the colonized. He quotes an Algerian worker who declares, “Non, je n’ai pas cherché autre chose, parce que je n’aurais pas trouvé. Je ne peux rien faire d’autre; pour trouver du travail, il faut être instruit. Où c’est que vous trouvez

du travail aujourd'hui? Ce boulot, c'est ça ou rien. Sinon, je crève de faim" (*Le désenchantement* 89).

Omar had the opportunity to receive a colonial education which could have led to a better job in the future, but he left his school at the age of thirteen in order to become a "productive" member of society and to help provide for his family. Omar's first job after leaving school to find a *métier* involved working at an *épicier*. Unfortunately, "il commençait à peine à travailler, que le magasin était fermé par les autorités, et le marchand, son patron, jeté en prison" (Dib, *Le métier* 11). With the owner arrested and accused as a supposed revolutionary, Omar was left without a job, or the ability to easily find one, for over a year; in part due to his lack of education. With the help of Aïni and her pleas, not through Omar's educational background, Omar finds employment as a *dévideur* for Mahi Bouanane.

Ironically, after Omar gains employment as a *dévideur* with the possibility of becoming a textile worker, Aïni contradicts her desire for Omar to quit school to obtain employment. She argues with Omar stating, "Si tu étais resté à l'école, tu aurais pu, plus tard, avoir une place dans un bureau... Ne serait-ce que comme balayeur. Qu'est-ce que tu vas être ? Un tisserand ? Tu travailleras jour et nuit, et tu n'atteindras pas le bout de pain. Entends-tu ? Tu n'atteindras pas le bout de pain" (39). She once believed that there would be no beneficial gain in studying books under the colonial system, but this may as well be her *prise de conscience* as she recognizes, even if momentarily, that poverty in the colonial system can be avoided, permanently or temporarily, by colonial education. Rather than investing in the future by allowing Omar to remain in school and eventually land a job in an office, Aïni focuses on the immediate future and the acquisition of daily bread. She has difficulty looking toward the future, as she is blinded by the constant trauma of suffering; she calls death "la couverture d'or" and continues by stating,

“Mais si cette mort n’arrive pas, ne veut pas de nous, et si, ne pouvant plus abattre de la besogne, nous continuons tout de même à vivre, voilà la calamité” (Dib, *La grande maison* 137). She has lived a life full of despair in which the injustices of colonialism have bound her and put her on the brink of madness; she has lost sight of what the future may hold.

Even with an education or a skilled trade, the colonized are placed in an inferior status; they cannot and will not be equals with the colonizer in the colonial system. Mostefa Rezak, a *tisserand* who works with Omar, declares, “j’ai travaillé toute mon existence, et malgré ça, je suis resté au même point. J’ai donc décidé de travailler juste assez pour gagner de quoi boire !” (Dib, *Le métier à tisser* 103). Mostefa had worked his whole life, never advancing, only remaining stagnant with insufficient wages. He represents the lot of the colonized worker who is fortunate enough to find a stable job, regardless of his education.

3.5.3 Child Labor

Albert Camus states that in an agrarian society or the urban center, “il est plus économique d’utiliser trois colons qu’un Européen” (100), but this declaration of colonial labor can be further argued that it is more economical to hire three colonized children rather than one colonized adult. Child labor in the colonial system became exploited, since lower wages could be paid to these children. As discussed in the previous section, if a family could not afford for the children to attend school, the children would often join the workforce at a young age. Bourdieu declares that the colonized are “contraints de commencer à gagner leur vie très tôt, entre 10 et 15 ans, sont jetés dans la compétition pour l’emploi sans aucune préparation, à peine sortis de l’école, lorsqu’ils ont eu la chance d’y aller” (Bourdieu, *Le désenchantement* 82). As a result of insufficient educational opportunities, the colonized youth were forced to provide manual labor to supplement the family’s income.

Jean-Pierre, the educated son of a European and antithetical opposite of Omar, is reminded by his father that he must not forget that “il y a beaucoup d’enfants qui travaillent et qui n’ont jamais eu de livre ou un autre jouet” (Dib, *L’incendie* 171). Jean-Pierre, the son of a colonizer, differs greatly from Omar in that as the child of a settler, he possesses greater opportunity and does not have to resort to working at a young age to provide for his family. Omar, in *Le métier à tisser*, begins his tenure in the workforce at a young age in order to aid his mother who labors tirelessly to provide for the family.

While Omar attended school, his sisters Aouïcha and Mériem were kept at the house until adolescence when they, like Omar, became part of the workforce at a very young age. Omar’s sisters began working for a rug factory where they each received their own salary. However, their wages differed because of age; the narrator demonstrates the differing wages as he declares, “Aouïcha apportait son gain de la semaine, la cadette aussi, le sien, mais moins important parce qu’elle était plus jeune” (Dib, *La grande maison* 143). Mouloud Mammeri similarly addresses this issue in *Le sommeil du juste*: “Parmi les vendangeurs il y avait beaucoup d’enfants. Lounas dit que le patron les préférait parce qu’il les payait moins” (65). The use of child labor in colonial Algeria was preferred to that of colonized adults because of its economic benefits. The requirement for the youth to work at such a young age affects the character development and plot of the novel as Omar, in the final novel of the trilogy, no longer plays and constantly worries about hunger, but spends his time in the dank atelier.

3.5.4 The *Fellahs*

With the integration of the local economy with the European economy comes the infrastructure, built by the colonizer, needed to enhance the standard of living of the developing

world.⁵⁶ However, with this integration, Algeria moved, at the hands of the colonizer, from producing traditional agricultural products (such as figs), to wine grapes, a crop that could not nourish the population. This transition created an imbalance due to the abundance of vineyards⁵⁷ in comparison to nourishing crops, contributing to the malnutrition and starvation of the colonized. With the abundance of colonial vineyards came the requirement for manual labor to work the large tracts of land and “Since winegrowing requires a plentiful supply of labor, the dispossessed fellahs and the former tenant farmers became the hired workers of the colonists” (Bourdieu, *The Algerians* 125-26).

The *fellahs*' trade tends to be low-skilled, and as a result, their value is diminished in relation to the technology of the colonizer in the agrarian system. The *fellahs*, however, believe themselves to be “le maître de la terre fertile,” understanding the feminine nature of the land with “le même mystère de fécondité s'épanouit dans les sillons et dans le ventre maternel. La puissance qui fait jaillir d'elle des fruits et des épis est entre les mains du fellah” (Dib, *L'incendie* 27). The role of the *fellah* in the agrarian society is overlooked by the colonizer, who views the techniques and technology of the colonized as inferior. The expropriation of land partly comes about by the superiority complex of the colonizer in regards to technology and agricultural advancement. Due to this expropriation, the *fellahs* who have lost their land become manual laborers on the lands of the colonizer, earning insufficient wages, as their labor is viewed as inferior. However, the work in the fields of the colonizer had become as rare as the opportunity for unskilled laborers in the urban center. Sliman and Lounas in *Le sommeil du juste* found it difficult to find a stable job as they wandered the countryside; the narrator explains that, “Aidé

⁵⁶ Newman et al. state, “Many features of the systems used to extract surplus from peasant producers can also be used to move food supplies into areas of shortage. It depends on the ideological perspectives of the people in power” (217). However, the people in power chose to ignore the gravity of the situation at hand, further degrading the colonized.

⁵⁷ Alistair Horne notes that “on average the vineyard of Algeria was notably larger than its French counterpart” (62).

de Lounas, Sliman trouva trois fois du travail mais chaque fois pour deux jours seulement. Il envoyait les ouvriers qui étaient attachés à une ferme : ceux-là travaillaient toute l'année" (Mammeri 64). Sliman wondered how there would be enough jobs for all of these displaced individuals to which Lounas simply replies "il n'y en a pas pour tous" (63). Lounas and Sliman continued their search as they "parcouraient les routes, des kilomètres et des kilomètres de route. Chaque jour ils rencontraient d'autres ouvriers qui cherchaient du travail comme eux. Ils leur posaient des questions. Les autres répondaient toujours la même chose : « il n'y a pas de travail. »" (65). They both eventually find work on a colonial vineyard with an initial duration of two weeks. Their job consists not of picking the grapes, but hauling the baskets to the desired location, a non-skilled position purely relying on manual labor. Due to Sliman's exceptional work ethic, he is offered a permanent position on the farm. Sliman, thus, contradicts "l'idée si répandue de l'infériorité de la main-d'œuvre indigène" (Camus 54) propagated by the likes of the client in the café in *Le métier à tisser* who argues that "La terre doit toujours produire... Si les mains qui la travaillent ne sont pas mauvaises ! Chez vous, les mains et le cœur sont rouillés. Quand on veut, on ferait produire la pierre elle-même" (Dib 120).

This newfound employment comes close to resemble slavery more than employment in a modern capitalist society as "le travail se faisait « des étoiles aux étoiles », c'est-à-dire de 4 heures du matin à 7 heures du soir" (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 66). Similarly, the laborers are treated with indignation and are beaten for disorderly conduct like slaves. On the same vineyard as Sliman, a young shepherd had lost track of a single sheep that had been running through the vineyard. For this negligent action, the young shepherd had been caught and beaten until Sliman and Lounas threw themselves on the aggressors. Lounas and Sliman had to flee the vineyard and that region or face punishment or even death at the hands of the colonizer. Sliman's idealistic

notions had lost him a stable job, but instead of partaking in the colonial oppression, he stood up for the little guy, an action representative of Algeria's fight against colonial France.

While on the road in search of a new job, Lounas and Sliman encountered many more unemployed grape pickers like themselves. The situation for those looking for work degraded each day, as the *maalems*⁵⁸ preferred child labor as discussed in the previous section.

Complicating the issue further, truckloads of unemployed workers from the south were dropped off alongside the road to compete with the likes of Lounas and Sliman. These two men, unlike a majority of others, were fortunate enough to find some form of employment wherever they went. The next farm which hired them differed from the previous, as it was not owned by the colonizer but by a Kabyle, and was unknowingly overseen by Akli and Toudert, casually referred to as the cousin. After having worked there for a month, Sliman notices that “Les figures de ceux qui travaillent changent chaque saison, quelquefois chaque jour, le travail ne change pas” (75). The conditions of the work were not favorable to the weak. If an individual was unable to complete the task, someone else would be brought on, resulting in a high turnover rate.

With the lack of steady work and slave-like labor conditions, the colonized grew weary and looked toward an end to the current situation. The arrival of the American troops in *Le sommeil du juste* provided a glimmer of hope for the colonized that would be short-lived. This arrival signified the end of the war, and for Sliman, it signified the new distribution of dominos that he believed would take place; he declares: “Il y a trois jours à Alger les troupes américains ont débarqué. Notre destin avec l'aide de Dieu va changer. Nous avons assez bricolé, assez travaillé pour que les autres vivent. Nous allons maintenant travailler pour nous” (78). However Arezki, Sliman's older brother, “n'était ni dupe ni distrait. Il savait qu'à Ighzer, où il allait pour toujours rentrer, les actions des hommes sont comme les efforts de quelqu'un qui se noierait là,

⁵⁸ Those who had oversight of the fields and were considered as master artisans in the agricultural domain.

devant lui, en pleine Méditerranée : démesurés mais vains, perdus dans les grands remous d'une mer qui les ignore. Nul homme jamais n'en profiterait" (202). He observes that the working and living conditions under the colonial regime will not change until the end of colonialism, an end which he does not see in sight. The disillusionment of the colonized brings with it despair, leading people to declare that "Ce travail me démolit la poitrine. Je n'en peux plus. Mes jambes sont sans force. Tout ce que je gagne ne suffit pas pour acheter assez de pain. Je travaille autant que je peux pourtant. Et à quoi ça sert ?" (Dib, *La grande maison* 121).

3.5.5 Supplemental Income by Various Means

Another employment option for the colonized involved leaving their native Algeria to work in the factories in metropolitan France. The individuals who left for France had high hopes of escaping the suffering rampant in colonial Algeria due to poverty and unemployment. However, the enlightened, positive view towards employment in France becomes quickly frustrated as the migrant workers "live in overcrowded rooms, are underpaid, and do the most difficult, most hazardous, and dirtiest tasks" (Aoudjit 85). As a result of these miserable living conditions, the colonized only stay in France for a limited amount of time before returning to their native villages.

Mohand, the older brother in *Le sommeil du juste*, had great hope as he left to work in the Renault factories in Paris. However, while there he contracted tuberculosis⁵⁹ and his physical body began to decline; rather than alleviating suffering, he augmented it. This not only augmented his own physical suffering, but that of his family: three kids, a wife, two brothers and his father. The working conditions in the factories did not differ greatly from the insupportable

⁵⁹ "Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly TB disease can be fatal. [...] TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected" ("Tuberculosis" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

conditions in colonial Algeria. The Algerians working in France were malnourished, with overcrowded habitations, while working in miserable conditions, including cold weather and long hours. These conditions along with the lack of vaccination greatly contributed to Mohand catching tuberculosis. The narrator describes the trauma of tuberculosis for Mohand as:

Le frère Mohand n'en avait plus pour longtemps à vivre. Aux premiers temps de sa tuberculose, quand il venait juste de rentrer de France, il crânait. Quand Arezki lui disait de se ménager il s'esclaffait : « Moi, crever ? Non pas si vite, en tout cas pas avant de vous avoir enterrés tous. Tu crois que je vais y passer avant ta frêle charpente ? Regarde, mais regarde-toi. C'est moi qui creuserai ta tombe. » Mais c'était bien sûr la maladie qui le faisait parler ainsi, la rage de voir que son beau corps était voué à la destruction, que c'était seulement une question de temps.

A mesure que la vie le quittait Mohand la haïssait chez les autres comme une injustice. A la maison on faisait toujours comme s'il était déjà mort; on comptait toujours sans lui et il s'en apercevait. Déjà il ne mangeait guère, il ne pouvait plus monter aucune côte ni marcher longtemps sans être oppressé. Il voyait venir les nuits avec effroi parce qu'alors sa toux s'exaspérait. (224-25)

Mohand initially felt strong and had the desire to face this disease head-on; however, his body continually deteriorated and left him nearly incapacitated until his death; he became a burden to the family, rather than a benefit, after his experience in France. The prospect of working in France provided immediate relief through slightly higher wages but, in the long run, deprived Mohand of the ability to live a full life, even under the harsh circumstances of colonial rule.

The father similarly wanted to send Sliman to work for Renault in France, since he had not received any formal education. Mohand openly disputes this idea as it, for him, has ruined rather than augmented his quality of life. Mohand tells his younger brother that, “Tu comprends, petit frère, il vaut mieux mourir de ma main que mangé par la tuberculose, au moins tu ne souffriras pas” (18). Throughout the novel, Mohand's health continuously declines until his eventual death from tuberculosis; the narrator describes his suffering, “La toux qui le secoua cette fois commença doucement mais sembla ne plus vouloir s'éteindre. Il s'adossa contre le mur” (224). He believes that his time is coming to an end, and his last act attempts to be

redemptive: to kill Toudert who had brought so much suffering to his family. After killing Toudert, he falls into a coma as he has lost all of his strength and eventually before the conclusion of the novel. Mohand's death brings an end to the suffering that began long before his arrival in France. It is the trauma of poverty and unemployment that pushed him to go to France in the first place, just as the father tries to send Sliman. Finding employment in France provided short term relief to the overwhelming pressure of colonial suffering from poverty. This, however, eventually hindered the family who were left behind with even fewer males to care for the family and the indigenous society. Similarly, the men would either return with illness or not return at all and stop sending the financial aid.

Outside of the agricultural labor market, the *fellahs* perform a multitude of tasks in order to earn money. A *fellah* from Djemâa-Saharidj explains that

Maintenant, tout est métier (*al-mityi*). Quel est ton métier ? demande-t-on ; et chacun de se trouver un métier. Qui, pour avoir entreposé quatre boîtes de sucre et deux paquets de café dans un local, se dit commerçant ; qui, parce qu'il sait clouer quatre planches se dit menuisier ; les chauffeurs ne se comptent plus, même s'ils n'ont pas de voiture ; il suffit d'avoir son permis en poche. (Bourdieu, *Le déracinement* 61)

Aïni, the illiterate widowed mother of Omar and his two sisters, does likewise as she works from home sewing espadrilles for Gonzalès, a Spaniard. During her life she had worked many jobs, “Elle avait cardé et filé de la laine. Ensuite, elle se mit à faire des arraguiats. Puis des feutres foulés à la main. A présent, elle piquait à la machine. Elle avait eu, indéniablement, beaucoup de métiers” (Dib, *La grande maison* 125). At the same time, she does not hesitate to smuggle Moroccan fabric across the border, a dangerous task, to supplement her income; she literally sacrifices her life to provide for her family.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Charles Bonn argues that the emergence of Francophone literature by Algerians in the 1950s and 1970s “repose sur le sacrifice de la mère” (13). Aïni, however, only dreams of smuggling fabric and never actually does so.

Likewise, Arezki, in *Le sommeil du juste*, supplements the family's income by reading and responding to letters sent from France for the villagers. This real world application of the colonial education provides not only monetary benefits, but praises from those around him. The villagers begin to call him Arezki-nnegh, meaning "notre Arezki, l'Arezki de tout le monde en quelque sorte" (Mammeri 15). Arezki does not work in the fields with his brothers and father, as he is deemed useless when it comes to manual labor. Instead, he comes to represent an educated dandy with his long hair and espadrilles, rejecting the commonly worn cowhide sandals because the rocks and pebbles hurt his feet. Although the family rejects him due to his unsuitability to labor deemed productive and beneficial, he, nevertheless, manages to earn a little extra money on the side for translating these letters.

3.6 Conclusion

The spiraling descent into poverty, from which an escape seems impossible and perilous, constantly affects and denigrates the colonized. Without employment, the colonized experience a whole life of hunger and suffering. Likewise, an inability to eat daily resulted in inferior manual labor, escalating the problem. Poverty and ensuing results of that poverty were a direct outcome of colonial in/action. Foucault's theory concerning biopower and biopolitics explains the colonizer's inaction or insufficient action to help a population whom they, through the *mission civilisatrice*, are supposedly required to help. The colonizer acknowledges that through regulating the devices required to live, he holds a power even greater than physical, violent acts of domination. The colonizer possesses a new form of control over the body, one that allows for the subjugation of an entire population. Before biopower, the sovereign's power was viewed as to kill or let live; but with its introduction, this dynamic changes to make live or let die. With this

choice, the colonial regime, as evidenced in this literature, has chosen to make the colonized live while restricting the ability to thrive.

The plague of poverty in the colonial system historically runs rampant and, therefore, in accordance with the author's social realism, it is essential that it be demonstrated in the Francophone Algerian novel. The theme of poverty, however, plays a vital role in the narration and character development of these novels, rather than realist, descriptive background information; it acts as a driving force for both the narration and the characters, whether through hunger, starvation and famine or through labor and workforce.

The following chapter continues the investigation of suffering and its role in the Francophone Algerian novel by looking at the plagues of colonialism in the postcolonial works by Dib, Mammeri, Feraoun and Yacine. It will look at the residual effects that violence and poverty continue to play in the postcolonial period, as well as at the insistence on the colonial past. This chapter will use, as a baseline, the first two chapters' thematic elements in order to analyze the implications of colonial suffering in the postcolonial novels.

CHAPTER 4: IMPLICATIONS OF COLONIAL TRAUMA ON FRANCOPHONE ALGERIAN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Colonial trauma and suffering not only endures, but persists through the liberation movement and into the postcolonial period. The influence of colonial suffering pervades the postcolonial literature through representation and memory, neocolonialism and the plagues of colonialism: violence and poverty. This chapter will analyze the residual effects of colonialism and its plagues, as well as the war of decolonization in the following novels: *Qui se souvient de la mer* by Mohammed Dib, *L'opium et le baton* by Mouloud Mammeri, *L'anniversaire* by Mouloud Feraoun and *Le polygone étoilé* by Kateb Yacine. This chapter is restricted to these novels in order to look at the transition between the colonial novel and the postcolonial novel with these authors, as the previous chapters have looked at these authors' colonial novels. I have intentionally omitted other postcolonial authors to limit the corpus to demonstrate the similarities and differences between these two periods. This chapter will primarily answer the following questions: For what reason do these authors focus on the colonial past rather than look forward to the postcolonial future? What role does the colonial past have on the thematic elements and modes of the postcolonial literature?

4.1 Representation and Memory

The traumatic events stretching from the colonization of Algeria in 1830 until the culminating events of the Algerian War and independence 132 years later, impose themselves on the memory of the colonized as well as of the colonizer. The authors of this corpus, through narration, demonstrate the trauma of the political events on the memory of the colonized; they meanwhile ignore the implications of these events on the memory of the colonizer. Alina Sajed argues that the memory of colonialism as well as the events leading to the decolonization of Algeria transfigured in contrasting ways:

In France, the memory of the Algerian War has been for the longest time a painful and embarrassing colonial wound the attempted burial of which took the form of amnesia. In Algeria, the memory of the war became a hyper-memory constantly re-enacted in repeated commemorations, as the new *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN, National Liberation Front) government established it as the founding moment of the nation and as the source of its legitimacy, which subsequently underpinned the shift from liberation state to a military dictatorship. (Sajed 89)

The Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun likewise argues that:

Between France and Algeria, a memory still survives. But it is not a healthy one. It is a wounded part of a shared history that has not managed to accept reality. Neither the war of liberation nor the independence that followed have really been recorded in the great book of French history. A kind of amnesia affects that part of the story of decolonization, which has been stated but not assimilated into France's social and political awareness. (qtd. in Le Sueur, "Decolonizing 'French Universalism'" 104)

Alina Sajed and Tahar Ben Jelloun pinpoint the French response to the Algerian war as a form of amnesia,⁶¹ but Sajed overlooks the autochthonous intellectuals, as well as the authors of this corpus in Algeria who do not necessarily create a hyper-memory of the events. Mouloud Mammeri, for example, "confessed his incapacity to write anything in the painful circumstances which prevailed then; witness his 'Lettre a un ami français' of 1957: Voici un an que je n'écris plus rien, parce que plus rien ne me paraît valoir la peine d'être écrit, plus rien que la grande tragédie, les larmes, le sang des innocents" (Arab 34). Lawrence and Karim likewise argue that, "In death as in life the context of violence dictates both the range of public memory and political uses of the past, yet in every generation and in all parts of the world violence of some kind defines the experience, and limits the options, of humankind" (3). Violence and trauma dictate

⁶¹ Memory of colonialism in the postcolonial realm expands beyond the initial years after colonialism had ended as the amnesia fades away. The French government in February of 2005 issued a law concerning the university education curriculum which declares: Les programmes de recherche universitaire accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite. Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit. La coopération permettant la mise en relation des sources orales et écrites disponibles en France et à l'étranger est encouragée (Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 – Article 4). This law demonstrates that the French national conscience in the postcolonial still struggles to come to terms with the trauma of the loss of Algeria.

both individual and collective memory which can be used and altered to meet the often political needs of the supposed collective, such as the FLN, as argued by Sajed. The troubling and violent war affected the Algerian memory imposing psychological suffering just as the long years of colonialism had done. Ways of coping with these traumatic events vary: one might simply repress this memory and continue on if nothing had happened; meanwhile, another may openly detail the events for the rest of the world, and, on the other hand, these events may seem impossible to portray without the use of symbols and surrealist imagery.

The narrative trope of memory after trauma is omnipresent in the Francophone postcolonial novel, whether the narration directly or indirectly addresses innate suffering or constantly references the traumatic past. The impact and influence of colonialism is demonstrated through the subject matter of postcolonial literature; a preoccupation with the aspects of colonialism is not anachronistic but, exhibits the inability to forget the past. Although Yacine's last novel *Le polygone étoilé* had been published in 1966, four years after Algeria's independence, it still cannot escape the plagues or the memory of colonialism. *Le polygone étoilé*, just like *Nedjma*, follows a non-linear narrative partly justified by Yacine's belief that "la mémoire n'a pas de succession chronologique" (*Le polygone* 179). Nostalgia and memory play a large role in his postcolonial novel, which is a continuation of *Nedjma*, as the past and present are intertwined in a fragmented, mosaic narrative. The narrator often reflects on the past and the implications that colonialism has had on the past and the present. He notes that at a young age his family could already see that he would become a writer, or he was at least "passionné de lettres," but if they were to guess the language in which he would produce literary works; it would be Arabic "comme son père, comme sa mère, comme ses oncles, comme ses grands-parents" (Yacine, *Le polygone* 181). If not for the colonial education system, imposed upon him

by his father, he would have fulfilled the desire and destiny foretold by his family but, instead, he employed the French language, the language of the colonizer, to tell his story in the colonial and postcolonial realm.

Le polygone étoilé differs slightly from the other postcolonial novels of this corpus as Yacine addresses issues presented in the colonial works of the other authors, such as education and language, because his previous novel, *Nedjma*, had not previously addressed these themes. As a result, Yacine, in this postcolonial novel, demonstrates the importance of discussing his colonial boyhood and its influences on his postcolonial self. He flashes back to the past as a school age child at the height of colonialism in order to exorcize himself from the trauma rather than repress the memories. As he recounts these events, rather than implementing the circular narrative and telling the story in the present, he uses the imperfect as well as the simple past which distances himself and the reader from the actual events; it is a mere story being told. The telling of this, therefore, acts as a means of addressing an issue that he previously believed had not been extremely relevant in his pressing towards an independent Algeria — demonstrated through the thematic elements of *Nedjma*: the myth of the nation. Yacine's postcolonial novel, thus, fails to directly address the Algerian war and thematic elements of postcolonialism, but does emphasize the suffering of colonization and its effect on him and his family.

Feraoun's final, yet partial, novel glosses the trauma of colonialism and the events of the Algerian war during which it takes place. In doing so, his narrator addresses the issue of the past and memory on which he does not place great importance, in contrast to the other postcolonial novels of this corpus. He goes on to declare that, "en bref, j'aime regarder en avant, non en arrière, me réservant une fois arrivé au mur, de m'arrêter un long moment, si possible, d'accomplir un demi-tour sur place, afin de revoir tout d'un seul coup d'œil et de constater

définitivement que je n'avais en effet rien à regretter de tout le passé. Rien. Rien”

(*L'anniversaire* 22-23). The trauma of colonialism and war affect the narrator; though he prefers to look toward the future and not the past, it is the past that has shaped him and continues to guide his actions. As he narrates, he refers to the explosions and *négociations* in the past tense, further implying that he cannot forget the past as he looks forward. However hard he tries, he is unable to forget the trauma of the past. He argues, “Chaque fois que je suis tenté d'oublier mes contemporains, une rafale, une explosion, simplement des cris de guerre viennent me rappeler à n'importe quelle heure du jour et de la nuit que les tueurs rôdent alentour ou qu'une partie de la population proclame passionnément son intention de massacrer l'autre partie” (29).

Both Feraoun and Yacine use different methods of narration, as their view on the colonial past differs. Dib in *Qui se souvient de la mer* likewise uses a different mode to represent the memory of trauma similar to Picasso's representation of the Nazi bombings during the Spanish Civil War in his painting *Guernica*. Dib, in his postface to *Qui se souvient de la mer*, directly addresses Picasso's painting stating that, “pas un élément réaliste dans ce tableau—ni sang, ni cadavres—et cependant il n'y a rien qui exprime autant l'horreur” (190). Picasso's work emblemizes the atrocities of war without historical reconstruction. This same mode is used by Dib as his work parallels Picasso's painting by avoiding realist imagery in order to represent the trauma and memory of colonialism and the Algerian war. The trauma of these events plagues memory and its ability to represent itself in concrete, realist terms; it is a nightmare that haunts men and can only be embodied through abstract means for Mohammed Dib. Dib, in fact justifies these means by arguing:

Horreur inimaginable en cette seconde, et qui ne sera qu'une péripétie banale tout à l'heure, une fois qu'elle aura été accomplie ; qui affectera alors à peine ses témoins, ses victimes et ses initiateurs. Un peu de sang répandu, un peu de chair broyée, un peu de

sueur : il n'existe pas de spectacle plus désespérément terne. L'horreur ignore l'approfondissement ; elle ne connaît que la répétition.

Aller donc la décrire dans ses manifestations concrètes lorsqu'on n'a pas à dresser un procès-verbal serait se livrer presque à coup sûr à la dérision qu'elle tente d'installer partout où elle émerge. Elle ne vous abandonnerait que sa misère, et vous ne feriez que tomber dans son piège : l'usure. [...]

J'ai compris alors que la puissance du mal ne se surprend pas dans ses entreprises ordinaires, mais ailleurs, dans son vrai domaine : l'homme, — et les songes, les délires, qu'il nourrit en aveugle et que j'ai essayé d'habiller d'une forme. L'on conviendra que cela ne pouvait se faire au moyen de l'écriture habituelle. (*Qui se souvient* 189-90)

Dib, therefore, uses mythological modes to represent the memory of trauma. His previous novels, the Algerian Trilogy and *Un été africain*, differ greatly from *Qui se souvient de la mer* in their narrations. Rather than symbolic representations of violence, his colonial novels, through a realist mode, portray the prevalent social and political issues in 20th century Algeria.

Dib uses myths and mythology in *Qui se souvient de la mer* to provide an outlet for describing the indescribable; in doing so, he focuses on emotions rather than historical facts. Dib's opening pages introduce minotaurs, the mythical creature spawned between Queen Pasiphae of Crete and a bull which had been given her by Poseidon, who are described as "un minotaure gris" which "se découpa devant la porte, lance-flammes en avant, passa dans un sifflement, puis un deuxième minotaure, exactement à la même place, qui disparut dans un sifflement identique. Puis un troisième..." (10-11). The minotaur in Greek mythology had been sent to Minos and resided in an inescapable labyrinth, a labyrinth not unlike the city described by Dib's narrator, where he regularly fed on the Athenian youth, seven males and seven females, that had been offered up in tribute to Minos. The minotaurs in Dib's novel come to represent the French soldiers with their grey visage and flame-throwers capable at any moment of devouring the supposed Algerian tributes. Dib's usage of the mythical Minotaur permits the reader to associate the French soldiers with a recognizable creature known for his cannibalistic hunger and oppression as well as his defeat by Theseus, another mythical figure from Athens who became

associated with Athens as a founding hero. For Dib, the minotaurs represent the disruptive French colonial policing force which for years had literally and figuratively killed the Algerians, who in this analogy represent the Athenians. The death of Algerians came as a result of the required figurative tribute to the colonizing forces. However, by evoking the myth of the Minotaur, Dib, likewise evokes the Minotaur's death: the defeat of France and its soldiers by Algerians. This myth references the epic quest to defeat the Minotaur which leads to Theseus' reputation as a glorious conquering hero, just as Algeria in the end would conquer the French colonial system. This reading of the myth of the Minotaur inverts the center periphery binary in the colonial system. In Greek history and mythology, Athens was the center of the world, the same role played by the French in the colonial system, and Minos, the periphery. This reading, however, places Algeria at the center; it inverts the role of the colonizer and colonized as a means of symbolically justifying the right to self-determination for Algeria.

Dib deviates from the representation of the French soldiers as minotaurs, as they mutate into "des momies, qui ont été ressuscitées [...] De leur sommeil millénaire, beaucoup gardent encore une immobilité, une rigidité, dont elles ont quelque mal à se débarrasser. Cela ajoute à leur regard de lézard, elles inspirent une terreur salutaire, qui se traduit par un grand respect" (46). Having become mummies, their symbolic power, granted to them through the myth of the Minotaur over the inhabitants of the city, transforms. They no longer consume the inhabitants, but now rest immobilized and rigid. The mummies represent a "figure of omnipotence trapped in his own perspective of domination, the mummified soldier radically cuts himself off from what he dominates, and thus destroys his capacity to grasp objective reality" (Hilliard 179). The designation of the soldiers as mummies continues the symbolism required to represent the

indescribable for Dib as they move to represent oppression, with no regard for the oppressed or reality.

The nameless city, understood to be Algiers, mimics the contortions of the inescapable labyrinth where the Minotaur rules and oppresses. In opposition to the Minotaur, Dib uses moles as symbols of “freedom fighters” who roam the underground city unnoticed by untrained ears. The moles go about their duty undermining the current system, moving with the crowds above, forming a new city in opposition to the old. The symbolism of the mole incorporates the literal digging underground, as well as representing “the person who unfolded the mysteries of the Earth and of death” and “the master who guides the soul through the gloomy underground maze and heals it of its passions and anxieties” (Chevalier 663).

Along with the Minotaur, Dib uses another mystical creature, the phoenix, which rises from the ashes of the underground after the bombing of the café, which the narrator experienced first-hand. The narrator states, “Le présage s’était accompli, le phénix déterré vivant des caves, qui préparait depuis longtemps ce crime, savourait son triomphe” (Dib, *Qui se souvient* 43). This representation plays on more than just the typical cycle of regeneration, resurrection and immortality associated with the phoenix but also “conjures up an image of creative and destructive fire, from which the world began and in which it will end” (Chevalier 753). The bombing of the café brings about a destructive fire, but promises the rebirth of the nation, just as the phoenix rises above the ashes from the underground. The idea that the phoenix lay in wait in the underground before coming to the surface in flames, associates it with the moles, which fortifies its imagery of the creative and destructive fire which brings about a new world. The Algerians associate the phoenix with a protective force because they see it as an attack against the French who are able to regenerate and begin anew.

In addition to recognizable myths and symbols, Dib invents new words, such as *iriaces* and *spyrovirs*, to describe warrior bird-like creatures that terrorize the city and its inhabitants. The *iriaces* symbolically represent the bombs and explosions which destroy the city, flying above and squawking in swarms: “Un nuage d’iriaces roulait au-dessus de nous dans un fracas de galets” (Dib, *Qui se souvient* 25). This invention of new words demonstrates the inability to put into conventional words the trauma of the war and the ability to recount the memories. The bombs and sounds of explosion can only be told by the absurd *iriaces* and *spyrovirs* flying through the sky and having become companions of the population. Similarly, the pain of trauma cannot be expressed in conventional terms as Dib has demonstrated. One must learn new words, new ways of expression through which “la douleur se fût écoulée entièrement” (Dib, *Qui se souvient* 22).

As well as using symbols to recount the traumatic events of colonialism and the war, Dib allows his narrator to repress memories. After an attack on the city, the narrator represses the traumatic memories of the evening as he asks himself, “Combien de temps ça a-t-il duré : une demi-heure, une heure, la nuit entière ? Je n’en conserve aucun souvenir précis, ce matin, c’est drôle” (Dib, *Qui se souvient* 43). While the narrator attempts to repress memories, others come to the surface, brought out by triggers. Just as the taste of the madeleine dipped in tea brings about involuntary memory for Proust, the mummies do the same for the narrator: “Je me sentis las tout d’un coup et légèrement écoré. D’avoir, sans doute, examiné de trop près ces singulières gardiennes. Elles avaient réveillé en moi je ne sais quels fâcheux souvenirs (surgis d’une autre époque ?). Je retournai à la maison et, en chemin, mon malaise se dissipa peu à peu” (Dib, *Qui se*

souvient 166).⁶² The involuntary memory of days gone by becomes triggered by the representation of the mummies which haunts the narrator's past.

In contrast to Dib's allegorical representation of the trauma of war, Mammeri openly addresses the conflict in *L'opium et le bâton* in which he highlights the efforts of everyday men and women in the struggle for independence. Mammeri's opening pages immediately contrast with *Qui se souvient de la mer*'s allegorical representation, as Ramdane, *le professeur*, argues with Bachir declaring: "Pourtant ce qui se passe dans ce pays depuis trois ans aurait dû te guérir de la comédie. Il y a tant de sang, tant de souffrance, tant de morts. Mais non. Le sang, tu crois que c'est de la teinture ; les morts étalés par dizaines dans ton journal chaque matin, tu attends qu'ils se lèvent après la représentation" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 11). Instead of symbolic representations, Mammeri tells the story through a realistic lens, directly portraying the horrible, bloody events without the use of figurative depictions and mythical creatures. The designs of both realism and symbolism aim to tell truth about human experience; they simply provide different means through which to achieve the desired outcome. The symbolism used by Dib perceives these traumatic events as universal and personal at the same time, and he, thus, uses universally recognized symbols, as well as newly created symbols, to display these events. Mammeri's social realism contradicts symbolism at almost every level; realism aims to create a social criticism through facts, rather than through symbols. Mammeri describes in great detail what Dib considered indescribable; he provides a representational rather than a presentational

⁶² Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* addresses the issue of voluntary and involuntary memory. Voluntary memory involves intentionally and consciously putting effort into remembering things; these types of memories are partial. Involuntary memory surfaces through cues in the world, such as the madeleine for Proust. Dib's chapter here invokes both types of memory à la Proust. The narrator as he looks at his wife tries to engrave a voluntary memory in his mind as he states, "Je voulais imprimer ses traits dans ma mémoire. « Tels je les vois en cette seconde, tels ils me hanteront jusqu'à la fin des temps. » Je constatai vite combien ma tentative était vaine, impossible : son visage se brouillait à mesure que je le fixais pour se fondre dans un sourire" (Dib, *Qui se souvient* 165). This voluntary memory does not stick; however the involuntary memory brought out by the cue, the mummies, sticks. Dib is demonstrating the roles of memory in the face of trauma by subtly referring to Proust.

account through which he places the reader in the same situation as the characters by creating an illusion of actual life in the pages. In representing the trauma of war through a realist lens, the reader becomes aware of the daily struggles of the Algerian population and an understanding of why Bachir says “Chez nous [...] on se réfugie volontiers dans le rêve, les contes bleus, les histoires d’un passé embelli” (164). In order to escape the trauma of war and colonization, the people use the memory of past glories to overcome tragedy.

In addition to the social realism found in *L’opium et le baton*, Mammeri flashes back to the colonial period before the beginning of the war, similar to Yacine’s *Le polygone étoilé*, to demonstrate colonial suffering, ancestors and tradition. These flashbacks demonstrate an inability to forget the suffering of the past, but, meanwhile, recognize the insistence on honor in the face of suffering, a trait the Algerian population need in the struggle for independence. In one of the flashbacks, the narrator emphasizes the colonial past of Tala-Ouzrou, including the expropriation of land which forced the inhabitants to move from the plains to “ce village sur ce piton perdu de la montagne” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 89). The expropriation resulted in suffering, yet the ancestors left *ghef-ennif* to keep their honor intact; they preferred “la dignité dans la misère” and thus relinquished themselves to a difficult life:

Depuis que nous sommes partis de la plaine, nous avons mangé de la farine de glands, porté des tissus de laine hiver comme été, eu faim, eu froid, marché pieds nus — mais toujours très jalousement nous avons veillé sur notre misère et notre dignité et il ne nous est pas venu à l’idée que nous pouvions y renoncer pour tous les biens de cette terre... (89-90)

Mammeri does not repress the memories, but creates a quasi-hyper-memory by openly addressing the war and portraying normal individuals as heroes of the war. In the years following the Algerian war, few voices came forward to discuss the war overtly: Yacine ignores the topic; Dib uses allegories to describe it; Feraoun’s posthumous partial novel *L’anniversaire* glosses it;

meanwhile, Mammeri tackles the topic head-on in an attempt to give meaning to the liberation movement and freedom. As a quasi-hyper-memory, this representation creates a means for understanding and preserving the trauma in order to bear witness of the heroics of everyday people.

The effects of colonialism and its inextricably linked trauma play out in the works of these novelists through memory and the means by which they represent this trauma in the postcolonial era. They can in no way escape the colonial past, as this part of history plays an important role in the movement towards national identity; it shapes and creates individuals and collectives through its memory and representation of trauma. Although Yacine omits direct involvement in the movement towards liberation, his preoccupation with the colonial era demonstrates the ever present role of the memory of colonialism as he publishes *Le polygone étoilé* four years after the liberation of Algeria. The modes used by these authors differ, but, nevertheless, they, as well as their literary works, were greatly affected by Algeria's historical colonial past.

4.2 Violence in Algerian Francophone Postcolonial Literature

Violence plagued the colonial realm, as demonstrated by the colonial literature discussed in the previous chapters. Colonial violence, however, continues to plague the postcolonial narrative as the “evocations of colonial violence coexist and share the same discursive/narrative space with exposés on postcolonial violence” (Sajed 10). I argue that, just as Sajed, this literary corpus evokes “the violence of the colonial encounter at the same time they reflect on its continuity into the postcolonial present” (10). The level of violence during the decolonization war matched and exceeded that of the colonial sphere, and, as a result, the impact of this violence

spread into the postcolonial narrative space; the postcolonial literature becomes preoccupied with this violence.

This section will look at the implications of colonial violence and the Algerian war in Mohammed Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer*, Mouloud Mammeri's *L'opium et le bâton* and Mouloud Feraoun's *L'anniversaire*, in addition to the representations of colonial violence in Kateb Yacine's *Le polygone étoilé*. The themes under review in this section include: Violence of the classroom and the implications of the colonial education system, the liberation war and torture.

4.2.1 Forms of Postcolonial Violence

Colonial trauma in the form of violence has residual effects in the postcolonial period, as the newly independent nation and its intellectual authors reflect on the colonial past, as well as on the war of liberation. The violence of the postcolonial and war period slightly resembles that of the colonial era. The main forms of violence in this literature, however, do not come from colonial psychological oppression, but the physical acts of violence on the body to quell the uprising. The singular exception lies in Kateb Yacine's *Le polygone étoilé* in which the themes of the narrator's colonial youth, as well as his education, play a larger role than the physical acts of violence, similar to the colonial works of the other authors of this corpus. As argued by Martin Thomas in the first chapter, there exist multiple forms of violence in the colonial sphere which "might be cultural—the denigration of established ways of life or particular ethnicities or religions, for instance. It could be social—and here one thinks of the destruction of customary practices, communal bonds, and economic relationships. And it was sometimes psychological—creating insecurity as a form of coercive practice" (xiii). In addition to the cultural, social and psychological forms of violence, there are physical disruptions which "were knowingly and

methodically produced in order to ensure the control of the dominant power and to further the interests of its own nationals” (Bourdieu, *The Algerians* 120). The colonial violence in this Manichaeian world permeates into the postcolonial and is represented in the postcolonial Francophone literature of Algeria.

In contrast to colonial violence, the postcolonial literature looks past any violence among the formerly colonized, since they have become united under one common goal. The characters in the postcolonial literature finally come to recognize the indigenous population under the Algerian nationality, rather than through tribal identity, the idea propagated by Lounas in *Le sommeil du juste*. Similarly, the violence enacted against the colonizer in the form of resistance continues in the postcolonial period, but with the outbreak of the war, becomes more overt. Thus, resistance in this section will be looked at specifically under the theme of violence in the liberation war, rather than separately as violence against the colonizer as illustrated in the first chapter.

4.2.2 Violence of the Colonial Classroom and the Implications of the Colonial Education System

The colonial education system’s aim contributed to the degradation of the colonized as previously discussed in chapter one, but the results of the education granted to the colonized remain a pivotal point in the life of the intellectual elite. Dib is the only author in the corpus who does not discuss the colonial education system in his postcolonial novel, as he had already devoted many pages in the Algerian trilogy to either denounce or praise his education.⁶³ Yacine,

⁶³ Unlike Omar, the principal character of the Algerian Trilogy, the children in the outlying areas, such as is the case with Arezki in *Le sommeil du juste*, have minimal direct contact with the colonial administration and, thus, rely on the character of the primary school instructor to form opinions. Of course, just with the modern education system, there are poor teachers and stellar ones, but the ones selected to teach in the rural communities were often better qualified than those in the urban city centers. “These teachers, the great majority of them recruited from France, had to meet strict qualifications, including proficiency in Arabic. These teachers were required to serve in the native community for at least five years, and their compensation was appropriately higher than that for teachers in other schools. The French school teacher in remote areas often became an invaluable link between the Muslim population and the government, the only representative of the French administration and a general jack-of-all-trades, teaching

however, devotes some of *Le polygone étoilé* to his colonial youth and educational experience as a demonstration of how the colonial past has affected and continues to affect him in the postcolonial era. Yacine ends the novel with a description of the narrator's transition from the Koranic school and homeschool associated with Arabic to the colonial school and French. The narrator spent his youth speaking his maternal language, Arabic, toward which he had great affection; he argues that, "autant que je me souviene, les premières harmonies des muses coulaient pour moi naturellement, de source maternelle" (Yacine, *Le polygone* 181). He associates the beauty of Arabic with his mother, and the loss of his maternal language with entrance to the colonial school becomes a "seconde rupture du lien ombilical" (183). The narrator becomes alienated by the transition from the Arabic education received at either the madrasa or from his mother and father in the home, to the "« gueule du loup », c'est-à-dire à l'école française" (182) at the age of seven. Before the transition, he compares himself to a tadpole amongst other tadpoles, and he is content in his current situation. This tadpole, however, must evolve, leaving the comfortable waters of home and become a frog.

With the change of educational systems, the young narrator must now become acquainted with what he calls *la langue étrangère*. He must, at least for a moment, put off Arabic for the language of the colonizer. The continuation of the use of French in the postcolonial is a sensitive issue. Kateb Yacine in an interview given in 1988 argues that, "Ce qu'on appelle 'francophonie' est une machine politique néo-coloniale qui ne fait que perpétuer notre aliénation" (*Le poète* 132). The usage of the French language in the postcolonial era, even after the introduction of

agriculture and hygiene, as well as Moliere" (Marston 13). This defines the difference between the educational experience of Omar and of Arezki. Mouloud Feraoun, just as Arezki, praises these educators by stating, "Que Dieu leur réserve une place au paradis" (Feraoun, *Jours* 131). This optimistic view towards the colonial education system appears at the outset as illogical, especially after understanding that the objective behind this system was to provide a foundation for domination. However, the structured education system provided a means for a select few of the Algerian population to have a voice.

Arabic as the official language following independence, acts as a residual form of colonialism that alienates the formerly colonized. Yacine, in *Le polygone étoilé*, points the finger at the colonial education system for his usage of the French language and this second rupture of the umbilical cord. The narrator's father provides him with a justification for exporting his education to the colonial system by arguing that "[l]a langue française domine. Il te faudra la dominer, et laisser en arrière tout ce que nous t'avons inculqué dans ta plus tendre enfance" (182). Although his father could have been himself his "professeur de lettres, et ta mère aurait fait le reste" (182), the father must ask to what end this education will lead, if French is the dominant language in his society.

The narrator is not required to leave his home in order to attend the colonial school but a divide arises between him and his mother. She no longer provides an educational background to the young boy, and childish things are set aside so that he alone may complete his studies; he sadly states, "Adieu notre théâtre intime et enfantin, adieu le quotidien complot ourdi contre mon père, pour répliquer, en vers, à ses points satiriques...Et le drame se nouait" (Yacine, *Le polygone* 183). After a short period, the narrator comes to realize that he is gifted in this foreign language, insomuch that his mother asks him to teach her the language. The narrator had grown affection toward French, but looking in hindsight, recognizes the dangers of establishing oneself through the colonial education and language in the postcolonial realm. After the end of colonialism, the French language essentially got put on the back burner, as the linguistic politics of *arabisation* came into effect which form "part of a larger project of postcolonial nation-building in the Maghreb, which revolves around the idea of an Arab identity, imposed and enforced from above as a totalitarian and immutable set of characteristics" (Sajed 44). Le Sueur likewise argues that the process of *arabisation* "was intended to be both a physical and symbolic

reclaiming of the postcolonial self” and “interpreted as an understandable political outcome of decolonization and as the by-product of a brutal eight-year war of national liberation” (“France’s Arabic Educational Reforms” 194-95). Yacine concludes his novel with an apologetic declaration toward his mother for inculcating her in French:

[...] j’enrage à présent de ma stupide fierté, le jour où, un journal français à la main, ma mère s’installa devant ma table de travail, lointaine comme jamais, pâle et silencieuse, comme si la petite main du cruel écolier lui faisait un devoir, puisqu’il était son fils, de s’imposer pour lui la camisole du silence, et même de le suivre au bout de son effort et de sa solitude — dans la gueule du loup.

Jamais je n’ai cessé, même aux jours de succès près de l’institutrice, de ressentir au fond de moi cette seconde rupture du lien ombilical, cet exil intérieur qui ne rapprochait plus l’écolier de sa mère que pour les arracher, chaque fois un peu plus, au murmure du sang, aux frémissements réprobateurs d’une langue bannie, secrètement, d’un même accord, aussitôt brisé que conclu... Ainsi avais-je perdu tout à la fois ma mère et son langage, les seuls trésors inaliénables — et pourtant aliénés ! (Yacine, *Le polygone* 183-84)

The narrator feels guilty for having led his mother into the figurative den of lions. If this novel is to be taken as autobiographical, then Yacine ends his it with this apology directed towards his mother as her mental health declines and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Yacine can then be seen to feel partly at fault for her decline because before his entrance into the colonial school his mother was always filled with joy; he describes her as a *théâtre* in which he was her sole audience. After his entrance into the colonial school, she is then described as “une âme en peine” (183) wandering aimlessly, and the narrator, Yacine himself, figuratively and literally loses his mother.

The colonial education system exemplified in *Le polygone étoilé* alienates the indigenous population from their cultural roots. Yacine, in a move of resistance against his colonial education and the language of the colonizer to regain his cultural roots, later publishes plays directly in Arabic such as “Mohamed, prends ta valise” his first published work in his maternal language in 1971. This play “[a]vant comme après l’Indépendance, c’est donc aux problèmes de

la colonisation et de ses séquelles qu'a constamment été confronté Kateb Yacine" (Faure 81); it confronts the themes of colonialism, which are finally addressed to the formerly colonized body rather than to the colonizer.

Mouloud Feraoun similarly presents colonial education in *L'anniversaire*, but does so in a different tone, as he holds a reverence toward his colonial education and professors. This reverence contrasts greatly with Yacine's distaste towards the end result of his education, although he did have a great affection for his *institutrice*, declaring that, "j'allais jusqu'à rêver de résoudre, pour elle, à son insu, tous les problèmes proposés dans mon volume d'arithmétique!" (Yacine, *Le polygone* 183). Feraoun's novel introduces a narrator speaking as if to his children about education and the *bac*. He uses education and the *bac* to demonstrate a particular point regarding the liberation war which contrasts with Yacine's direct attack on colonial education. The narrator argues that simply going through the motions does not always provide the desired outcome. He provides the following example concerning the *bac* as he tells his son:

[...] Tu as toujours cru qu'il suffisait d'aller à l'école, de bien travailler, d'étudier point par point toutes les questions du programme pour réussir au bac. Tes enfants vont à l'école, travaillent bien, étudient consciencieusement tout le programme et échouent chaque fois au bac.

Te souviens-tu de ce que te disait un jour un copain ? Plus jeune que toi pourtant et que pour cette raison d'ailleurs tu ne voulais pas croire.

-Mon vieux, il ne suffit pas d'avoir une bourse pour étudier et réussir. Il faut plusieurs chances : les parents, la bourse, l'intelligence, le courage... plusieurs chances réunies qui forment une grande chance. Toi, peut-être, c'est celle-là que tu as rencontrée. Ceux qui ne peuvent réussir, il faut les plaindre, et, si tu peux, les aider. (Feraoun, *L'anniversaire* 7-8)

Feraoun here uses an analogy of the education system in order to critique the colonial system, as well as the struggle for independence. Just like the *bac*, simply going through the motions to acquire the end result does not yield a successful outcome. Going to school, working and studying the necessary material alone will not guarantee the *bac*; the actual performance when

the time comes is just as crucial. In order to provide the student with the best success, the narrator argues that the student needs multiple opportunities and much help. Such is the case for the success of the war of liberation; success will only come about if the stars are figuratively, properly aligned and in the Algerian's favor in order to create a "grande chance." Continuing with the allegory of the *bac* as representative of the Algerian war, the narrator has reluctantly become habituated to continual failures where simply "jouant correctement le jeu" (8) does not suffice.

Yacine and Feraoun both use the theme of colonial education, and it provides an ample vehicle for a postcolonial critique of the colonial system. Although they use different methods, their critiques effectively portray the injustices and the effects of the colonial education in the postcolonial; it is a reflection of the past on the present. Yacine exhibits the violence of the classroom and the lasting effects on his life and those around him, while Feraoun, as a façade, demonstrates the difficulty of the colonized to assimilate to the colonial education system and subversively uses this struggle as a means of characterizing the struggle for independence.

Mouloud Mammeri, along with Yacine and Feraoun, discusses the issue of the implications of the colonial education system through the violence of the classroom. Mammeri does so differently from both Yacine and Feraoun, as he explains the propagandistic nature of the colonial schools and its effects on the Algerian war, as well as the role of the intellectuals in this endeavor. As Ramdane, a professor, debates with Bachir, a doctor by trade, he argues that along with physical violence, the colonizer, in order to appease the colonized, attempted modes of seduction through books, demonstrating that the colonized were loved and not forgotten. Ramdane argues that through these books "[i]ls nous ont appris Vercingétorix, Jeanne d'Arc,

Napoléon, Lyautey, Descartes, Pasteur et Déroulède” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 14), arguably some of France’s most notable generals and intellectuals.

Ramdane continues his discussion regarding education as he addresses the role of intellectuals in the liberation movement. He initially argues that the actors in a revolution should shoot all of the intellectuals, “en tout cas ceux qui ne se contentent pas de répondre : présent quand on a besoin d’eux” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 15). Ramdane’s desire to shoot the intellectuals contradicts Fanon’s description of the bourgeois intellectuals in which “[s]es manœuvres, en fait n’ont pas cessé. Il n’est pas question pour le peuple, jamais, de le repousser ou de l’acculer. Ce que le peuple demande, c’est qu’on mette tout en commun” (Fanon, *Les damnés* 35). The revolutionaries, according to Fanon’s analysis, do not shoot the intellectuals, but desire to add them to the ranks. However, these individuals remain inept at engaging in the dialogue because “the intellectual behaves objectively like a vulgar opportunist.[...] But at the start of his cohabitation with the people the colonized intellectual gives priority to detail and tends to forget the very purpose of the struggle—the defeat of colonialism. [...] He does not always see the overall picture” (13). Ramdane, in accordance with Fanon, argues that when it comes to the war, these intellectuals become too concerned with issues irrelevant to leading a successful liberation movement. These movements often ignore the topics of humanity, the West and civilization as well as knowledge of the facts, all of which preoccupy the mind of the educated colonized, thus the introduction of intelligence into the political according to Ramdane “gâte tout” (33). Ramdane argues, in contrast to the intellectuals, that the people are not educated and meanwhile have only one life to live. It is for this reason that “nous y apportons tant de zèle, tant de précautions, tant d’amour. Mais pour vous qui avez étudié dans les livres, la vie d’un homme n’est jamais qu’un maillon de la chaîne. Vous avez appris l’histoire de tous les peuples dans tous

les siècles passés, cela vous permet de vous projeter aussi dans l'avenir" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 29). The implications of the colonial education plague the liberation movement because of the separation between the educated and the others; the nonexistence of a homogenized population hinders the nationalist movement.

Mammeri continues with education as a violent thematic element, which still plays a role in the postcolonial world. Education, in fact, often acts as the scapegoat for colonial injustices, and may take the blame for completely unrelated colonial suffering. Ramdane blames the colonial school for his tuberculosis, which he acquired while in Algiers. He contrasts Tala, his native village, with Algiers by arguing that he would often go to school barefoot without his burnoose, in the rain or snow, while in Tala, with no ill-affect; but in Algiers, he caught tuberculosis as a result of his residence, a storage room. This storage room, located near the colonial school for convenience, was "trois mètres sur trois, pas de fenêtres, l'eau dans la cour, parce que c'est moins cher et que ça endure" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 45), similar to a jail cell. The violence of colonial education impacted Ramdane's physical and emotional well-being. His uncle viewed this education as extremely important and forced Ramdane to spend most of his time outside of school in his little storage room studying, only allowing him to leave Friday afternoons in order to participate in the dohor prayer. In response to Ramdane's story, Bachir argues that colonialism is the source of all their *maux*, for without it "[t]u n'aurais jamais su ce que c'est d'aller à l'école, ou bien tu aurais été avec un beau burnous et des souliers aux pieds dans une école de notre village, là où la pluie, le soleil et le vent sont franc-jeu, tu n'aurais pas été tubard" (46). Without colonial education, Ramdane would have lived a peaceful life in his home village in the open air with his flute and sheep.

The use of the thematic element of education as a form of violence contributes to the postcolonial's preoccupation with the past as a means to move forward. The author's choice to include this educational violence, therefore, demonstrates the inability to move on without acknowledging the colonial suffering which has shaped and molded the characters, as well as this literary movement.

4.2.3 Torture

Ultimately, the colonial endeavor revolved around the concept of power; the relationship between colonizer and colonized is none other than a relationship of power. A simple means of continuing the power relations between these two parties involved the use of torture to enforce submission during the colonial period. The use of torture continued during the liberation war and left a lasting imprint on the postcolonial body and mind. Torture during the war slightly differs from the colonial era in that its aim no longer placed a primary emphasis on policing and maintaining the status quo or demonstrating the power of the sovereign, but to acquire information. The violence of torture as a means of demonstrating force no longer holds a large impact once the revolutionary fire has been lit.

The pain and suffering of torture become visible through the intricate processes that produced them, including the instruments, location and questions. Elaine Scarry declares that "Torture aspires to the totality of pain" (55) which is demonstrated in the elaborate and emblematic torture scenes of the postcolonial novels. Dib's presentation of torture, like the rest of his novel, remains highly symbolic. The reader never enters a torture chamber, but becomes aware of what has happened through outside events, such as the women wondering where the men have gone. The narration then moves from realist to symbolic, as shown in the following scene: "Un lot d'hommes avait d'abord été enlevé. Les épouses, les enfants allèrent quémander

la vérité sur le sort de leurs à toutes les portes. En même temps, une petite chanson, un babil errait sur les lèvres du vent” (*Qui se souvient* 17-18). The torture of these men is to be understood through the absence of the men, rather than by the explicit and descriptive explanation from within the torture chamber; it is demonstrated through fear and imagination. With the later revelation that the men are dead, the emotions of the women run high, yet they remain calm. Dib continues his usage of obscure, symbolic descriptions to elaborate on the torture of other men. Early in the morning, twenty bodies had been found, which Hamou argues would not be extremely unexceptional considering the circumstances of the milieu in which they are living. What Hamou and the others find strange are the marks on the bodies, signs which had never been seen, the result of an unknown but identical practice. The word *torture* is not used in this scene to describe the marking of the bodies, but the reader is to assume what has happened. The absence of a realist account of the events does not, however, diminish the amount of suffering felt; but as Dib hopes, it becomes augmented and felt on a higher level. This method avoids the use of explicit suffering, but plays on the reader’s knowledge of the events to express an emotion.

Dib, in *Qui se souvient de la mer*, uses the “new constructions” as a symbolic representation of torture and its chambers. This representation is similarly echoed in *L’opium et le bâton*, in realist terms, when the narrator explains: “De l’autre côté, à moins de deux cents mètres, dans un immeuble en construction, les paras torturaient à partir de onze heures du soir. Par temps calme, quand les voisins ne tournaient pas à fond le bouton de leurs radios pour couvrir les cris, il entendait distinctement les hurlements de ceux dont c’était le tour d’avouer” (40). Here the spectacle of the torture, although behind closed doors, remains ever present in the mind of those who surround the exterior of the torture chambers. The exhibition, however, is no

longer the primary function of torture but that of acquiring information as the narrator's use of the verb *avouer* implies the confession of information and/or guilt, whether genuine or not.

Mammeri acknowledges the widespread use of torture by the French during colonialism but especially during the war. As Ramdane explains the ever present nature of the colonial powers in the capital city of Algiers, he directly points out the Sesini villa as an official place of torture, as well as the central police station where “l'on débarque des Algériens à toute heure du jour et de la nuit par charretées [...] plus loin la mairie où l'on jette les Algériens dans les caves avant l'interrogatoire” (*L'opium* 12). Bachir himself becomes the victim of torture after his absence from Algiers and his medical office for a prolonged period of time. Bachir, dressed in European attire, accompanies the French *paras* to what can be called the waiting room, where he encounters a group of around forty individuals dreadfully waiting to be tortured or retortured.

The agent of torture was known among the French as Graine de Violence who is described as not being more violent than the others or wanting the information more, but one who especially enjoyed inflicting pain upon the *fellahs*. Graine de Violence saw “le côté sportif de la chose” (126) as if it were a cat and mouse game. He sees how far he can push the *fellahs* before they cave in, and likewise he enjoys seeing them undergo different forms of suffering. Bachir goes into the torture chamber aware of Graine de Violence and, therefore, has a pre-prepared speech in which he discusses “la civilisation chrétienne, l'ONU, la défense de l'Occident, Charles Maurras et la vieille galanterie française” (128). Graine de Violence is unaware of how to act around this educated individual, calling him a “femmelette” who with the first blow will “se mettre à chialer” and “A la seconde il va inventer des romans” (128). Bachir's strategy to appear as French as possible provides an initial escape to the torture, as he is not

beaten, but only asked questions regarding his involvement with the FLN, which he ardently denies.

The narrator painstakingly describes the torture process, as Mammeri devotes several pages to the events witnessed by Bachir. The main characters learn of the torture techniques through those who have gone on before. One of these techniques described by the narrator is that the French wait until eleven o'clock to begin the torture, a time when the majority of the inhabitants have already gone to sleep and should not be awakened by the screams. Mezoued Ali, the first to be taken, can be heard screaming throughout the torture, to which the narrator adds, "A la fin ce n'était plus un cri de douleur, c'était comme un hurlement d'animal" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 141). This process reverts both the torturer and the tortured to their primal state.

Fanon provides an apt description of what torture does to the mind of the torturer through a case study with a European police inspector who ends up torturing his wife and children. This thirty year-old man begins to smoke in excess and have constant nightmares. He also becomes very impatient with those around him, wanting to become violent with them in order to teach them a lesson; these are all signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Fanon writes, "Il n'aime pas les bruits. A la maison, il a envie de frapper tout le monde, tout le temps. Et effectivement, il frappe ses enfants, même le petit de 20 mois, avec une rare sauvagerie" (*Les damnés* 198-99); the act of torturing as a form of employment in the French regime has made him into a violent savage. Fanon goes on to quote this man, who had even gone so far as to beating his wife and tying her to a chair, who states, "Je torture des fois dix heures d'affilée..." (199). Fanon goes on to ask how torturing makes him feel, to which he replies "Mais cela fatigue... Il est vrai qu'on se relaie, mais c'est une question que de savoir à quel moment passer la main au copain. Chacun

pense qu'il est sur le point d'obtenir le renseignement et se garde bien de céder l'oiseau préparé à l'autre, qui naturellement, en tirera une gloire. Alors, on lâche...ou on ne lâche pas..." (199). As a result, the man believes that he has a screw loose in his head; it is the long hours of torture that has turned him into a savage beast.

Concerning the language of the torturer, Elaine Scarry declares that "Amid his insistent questions and exclamations, his jeers, gibberish, obscenities, his incomprehensible laughter, his monosyllables, his grunts—for just as a person in pain reverts to sounds prior to language, the cries and screams of human hurt, so the person inflicting pain reverts to a pre-language, [and] uncaring noises" (42-43).

Torture reaches its climax nearing the end of *L'opium et le bâton* after Captain Marcillac, the replacement officer for Lieutenant Delécluse in Tala, and his men have let Amirouche, the commander of Wilaya III, slip through their hands. The colonel placed over Marcillac argues that the only way Amirouche could have gotten away was if there had been a mole within Marcillac's ranks. For this reason, the captain gathers a list of thirty names, twenty women and ten men, who are to be interrogated by any and all means possible. To provide maximum effectiveness, the captain has consulted the guidelines provided by the *service psychologique*. He argues that this information must be obtained, reiterating "Ab-so-lu-ment!" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 234). Once the thirty individuals have been rounded up in trucks like lambs going to the slaughter, Tayeb, the vicious harki, adds his own wife to the group. As they travel a short distance to the SAS, the place where they are to be tortured, Tayeb once again adds another person to the group, a young lady, Titi, with a child on her back who was walking along the side of the road with a *laissez-passer*. Tayeb forces Titi onto the truck and abandons the small child alone in the middle of the road. The torture scenes of these thirty Algerians are not depicted in great detail, but the captain

acknowledges that they were “à la limite de la légalité” because “les interrogatoires trop poussés étaient interdits” (234). The captain overlooks the legality of these actions as he believes that the ends justify the means, however atrocious they may be. In regards to ends and means, Walter Benjamin states, “The question would remain open whether violence, as a principle, could be a moral means even to just ends” (269)

The group of twenty women included Farroudja, Bachir’s sister, who provides the narrator the means to comment on the atrocities through a third person limited narration. Once at the SAS, the torture of the men begins well after sunset and lasts throughout the night. The narrator exclaims that “Toute la nuit Farroudja entendit leurs hurlements. Elle finit par les reconnaître à leurs voix, ils avaient des façons différentes de crier sous la douleur” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 243). The torture goes to such extremes that the howls of the men being tortured cannot be distinguished from the hunger of the jackals outside, similar to the torture of Mezoued; the torture by the French regime not only treats the tortured as an animal, but turns him into a savage creature, indistinguishable from a jackal. The pain expressed through the screams as heard by the non-participants is almost invisible to anyone else other than the victim; it is unfelt and unknown (Scarry 51).

The physical torture reached beyond the closed doors of the chambers into the holding places of those waiting their turn. Twelve of the individuals had been placed in small cells in the holes of the cellar, while the others were placed in an emptied cistern with only standing room; with very little space, these holding places would wreak of vomit and excrement. When it came time for Farroudja’s turn, she seemingly welcomed the opportunity to escape from the cramped cell, which like the cistern, only allotted enough room to stand. In addition to the torture of the holding cells, a step was missing on the way down to the torture chamber, and the guards

laughed as each individual tripped and fell while walking down the stairs. The step was eventually replaced by Tayeb's cousin's body, Mohand Saïd. Not only did Mohand have to endure the pain of torture, but the humiliation, as Farroudja and others were forced to walk on his limp body.

As Farroudja reaches the torture chamber, the narrator provides a description of the room: "il n'y avait ni les fils électriques ni la baignoire ; seulement sur la table deux bols de faïence épaisse, l'un empli de sel et l'autre d'un liquide mousseux, sans doute de l'eau savonneuse."⁶⁴ Au-dessus du capitaine assis à une longue table, une grosse lampe allumée. Près de la porte, un jeune soldat tenait en laisse un berger allemand" (Mammerie, *L'opium* 246). Farroudja's shock at the lack of instruments demonstrates some preconceived notions of the French torture techniques during the colonial period, as well as during the war. Her perception of the torture chamber, as Elaine Scarry argues, is part of the act of torture as well. The chamber is the figurative stage on which there is a "production of a fantastic illusion of power" (Scarry 28). Scarry goes on to state that "torture is a grotesque piece of compensatory drama" (28). She similarly argues that, "The torture room is not just the setting in which the torture occurs; it is not just the space that happens to house the various instruments used for beating and burning and producing electric shock. It is itself literally converted into another weapon, into an agent of pain" (40).

The torture of Farroudja and the other inhabitants of Tala placed importance on physical acts of violence with no traces of scars or deformation, in contrast to foot whipping during the

⁶⁴ Fanon describes a form of torture as told by a victim where there is an "injection d'eau par la bouche accompagnée de lavement à forte pression d'eau savonneuse" (*Les damnés* 209). He continues in a foot note to describe this type of torture which "est la cause d'un grand nombre de décès. Après ces lavements à haute pression, en effet, la muqueuse intestinale est le lieu de multiples lésions provoquant des micro-perforations intestinales. Les embolies gazeuses et les péritonites sont alors très fréquentes" (209).

colonial period.⁶⁵ Interestingly, it was Tayeb, the Harki, who provided the brutality while Marcillac asked the questions. In this situation, Tayeb merely acts as a pawn in the hands of Marcillac and the French colonial regime. While being tortured, Farroudja declares “Je suis une femme, je n’ai jamais été à l’école ; la guerre c’est l’affaire des hommes !” along with “Je peux m’asseoir ?” (246) which are the only words uttered by her in this scene; it is the narrator who speaks for her. Just like most instances of torture in this literature, whether colonial or postcolonial, Farroudja is beaten until she can no longer see. All of the women are released five days later, and as they return to the village, the narrator states, “Elles allaient en silence et elles avaient peur de rencontrer sur le chemin des hommes qui les verraient dans cet état. Entre elles-mêmes, elles évitaient de se regarder pour ne pas avoir trop de honte. La plupart du temps, elles allaient l’une derrière l’autre à la queue leu leu, la tête baissée” (248). The narrator, however, does not remark on the status of the men,⁶⁶ but these women become greatly ashamed for what has happened to them; they are concerned for their physical appearance, more so than for their mental state.

The role of torture in the postcolonial novel *L’opium et le bâton* slightly resembles the torture of the colonial novels of the corpus, with the exception of the focus on the body rather than the mind. Similarly, the torture of Farroudja also occurs in tandem with the questions asked, rather than the torture of Hamid Saraj in *L’incendie* where the beating occurs before questions even arise, as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. Kateb Yacine introduces the theme of torture in *Le polygone étoilé* through a realist lens similar to that found in *L’opium et le bâton*. He provides a descriptive overview of the torture and torturers, of which only one speaks

⁶⁵ Fanon notes that indiscriminate torture such as this acts as a so-called precautionary measure where in order to get the victim to speak “Le but est donc de parvenir le plus rapidement possible à ce seuil. Le figolage n’est pas pratiqué. Il y a attaque massive et multiforme” (*Les damnés* 209).

⁶⁶ This is due to the third-person limited narration in which the narrator uses Farroudja as a window into the torture chambers. There is no male experience that the narrator can draw upon in this instance.

Arabic, similar to the reason Marcillac used Tayeb as a translator in *L'opium et le bâton*, whom they refer to as Docteur. Yacine's description of torture techniques mirrors that of Mammeri, even though *Le polygone étoilé* reverts back to the pre-war colonial era. The similarity between the tortures in these last two novels represents a need to express the seemingly inexpressible horrors found therein. In contrast to *Qui se souvient de la mer*, they respond to a social need to provide the reader with a realist depiction. However, it is through the act of telling the story, whether through realist depictions or symbolism, that the suffering endured by the victims, moves from individual suffering to collective; no matter how excruciating the pain and the screams appear, it only conveys a "limited dimension of the sufferer's experience" (Scarry 51).

4.2.4 The Liberation War

The physical violence of the Algerian war seemingly knew no bounds, but in the light of historical events such as the Holocaust, Dib argues that, "Comment parler de l'Algérie après Auschwitz, le ghetto de Varsovie et Hiroshima?" (*Qui se souvient* 190). For this reason, his representations of the violence of the liberation war remain allegorical; meanwhile, Mammeri's *L'opium et le bâton* exhibits violence through realistic means. The different forms of representation and memory of the Algerian war have previously been discussed and, therefore, this section will look at the effects of violence resulting from this conflict on the postcolonial novel, rather than on the methods used to represent the events. This section will focus on the use of violence during decolonization using the theories of Frantz Fanon in *Les damnés de la terre*.

Decolonization is always a violent encounter between two parties in a disintegrating power relationship begging to become inverted. Fanon argues that this inversion "ne peut être qu'à la suite d'un affrontement décisif et meurtrier des deux protagonistes" (*Les damnés* 26); it is only in and through violence that the oppressed can put off the oppressor and become liberated.

Fanon goes on to argue that, “l’existence de la lutte armée indique que le peuple décide de ne faire confiance qu’aux moyens violents. Lui à qui on n’a jamais cessé de dire qu’il ne comprenait que le langage de la force, décide de s’exprimer par la force. En fait, depuis toujours, le colon lui a signifié le chemin qui devait être le sien, s’il voulait se libérer” (58). The suffering of the colonized reaches a boiling point, a point of no return, where violence seems the only logical response. In discussing Bachir’s role, that of doctor, the narrator in *L’opium et le bâton* argues that the sick “[p]our seulement survivre, il leur faut être brutaux, grossiers, cruels, indécents, mentir effrontément et voler sans scrupule” (22). This, however, provides an apt description and analogy of the colonized in the colonial system as well if the colonized can be viewed as sick individuals looking for a cure for their suffering; in order to merely survive the sickness of colonialism, the colonized must act violently and cruelly. Those who fight against the colonizer in this analogy play the role of doctor, just like Bachir, someone who helps relieve suffering while finding a cure, liberation. Once the boiling point has been reached, this “sick” society reacts violently just to survive; it is not until a cure has been found that society begins to heal and recover, with the possibility of thriving in the future.

The main use of violence depicted in this postcolonial literature focuses on the Algerian involvement with war-time events. The Algerian war for liberation employed guerilla tactics, as well as modern warfare, which the narrator in *L’opium et le bâton* defines as “la guerre révolutionnaire” (209) rather than “la guerre classique, celle de grand-père chargeant à Reichshoffen sabre au clair” (210). Mammeri’s methods in the presentation of the Algerian war follow a social realism, as previously discussed in this chapter, through historical figures and events. His depiction of violence in these circumstances similarly follows that realist method, as he does not shy away from physical representations of violence. With the *Opération Jumelles*,

the French presence and violence in the Kabyle region escalated, eventually eliminating the ALN⁶⁷ contingent in the province of Tizi-Ouzou, elaborated by the narrator who declares, “Depuis que l’opération Jumelles avait commencé, chaque pouce de terrain était truffé de soldats ennemis et il fallait faire parfois d’énormes détours pour les éviter” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 106). This French military operation provides the background for the majority of narration of the novel. Bachir becomes remotely involved in the combat, but it is his younger brother, Akli, who plays a larger role in the ALN. While in a shootout with the French army, Akli becomes the victim of a grenade explosion. The initial description merely states that “une douleur atroce lui traversa le bras gauche” (115), but the narrator later describes the circumstances by stating, “Le bras d’Akli pendait. Il le gênait beaucoup pour courir. [...] l’os était brisé, le bras ne tenait plus que par des lambeaux de peau sur des chairs en sang. Akli prit son couteau à large lame courte et, d’un coup sec, trancha le bras” (115-16). The narrator alludes to the violent explosion, but does not focus on the actual events that occurred with it; he merely focuses on the internal pain experienced by Akli who then makes a rash decision to field amputate his arm. In contrast to the torture scenes already presented, Akli does not scream when the doctor is forced to properly amputate his arm; he keeps his humanity even in the face of great suffering. The circumstances differ; his pain comes from someone attempting to help save his life, rather than take it; and the sense of solidarity within the liberation movement eases, rather than augments his suffering.

Violence during the war reached a climax, as intense methods of torture were allowed. Once captured, Ali and Omar wonder if they will be tortured first or interrogated first because “les Français ne respectent les lois de la guerre” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 145). The French considered the Algerian war to be an internal conflict, rather than a war for liberation and, for this reason, they believed themselves under no obligation to follow the provisions of the Geneva

⁶⁷ The Armée de libération nationale is the militant side of the FLN.

Convention of 1949.⁶⁸ Thus, they used violent means above and beyond torture during the war, as illustrated through the experiences of Ali and Omar. These two men had been fighting for the ALN when they had been captured and tortured; neither of them conceded to the demands of the torturers. The French lieutenant then loads Omar into a helicopter described as a banana and takes off when all of a sudden “dans un cri sauvage, la banane cracha une petite boule ronde ; elle était d’abord recroquevillée, puis des bras, des jambes lui poussèrent qui se mirent à gigoter follement dans le ciel. Omar s’écrasa” (149). Upon finding the body on the ground, Ali turns away, so as not to see “cette masse de chair écrabouillée qui nageait dans le sang” (149). These violent events are magnified and reoccur throughout the conflict. Ali is later shot in the back at the command of lieutenant Marcillac, in front of the inhabitants of Tala. This act, similar to the death of Omar, demonstrates Marcillac and the French army’s disregard for the humanity and the lives of the Algerians.

What makes these violent outbursts noteworthy in this war of liberation is the terror associated with it. The lieutenant Abdallah of the ALN explains to Bachir that “nous sommes en guerre. Nous sommes confrontés avec le colonialisme le plus inhumain. A l’heure qu’il est, des Algériens tombent chaque jour sous les balles de soldats mercenaires ou crèvent dans les geôles d’Alger” (196). Mammeri effectively paints a realist portrait of war opposite to that found in *Qui se souvient de la mer*. He praises the soldiers’ efforts and tells their horrific, yet noble, story. He demonstrates that the death of the historical figure of Colonel Amirouche may cut off the head of the serpent but does not kill it; this act, in fact, allows the revolutionary movement to grow more heads, like the hydra. It is the death of this figure that brings the narration of *L’opium et le bâton*

⁶⁸ The second article to the third Geneva Convention, August 12, 1949, however, states that “the present Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them” (Comité Internationale Genève, icrc.org, 04/13/2015).

to a close before the end of the war, which leaves the reader to imagine how the war comes to an end through the bravery and valor of the Algerian soldier.

The use of violence in the liberation war not only aids in the liberation of the physical state, Algeria, but obliterates the inferiority complex imposed by the colonizer as well; the individual experiences a *prise de conscience* and becomes emboldened, exuding immense amounts of self-confidence. The colonized come to realize that in resisting the rule of the colonizer, such things as the beauty of Algiers is not a privilege of the colonizer or the bourgeois, but “[e]lle s’offre également à tous, aux nantis comme aux prolétaires” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 11). This *prise de conscience* enlightens the colonized to their denigrated state, providing them with fuel to add to the fire. The colonized then come to believe that this liberation war “c’est de bonne guerre” (14), which requires violence as a reactionary movement. Ramdane argues that

Le procédé est classique, vieux comme le monde. Depuis que les hommes vivent ensemble, toujours ils se sont répartis en deux groupes par définition hostiles : ceux qui commandent, en tout petit nombre, et ceux qui sont gouvernés, en masses, en troupeaux, et les uns pour mener les autres n’ont jamais su trouver que deux moyens : le mensonge ou la violence. (14)

This “bonne guerre” is a violent protest against the colonizer, as well as against the supposed inferiority of the colonized.

As Bachir has returned to his native village, Tala, the inhabitants of the village are required to gather in an assembly where the Lieutenant Delécluze brings forth a declaration in which the citizens will be required to contribute to the military defense of the village. Delécluze treats the inhabitants as if they are children, as he explains the purpose for this increased surveillance: “Tout cela parce que vous avez peur” (81). Rather than refute this plan, the citizens remain defiant, yet quiet. Delécluze’s actions and the inhabitants’ docility perpetuate the psychological aims of the colonial regime pointed out by the narrator who quotes page 43 of the

manuel des services psychologiques, part of which states: “Pour manier un homme plus encore qu’une foule, dont les réactions obéissent à d’autres lois [...] il suffit souvent de découvrir le défaut de la cuirasse” (82). The chink in the armor which the Lieutenant uses to exploit the people of Tala is their supposed fear. Physical violence becomes inextricably linked to psychological violence in the Algerian war.

The violence of the war, whether physical or psychological, not only affected those fighting on the battle fronts, but “innocent” civilians as well. In his unfinished novel *L’anniversaire*, Feraoun demonstrates the impact of the war on the everyday lives of civilians through an unnamed narrator and his French girlfriend, Claire. The narrator provides an example of this violence as he states that, “Depuis l’annonce des « négociations », les Européens multiplient les attentats contre les musulmans sans distinction de personne” (17). This violence, however, is not one-sided, for “les musulmans tuent ou blessent autant d’Européens que faire se peut” (17). The narrator still recognizes that after seven years of war, there has been a lot of violence where men and women from each side have suffered and died; this is merely the Algerian drama, a drama played out on a stage that affects not only the actors, but the spectators as well. After telling Claire a story about a *bourriquot*, she begins to laugh hysterically when an enormous explosion is heard from a nearby neighborhood. The intense detonation rattles the door, interrupting her laugh and ending their good mood. Similarly, the narrator views himself as exterior to any social events, as if on a one-man island, but each time he is tempted to forget those around him “une rafale, une explosion, ou simplement des cris de guerre viennent me rappeler à n’importe quelle heure du jour et de la nuit que les tueurs rôdent alentour ou qu’une partie de la population proclame passionnément son intention de massacrer l’autre partie” (29).

These examples, though simple, demonstrate the severity of the violence of the war of liberation on all parties, even on those not directly involved.

The role of the Algerian war in this literature is to provide an outlet to express the horrendous acts committed by the French. It is not a separate act, but a continuation of the injustices endured by the Algerian population during colonialism. It is a focus on the past rather than on the present, but the decisions and actions made during those eight long years aided in shaping and creating a national identity. The war of liberation affects the characters actions and development. This is primarily demonstrated through Bachir who initially refused to participate in the war, but comes to an understanding of the plight of the Algerians. Through his involvement in the war, he no longer ignores the plight of the colonized, but figuratively fights alongside him as he participates in the improvement of the ALN's medical system. Likewise, with the outbreak of the war Bachir's brother, Ali, immediately joined the FLN and continued to fight for the liberation movement until his death. Ali, just like other characters in *L'opium et le baton*, change their course as a result of the war.

4.3 Poverty in Postcolonial Literature

The colonial sphere, due to the ever present inequalities evident in the colonial system, became rife with the plague of poverty, its causes and side effects. This section will look at the implications of poverty on the thematic elements of the postcolonial literature, as well as the use of those elements. In addition, this section will look at the continuation of poverty as a result of colonialism in the war and postcolonial periods through labor and the workforce as well as through the effects of hunger, starvation and famine. Of the poor Mouloud Feraoun declares that:

Des milliers de pauvres bougres se sont effacés peu à peu, sans bruit, laissant la place à d'autres. Ces autres sont venus du dehors où ils ont laissé les ruines d'une existence périmée, ils remplissent les quartiers arabes, prolifèrent dans certains bidonvilles, en

créent de nouveaux, envahissent les immeubles géométriques en préfabriqué ou en briques et qui sont des bidonvilles verticaux. (*L'anniversaire* 17-18)

Feraoun provides an apt description of the poor which would continue into the postcolonial realm; they inhabit places like Mohammed Dib's *grande maison*, Dar-Sbitar, the vertical slums in the concrete jungle. Poverty, however present in the colonial and postcolonial sphere, is not described by Mohammed Dib in *Qui se souvient de la mer*; meanwhile, the other postcolonial novels of this corpus discuss poverty's relevance through its impacts on other areas, such as labor and hunger, because of the interconnectedness with these themes.

4.3.1 Labor/Workforce

The struggle for financial stability still plagues the postcolonial novel through the question of employment, especially with *Le polygone étoilé* and its focus on the colonial past. In this novel, Yacine's principal character, Lakhdar, roams the country looking for employment, just as the colonial literature's characters had done. The struggle to survive forces the colonized to question if "c'est peut-être notre propre tombe que nous allons creuser ; nous travaillons pour les autres, et nous ne savons même pas à quoi nous travaillons...Faut-il mourir pour vivre ?" (Yacine, *Le polygone* 134). The theme of employment is wide-spread in this novel, whether it is a lack of employment, slave-like labor, or the necessity to work in France.

The difficulty to find work for the Algerians not only presents itself in Algeria, but in France as well, as noted by Yacine's narrator who argues that even the unemployed in France have a *baccalauréat*. In addition to the French level of education among the unemployed, the Algerians in France are at a disadvantage because "dès qu'on avoue un prénom original, on se demande s'ils ne vont pas appeler les gendarmes" (Yacine, *Le polygone étoilé* 33). Similarly, concerning employment, the narrator argues that, "A notre époque, un chômeur consciencieux devrait avoir une bicyclette, et de habits qui ne Les dégoûtent pas. Il devrait les écouter en

défilant éternellement devant leurs bureaux, en cachant ses cheveux frisés, le nombre de ses enfants et de ses maladies puisqu’ils ont peur de payer trop de cotisations” (33).⁶⁹

The novel begins with the main character, Lakhdar, wandering through France in search of employment. Along the way, he encounters others not unlike himself, from Algeria, who with a false sense of hope declare that they work and will soon buy a cow, all the while sitting in the employment office. Those looking for work were often left with the simple explanation that none could be found without connections; it is not the skills that one possesses, rather the people one knows. L’Oranais argues that, “Vous ferez des kilomètres, et vous verrez. Si vous avez des papiers foutus, ou pas de papiers, comme tous les nôtres, faut pas vous en faire. Je connais du monde” (Yacine, *Le polygone* 54). Lakhdar temporarily finds employment as a barber for an old hadj with whom he initially became friends because the hadj had a daughter he was looking to marry off. Once this daughter married another man, the hadj violently and callously fired Lakhdar without any reason. He entered the boutique where Lakhdar was working, collected his percentage from the cash register, and threw Lakhdar’s portion on the ground, telling him to pick it up and “va-t’en” (43). Lakhdar’s experience in this boutique demonstrates the injustices and difficulty of maintaining a stable job with positive working conditions. The majority of Algerians working in France at this point merely served as manual labor in the factories or on the docks, both of which do not provide a healthy working environment. This was, thus, a different experience for not only Lakhdar’s character, but for any Algerian in his situation. Shortly after this occurrence, Lakhdar must resort to the manual labor of the docks, where death lurked around the corner.

⁶⁹ Capitalizations are kept according to the original text, as it refers to the colonist’s almost god-like control over the colonized.

Similar to Lakhdar, Belaïd, the eldest son in *L'opium et le bâton*, had traveled to France to find employment. Before his departure for France, he is described as being the last person the inhabitants of Tala would expect to leave his native village. He had been considered as part of the “vieille trempe” (Mammeri, *L'opium* 62), one that had labored hard in the fields of others in order to obtain his own land and animals. The narrator goes on to describe his situation by declaring that, “C’était presque l’aisance, mais Belaïd continuait de vivre chichement, et quand sa femme lui disait que maintenant il pouvait laisser les enfants manger à leur faim, il répondait : « Il faut qu’ils s’habituent, on ne sait jamais quand vient la faim. »” (62). Because of his affluence, he was then expected to take care of the rest of his family, including helping to pay for Bachir’s education and to support Farroudja after the death of her husband. The following years did not result in a good harvest for Belaïd’s olive trees, and his children, once again, began to go hungry. He was gradually forced to sell all that he had worked so hard to achieve to merely survive. The day after he mortgaged the farm, he left for France, only saying goodbye to the eldest children.

During Belaïd’s first year in France, he worked just as hard as he had while in Tala, taking on extra shifts and working Sundays. He continued to “régler de loin tous les problèmes qui se posaient à la maison : le blé, l’huile, le bois, les vêtements, les fêtes” (Mammeri, *L'opium* 63). At the end of the first year, all of his debts had not been paid, and he lost his fields. The loss of land began Belaïd’s downfall, as he turned to drinking. This turn of events affected Belaïd, as he no longer could be considered as part of the “vieille trempe.” He now began to be concerned only for himself, working less and neglecting his impoverished family back home. One day, nearly ten years later, while drinking with a buddy, he is interrupted as he hears his name called from afar; it is his son Ouali who has come to bring him home. Belaïd feels a sense of hatred

toward his family and Algeria, as he exclaims: “Quarante ans ! Je suis resté quarante ans avec vous à Tala, à patauger dans votre boue, votre misère, votre merde” (65). He feels as if he had served his time in the pit of despair, as he goes on to explain the reason for which he left his village and family by declaring: “Non ! Je suis parti parce que je vous avais assez vus, pour vous fuir, pour ne plus entendre la voix égale de ta mère (égale, tu entends ? Elle m’exaspérait avec son égalité) me dire : il n’y a plus d’orge, plus d’huile, plus de savon, plus de burnous pour toi, pour tes frères, pour moi ; d’elle, elle ne parlait jamais. Je suis parti pour changer de refrain” (65). In his hardened state, Belaïd no longer argues that he left in order to help everyone out, but that he left for his own well-being. He believes that leaving for France provided a means of escaping the suffering prevalent in the Algerian society; this departure for him is a welcome change from repetitive suffering. It allows him to forget his past, although he cannot escape it, evident through the apparition of Ouali.

Ouali, in his attempt to convince his father to return to Tala, tells of the family’s suffering as a result of his absence. Because of the overall poverty in Tala, neither the neighbors nor family could provide help. Belaïd recounts to Ouali what he remembers of his wife, Annette, who goes barefoot to gather wood in the forest, which she sells to provide for her children and that “le matin avant l’aube, elle se lève pour aller chercher de l’eau à la fontaine, avant que la source soit épuisée, et tout le jour, elle est derrière son métier à tisser pour faire des burnous, qu’elle vend pour vous acheter de l’orge et de l’huile et du savon et des vêtements, et le soir, quand vous êtes tous couchés, elle veille à filer pour ne pas perdre une minute” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 67). This proves that although he has attempted to forget his past, the trauma and suffering are still present in his memory even if only subconsciously. Through a discussion with his son, these memories once again resurface.

After more drinking, Belaïd gives Ouali a lesson on the differences between Tala and Paris, between Algeria and France, by declaring that,

Ici on dort à deux heures du matin. Et puis, tiens-toi bien, on dîne ici tous les jours... hoc!... oui vieux... hoc... tous les jours, et pas seulement quand ta mère a vendu sa charge de bois, ou son burnous. Ici ce n'est pas l'Algérie, frère, c'est pas un camp de concentration ici, pas un oflag, pas un camp de la misère et de la mort. Ici, c'est la France, ici... hoc... la France ! (Mammeri, *L'opium* 69)

Belaïd's constant praise for France eventually results in Ouali taking his place in the Japy factory as he reluctantly returns to Tala. Meanwhile, moments later, Belaïd adamantly declares that although much more is possible in France, it is not their country. For the French, the Algerian population does not look like them, speak like them or eat like them. He, like Lakhdar, points out the differences between the two separate civilizations both of which place the Algerian at the bottom of the social ladder. After Belaïd's return to Tala, he settles down in a house near the French contingent, in order to align himself closer with them so as not to return to the suffering he tried so hard to forget.

The theme of colonial labor continues in a postcolonial setting as an essential element descriptive of the new national identity. It is from the dirt and ashes that colonial Algeria will be built anew, but this time, the difficult labor will not be for someone else. However, with the newly nascent country of Algeria, the economic situation and unemployment rates did not resolve themselves overnight. Long after the sword had been put down, independent Algerians still longed for stable employment and a means to provide for their family; it was not until years afterward, under the direction and presidency of Hoauri Boumédiène, that Algeria would become an industrialized socialist economy with consistent economic growth and lower unemployment rates.

4.3.2 Hunger, Starvation and Famine

In *Le polygone étoilé* Yacine discusses the issues of hunger, starvation and famine, referencing the colonial period, rather than the postcolonial. Once again, this demonstrates the pervasive nature of this suffering on the colonial body. The Algerians had been dragged into World War II through their association with France and, for this reason, were forced to suffer starvation and famine: “C’était la famine, et sans les bons vendus au marché noir (c’était la guerre, aussi), il n’était pas question d’ambitionner ni un mètre d’étoffe, ni un morceau de savon” (Yacine, *Le polygone* 94). France’s involvement in the war brought about famine on all fronts, not only of food, but of males and of supplies. His emphasis on the war period highlights the extremes of famine where children “à peine nubiles” are lured “dans une existence piteusement hasardée entre la joie de trouver un travail facile, ou pas de travail du tout, et l’espoir de rencontrer plutôt quelque personnage influent qui fasse entrer des illettrés dans une banque” (113).

The well-being of the Algerian indigenous population became less relevant for the colonial regime with the outbreak of the war, and, for this reason, the already difficult to obtain food rations became even scarcer. With Bachir’s return to his native village, Tala, after having spent numerous years as a doctor in Algiers, encounters his family and is apprised of their current situation. His mother’s immediate response is to want to give food to the welcomed visitor, the errant son. However, there is nothing in the house for Bachir to eat. Having just come from Algiers where money can buy things—and, thanks to his standing as a doctor, which wields purchasing power—he thus offers money for someone to go buy some food, to which Smina simply argues “Il n’y a rien à acheter” (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 55). In the countryside, the French colonial army has created a stranglehold on the well-being of the colonized by rationing “la

farine, l'huile, les grains, tout" (55), allowing the inhabitants to only consume a single meal per day. For Bachir to receive his own food rations, he must go to Tayeb, "notre responsable du village" (55), but he opts to go straight to the lieutenant at the *Section Administrative Spécialisée*.⁷⁰ The restrictions and extreme limitations on food rations further complicate and solidify the colonizer's position of power over the colonized by directly controlling their ability to live. The inhabitants of Tala are dying of hunger, while the French colonial regime watches. This scene culminates with the narrator's description of Ahmed, one of the children, who "s'était enfin endormi, mais il continuait d'avoir faim dans son rêve" (56). The pain of starvation is not alleviated through sleep or dreams of happier places, as it is anchored in Ahmed's subconscious; his suffering seems inescapable.

Through his older brother, Bachir becomes further enlightened to the dire circumstances of rural life during the war, as well as to the predominant means to avoid hunger and starvation. Belaïd has closely aligned himself with the French presence and, therefore, does not suffer to the extent of their mother and sister who are described as dying of hunger. Belaïd declares that, "T'en fais pas pour eux, ils ont l'habitude" (Mammeri, *Le sommeil* 60), as if one can be accustomed to starvation while in the flesh; the only way to be accustomed to such suffering is, in fact, through death. Belaïd continues, "Mais, moi je viens de passer dix ans à Paris, et j'ai oublié. Tu ne me vois pas couchant sans dîner, vivant de couscous soir et matin, ou crevant de faim, ou mangeant sans vin. Non, mon frère, c'est trop tard. Je ne peux plus me remettre à vivre comme eux. A vivre ? (il criait) à crever, oui !" (60-61). Belaïd, rather than return to his roots, turns to the French, those responsible for the mistreatment of his family. The complexity of the food situation in Tala becomes further compounded after the missed attack on Amirouche by the

⁷⁰ Commonly referred to as the SAS, this agency establishes and maintains direct contact with the indigenous population in order to discourage dissidence.

French. Tayeb convinces the colonial regime to burn down all of the olive orchards in order to see the enemy better. These olive trees are, however, considered as the inhabitants “seule ressource” (211). Tayeb’s ulterior, personal motives come to light after the act has been completed as he declares,

Vous étiez fiers de vos oliviers. Vous me méprisiez parce que je n’en avais pas. Vous me vendiez votre huile au prix fort, bande de salauds, et pendant des mois j’ai mangé mon couscous sans huile parce que je n’avais pas d’argent pour vous payer. Maintenant c’est vous qui allez crever de faim. Chacun son tour ! Ce sont vos enfants qui vont apprendre à se coucher le soir sans manger. Le pain de mes enfants à moi est assuré maintenant...et il est blanc !... (213)

Just like Belaïd, Tayeb believes that neither he nor his children will go to sleep hungry because of his alignment with the French. The burning of the fields further denigrates the colonial society while avoiding any harsh economic consequences on the colonizer and those like Tayeb who are closely aligned with them.

While in Morocco, Bachir, after his escapade with Itto, continues his affiliation with the FLN and ALN. Itto argues with him saying that he is not like those whom he is fighting for, as she states, “Regarde-les! Tous maigres, les yeux vitreux, le ventre certainement vide. Ils n’ont pas de pain, ils viennent manger du traître pour tromper leurs crampes d’estomac” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 193). She becomes worried for Bachir because she believes that the only thing that can control an empty stomach is food, and when that is unattainable, neighbor will turn against neighbor. Itto, however, fails to realize that, just like the Spanish when faced against Napoleon’s army, the Algerians possess “une foi nationale inébranlable” (Fanon, *Les damnés* 45). Hunger and starvation will not hinder the Algerians, but push them because of national fervor. Tayeb in associating himself closely with the French demonstrates a lack of foresight. He only looks to the immediate future while the other inhabitants loyal to the national cause view the suffering imposed by the colonizer as temporary.

Tayeb and Belaïd, through aligning themselves with the French, seek a source of stability in a completely unstable world. Feraoun's narrator in *L'anniversaire* elaborates on this situation, as he declares to an unnamed individual assumed to be his son: "Tu as été élevé avec la hantise de la faim et pour vaincre définitivement la faim, tu t'es fait fonctionnaire public et tu t'es déchargé sur l'Etat des soucis majeurs qui dominant, guident, expliquent, justifient, excusent le comportement de toute la cohorte de pauvres dont tu ne te caches pas d'être issu" (31). Feraoun's description here perfectly outlines Tayeb's character in *L'opium et le bâton*; it is an acceptance of the superiority of the colonizer and his culture and, thus, assimilation with the colonizer, even in the late stages of colonialism. Before the Algerian war, the colonizer would be more reluctant to find close allies among the colonized, but the fear of an inversion of the power relations required the French to essentially place spies among the indigenous. Thus, the implications of colonial hunger, starvation and famine remain thematically present in the postcolonial novel, as the suffering cannot be easily forgotten.

4.4 Neocolonialism

With the downfall of colonialism came other groups desiring to replace the colonial system with a new and different form of colonialism masked as external support and aid. Similarly, the colonized craves the inversion of the existing colonial order. Fanon argues that the colonized dream of taking the colonizer's place through what René Girard terms as mimetic desire. Girard's triangular desire demonstrates that at each corner of the triangle rests the subject (colonizer), the mediator (colonized) and the object (power). At the bottom of the triangle are the colonizer and the colonized, both of which are connected through colonialism; meanwhile, at the top of the triangle rests power. Through the colonizer's status in the colonial system, he is linked with power. The colonized then, through mimetic desire, want the colonizer's power. This

mimetic desire is not a mere wish for the end of colonialism, but a desire to become as the colonizer, wielding power. Fanon argues that,

Nous avons vu que le colonisé rêve toujours de s'installer à la place du colon. Non pas de devenir un colon, mais de se substituer au colon. Ce monde hostile, pesant, agressif, parce que repoussant de toutes ses aspérités la masse colonisée, représente non pas l'enfer duquel on voudrait s'éloigner le plus rapidement possible mais un paradis à portée de main que protègent de terribles molosses. (Fanon, *Les damnés* 37)

Similarly, Albert Memmi argues that with the end of colonialism, the social structures have not been eradicated, but a mere transfer of powers has occurred; "There has been a change of masters, but, like new leeches, the new ruling classes are often greedier than the old" (Memmi, *Decolonization* 4). Does the promise of a new era bring forth the desired outcome or does it simply recreate colonialism and suffering under a different name? This section will look at the role which neocolonialism plays in the postcolonial literature, as well as look at the effects of the colonial preoccupation with neocolonialism, in order to explain a willingness to accept forms of neocolonialism.

4.4.1 Colonial Preoccupation

Colonialism's preoccupation with neocolonialism derives from the mimetic desire discussed by Girard and Fanon who argue that the colonized wish to replace the colonizer and acquire similar power. The colonial literature of this corpus is full of the desire to replace the colonized. Sliman in *Le sommeil du juste* desires a redistribution of lots similar to the game of dominos where "c'est au tour des pauvres d'être heureux" (Mammeri 7). Those who had experienced a sort of *prise de conscience* became aware of the unfortunate lot of the colonized and hoped for real change, but they themselves became mere observers rather than actors in the movement towards an inversion of the social hierarchy. Sliman becomes preoccupied with a redistribution, but he himself does not actively partake in any actions which lead to a desired

quasi-utopic society. Through this redistribution, Sliman does not wish for an equal dispersal of wealth and power, but a mere inversion of the social hierarchy, which, in effect, demonstrates Sliman's desire to replace the colonizer with the lower, working-class citizen in a quasi-communist proletariat led society.

The youth of the colonial period exhibit the mimetic desire of the colonized as they reenact the social hierarchy of colonialism on a smaller scale. Observing the methods of the colonialists, the youth amongst themselves reproduce the tactics and roles in the street. In *Le fils du pauvre* Menrad Fouroulou and Akli construct an imaginary neocolonialist society where they play the role of the colonizer and torture those whom they deem inferior. Menrad Fouroulou, the intradiegetic narrator of the first part of the novel, defines a class/caste system existing in his neocolonialist construction in which there are “des garçons que tout le monde pouvait frapper – taillables et corvéables à merci. D'autres dont on pouvait se moquer ; certains qu'il suffisait d'appeler par un sobriquet pour les voir quitter la partie et disparaître” (Feraoun 32). Meanwhile, Fouroulou defines Akli through his *hardiesse* and describes himself according to his *goût* and *vivacité*. Because of his perceived superiority, Fouroulou does not fear the brutality of the streets. He is only reminded of his inferior status as a colonized youth in the face of the older boys who have themselves created their own neocolonialist, social hierarchy. When it comes to children of his age, he possesses an advantage because he was better fed than the other boys and, thus, had more strength. He also argues that his advantage over other boys of his age derives from the fact that maybe “« son père ne s'était jamais battu » – le fils d'un lâche ne devait pas faire reculer un Menrad ; ou encore « c'était le fils d'une veuve » - peu courageux par définition ; ou, enfin, c'était un garçon d'un çof rival – aucune retraite n'était permise devant un ennemi” (33). This neocolonial social hierarchy resembles that of the initial colonial system, as well as

Herbert Spencer's theory of survival of the fittest through which the stronger boys created relationships of power over the weak. This hierarchy among the youth ends as they grow older, but the system still continues with the younger generation as they reproduce the previous generation's imitation of colonialism.

Part of this preoccupation derives from the colonized's concern whether they are fit enough to govern themselves. Tante Hasna, a seemingly pro-colonialist, similarly referred to as Lalla in *La grande maison*, becomes fixated on this issue, demonstrated through her conversation with Aïni where she exclaims:

[Tante Hansa]-Eh, ils veulent défier le Français. Ont-ils des armes, ont-ils du savoir dans la tête ? Va donc ! Ils n'ont que leur folie et leur misère. Qu'ils se tiennent cois, ça vaudrait mieux pour eux. Pourront-ils lutter contre le Français ?

[Aïni]-Nous n'en savons rien.

[Tante Hasna]-Moi, je sais. Ce sont des imbéciles. Ce qu'ils veulent, c'est supplanter le Français. Ils sauront gouverner, eux ?

[...]

[Tante Hasna]-Qu'il cherche du travail, mugit-elle, qu'il prenne femme et fonde un foyer, plutôt que de perdre son temps à prêcher des billevesées qui le conduiront en prison ; ce ne sera pas mieux, crois-tu ? (Dib, 81)

As the ball begins rolling in the direction of independence, quasi supporters of colonialism, such as Tante Hasna, doubt the ability of the colonized to manage a successful revolution and lead a government post-independence. This doubt continues in *L'incendie* with a neighbor in Dar-Sbitar who argues that "Nous n'avons pas appris à manger du chocolat et nous voulons gouverner !" (Dib 155). The doubt behind self-determination continues through the colonial period into the postcolonial realm demonstrated by Dib in *Qui se souvient de la mer* as the narrator exclaims that "Les événements nous contraignent à mener une existence à laquelle nous ne sommes pas préparés" (62).

Colonialism's preoccupation with an inversion of the colonial system demonstrates a seeming willingness to accept any other form of neocolonialism, such as communism or Islam,

as long as it is not labeled colonialism or led by outsiders. The concern for self-determination likewise lends itself to the acceptance of neocolonialism, especially that of communism where the communist states were more than willing to help lead a proletariat based revolution, as well as provide logistical directions for the newly nascent country.

4.4.2 Communism

Following the Evian Accords in March of 1962, the Algerian government, headed by Ben Bella, received international financial aid from Soviet Russia, France, Communist China, as well as from the United States. The Algerian government refused to recognize financial aid from the Western world and slowly became infiltrated with communist ideologies. Communism had been gaining strength during the end of colonialism, especially with the ascension of Soviet Russia as a superpower; the colonies saw these ideologies as a counter balance to colonialism. In concluding his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Aimé Césaire argues that only a true classless society can bring an end to colonialism, but until that moment Césaire finds solace in communism because it supports “la seule classe qui ait encore mission universelle, car dans sa chair elle souffre de tous les maux de l’histoire, de tous les maux universels : le prolétariat” (*Discours* 72). The principal ideologies of communism declare that the working-class, the proletariat, are brothers, thus, aiming at a classless society; but the government must then be headed by a totalitarian or authoritative figure, instantly negating the classless ideology. Césaire recognizes this fault but chooses to align with communism because of its enlightening philosophies concerning human rights.⁷¹ As with every third-world revolution, Soviet Russia planted itself in an advisory role, so as to implement a form of communism in the nascent country. Soviet Russia provided military and technical support to Algeria during the war and

⁷¹ Césaire, shortly after the publication of his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, had a falling out with the communist party as a result of the Soviet Union’s suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956.

continued in an advisory role after independence by providing assistance in reconstruction and agriculture. The first form of neocolonialism in Algeria came in the form of communism led by Ben Bella, who was deposed two years after his election by a military coup headed by his close friend, Houari Boumédiène.

In *L'incendie* Zina recognizes the communists' desire to influence and lead postcolonial Algeria as a form of neocolonialism as she rhetorically asks "Que veulent ces communistes, ces nationalistes et ... les autres!" (Dib 154). She acknowledges that the communists wish to have a role in the future of Algeria, but meanwhile questions the effectiveness of their actions by arguing with Fatima, the sister of Hamid Saraj, that before the communists and nationalists came, there was Hadji Mesli⁷² who tried to revolt, but, instead, spent his life in prison.

In *Le sommeil du juste*, Lounas represents the communist ideals as he indoctrinates Sliman with communist and nationalist ideologies. These principles lead Sliman to rid his mind of tribal entities and to think of everyone, even of rivals such as Toudert, as Algerians which leads to a unification of the people; however, at the same time, unification eliminates tribal demarcation, a cultural trademark of precolonial Algerian identity. Lounas actively goes from place to place, never staying anywhere too long, preaching the communist ideology, paving a path for the entrance of a post-independence neocolonial, communist-like society.

The influence of communist propaganda similarly pervades the postcolonial literature of Algeria. Mammeri in the opening pages of *L'opium et le bâton* uses communist terminology and dialogues. Bachir, in a letter to Ramdane, likewise comments on the abundant amount of

⁷² This name references Messali Hadj, an Algerian nationalist politician who formed the Etoile Nord-Africaine, a political party initially associated with the communist party in France which paved the way for the FLN. Messali Hadj was either imprisoned or under house arrest for life for his revolutionary ideas and actions. Ben Bella later paid homage to Messali Hadj and declared that "That fantastic blaze of November 1954, that was to upset our destiny and that of other enslaved, is owed in large part to that man. In order to be convinced of this, it's enough to make a leap back and return to that date of 1926. In truth, they were very few, those who believed that our country could one day recover its independence. Years afterward that was still the case. It is thanks to that man and a handful of partisans that what appeared a mad utopia could become a reality" (Hadj, 05/20/2015).

propaganda throughout Algiers, especially that of the communists which declare, “Adhère au Parti communiste, doctrine scientifique, efficacité garantie, le nationalisme est ou une erreur passagère ou une maladie mortelle” (34). Bachir, in opposition to Ramdane, because he is a doctor, held a higher place in the colonial social hierarchy; he belonged to the bourgeois class, not the proletariat. For this reason, Bachir explains that, “Si je n’étais pas un affreux bourgeois repu, planqué et lâche devant la misère et l’effort, je serais communiste” (20). Bachir recognizes the benefits his social status allows him, and he is, thus, reluctant to discard them and adopt the communist movement towards liberation. Nevertheless, he does participate in the liberation movement after distancing himself from Algiers and his medical practice.

The Algerian population received exterior aid in their fight against the colonial regime. This exterior aid came from communist countries such as Yugoslavia; however, the aid did not only come in the form of weapons, but through medical supplies as well. Bachir, from the beginning of his voluntary service received exterior aid as explained by the narrator who declares: “Il était presque aussi difficile de se procurer des médicaments que des armes, mais il avait reçu dès le début tout un lot de matériel yougoslave” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 118) and once supplies run low they wait for “du matériel yougoslave qui n’est pas encore arrivé” (159). The communist countries, in addition to helping create a proletariat revolution through liberation wars, aimed at installing a neocolonial communist state through their direct involvement. Because communism had helped advance the revolution, the Communists thought that the newly liberated colonized would turn to communism and continue to receive aid, as well as show gratitude for their help. Hubert, a Frenchman introduced to Bachir while in Larache, is questioned regarding his purpose for his presence in Algeria. Bachir asks Hubert if he is a communist, to which he replies: “Si j’étais communiste, je ne serais pas ici. [...] Parce que les

communistes n'aident que les révolutions qu'ils contrôlent" (162). This demonstrates that communists do not directly control the revolution, but, nonetheless, play a major role in the disbursement of military and medical aid.

4.4.3 Religion

In addition to the communist movement, Islam acted as a form of neocolonialism in the newly nascent, independent Algeria. The second article of the constitution, drafted shortly after independence and approved in 1963 by referendum, states that Islam is the religion of the State (الدولة دين الاسلام). With this declaration approved as an official article, the members of the Islamic ruling class would implant themselves as a neocolonialist regime, implementing Islamic law and its associated penal code. In *Le polygone étoilé* Yacine comments on article 222 of the Moroccan penal code which states that "Celui qui, notoirement connu pour son appartenance à la religion musulmane, rompt ostensiblement le jeûne dans un lieu public pendant le temps du Ramadan, sans motif admis par cette religion, est puni de l'emprisonnement d'un à six mois et d'une amende de 12 à 120 dirhams" (82). Yacine goes on to explain that in Morocco there had been an incident at the beginning of Ramadan in which 600 people had not observed the daily fasting from sunrise to sunset, as they ate or drank in cafés, restaurants or other public places; as a result, these 600 individuals, according to article 222, were arrested by the police. The restaurants and cafés that had served these individuals were also punished for serving Muslims during this holy period and were closed for three to six months by governmental decree. Yacine uses this example in Morocco to introduce the extremist actions of a neocolonial government with a strictly enforced state religion and its subsequent penal code. Such an instance of using religion as a neocolonialist mode, however, occurred in Algeria as well, regarding the lack of observance of Ramadan where "des 'commandos' de défenseurs de la foi rossant les contrevenants" (Yacine,

Le polygone étoilé 81). Yacine's inclusion of this realist political issue is strikingly poignant as it is not essential to the narration of the novel, yet he viewed this incident as essential to relate; Yacine demonstrates the colonial-like nature of religion as a dominant force in society.

With multiple sources vying for control of post-independent Algeria, the use of propaganda during the Algerian war increased drastically on all fronts, urging individuals to join certain parties in addition to the widespread propaganda directed towards the maintenance of French Algeria and free Algeria. In addition to communiste PPA⁷³ and UDMA⁷⁴ propaganda, the Islamic Ulama's declare: "Rejoins les Ulémas, reviens au pur Islam, hors duquel tu es condamné dans ce monde avant d'être damné dans l'autre" (Mammeri, *L'opium* 34-5). Religion has been used as a source of power for centuries and continues with Islam in the post-independent nations of the Maghreb. Installing Islam as the religion of the state and enforcing its restrictions through the government according to Foucauldian notions of power becomes a set of discourses and practices which inhibit subjects from governing themselves.

4.4.4 Neocolonial Resistance

The desire to oppose any new form of colonial-like rule reached its peak in Morocco as depicted in Mouloud Mammeri's realist narrative *L'opium et le bâton* with the trial of Addi-Ou-Bihi. Mammeri's realism pervades this novel as he points out specific historical events to demonstrate the harsh realities present in not only Algeria but Tunisia and Morocco as well. He, like Yacine, uses Morocco as an example of attempts to provide a neocolonial regime post-independence. In focusing on the trial and example of Addi-Ou-Bihi, who in 1957 led an insurrection against the newly established Moroccan government under the reign of King Mohammed V, Mammeri criticizes neocolonial movements. Addi-Ou-Bihi, a member of the

⁷³ Parti du Peuple Algérien, the successor to Messali Hadj's Etoile Nord-Africaine.

⁷⁴ Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien, a political party headed by Ferhat Abbas.

Moroccan feudal system, “vivait en seigneur au milieu de sa cour et de ses serfs affamés” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 190), and, as such, he opposed the new government’s dissolution of the feudal system. Mammeri demonstrates the general sentiment towards Addi-Ou-Bihi through a clerk sitting opposite Bachir and Itto, in Meknès, who declares,

S’il y a des hommes, marocains ou étrangers, qui croient encore qu’ils peuvent ramener dans ce pays l’hydre colonialiste, le roi, parce qu’il est le premier gardien de notre indépendance, le gouvernement, par l’organe de ses tribunaux, de sa police et de son armée, sont là pour les empêcher de perpétrer leurs odieux desseins. De toute peuple qui a tant souffert dans les geôles colonialistes et qui a acheté de son sang notre indépendance bénie au besoin interviendra lui-même pour imposer aux criminels le juste châtiment de leurs crimes. [...]

Le peuple tout entier, profondément troublé par ces menées néocolonialistes d’Addi-Ou-Bihi, attend comme nous l’issue du procès, attend dans le calme que la justice, la justice sereine, implacable et dure, le dispense d’exercer sa colère. (191)

The Moroccan population desired that suffering as a result of colonial oppression would not be allowed to be once again replaced by a new form of colonialism. The population actively resisted the reintroduction of the feudal system while still allowing a king to reign in a constitutional monarchy. Morocco, known as the Kingdom of Morocco, had been led by the Alaouite dynasty since 1631 to which Mohammed V belonged. This dynasty continued its figurehead role while under the French protectorate. A return to the rule of the king in Morocco implied a return to the glorious past before colonial rule.

After listening to this clerk rant about the traitorous actions by Addi-Ou-Bihi, Itto expresses her concern for Bachir and the Algerian revolution concerning the possible neocolonialists in waiting. Bachir assures her that before the beginning of the revolution “nous avons fait le vide” (Mammeri, *L’opium* 192). No matter how prepared Algeria may be before the beginning of the revolution, there still remain those individuals and parties who willingly defect in order to place themselves in positions of power over others. Itto highlights this reality as she argues that “la révolution produit des traîtres” (192).

4.5 Conclusion

The suffering demonstrated in the postcolonial novel derives from that of the colonial period. The memory of this suffering cannot be easily forgotten as it has shaped the Algerian identity and created a population destined and convinced to choose its own path and write its own history. It is for this reason that the postcolonial novel places such a strong emphasis on the role of the colonial past, rather than on a repression of memory while looking toward the future. This emphasis may as well be a result of the Algerian focus on their ancestors and, as such, provides a means to pay homage to the vital role they played in the movement toward liberation. *L'opium et le bâton* can be viewed as an homage to all the men who lost their lives, as well as to Amirouche who had fought so hard and led the Algerians in Wilaya III to withstand the overwhelming French forces. In looking at the past, Aoudjit likewise argues that it is important “not only because it reconnects Algerians with their past, continues the struggles of their forebears, and enables them to understand the present better, but also because it makes possible for them to visualize conceptions of the future other than those imposed by colonialism” (113). The thematic elements of this section acknowledge the continued presence of colonial suffering in the postcolonial sphere as a means to move forward and visualize a new future, not constructed on the same pillars as colonialism.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has looked at and analyzed the works of Dib, Feraoun, Mammeri and Yacine from 1950-1966 in relation to suffering and its role in their novels. These authors, through the thematic elements discussed in the previous chapters, portrayed the difficulties endured by the colonized as a result of the unjust colonial system. This representation has shaped the literature as evidenced in the narration and character development. The historical and social settings of the novels affect the modes of narration and progression of the novels by placing the characters in an environment where suffering is commonplace. Characters' actions are all a result of colonial suffering whether explicit or not, because of violence and poverty. Some characters choose to be defined by what they have endured, and others choose to be defined by the triumph over their tribulations. Nevertheless, suffering plays a critical role even though the authors have used different modes to portray it. The thematic elements discussed here surrounding suffering should not be ignored or glossed over as they are integral in the development of the novel on multiple levels.

The first chapter has demonstrated the role of suffering in this colonial literature as a result of the first plague of colonialism, that of violence in its many different forms. The relationship exhibited between colonizer and colonized is none other than a relationship of power created and enforced through violence, whether cultural, social or psychological. As a result of this omnipresent violence in the lives of the colonized, these novels mirror that societal violence. Rather than providing simply background or descriptive information, the writers use violence in this literature to provide an authentic and truthful understanding of the historical environment from the rare perspective of the Algerians. The role of violence in the narration of these texts drives the plot forward through the actions of the characters. Everyday violence plagues them as

it directly influences their development and choices. The scenes of torture in these novels are not mere events which occur in passing. These events touch the lives of those involved as evidenced by the narrator's description of Lakhdar in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* at his arrival in Beauséjour who, roamed like a zombie after his torture. Suffering as a result of violence in its many forms contributes to the formation and evolution of the characters, whether contributing to their docility or sparking resistance; it causes the characters to speak and act in a particular way, effectively altering their behavior. Similarly, the violence and torture of colonialism, historically and in this literature, did not only affect the individuals directly involved, but the rest of society.

The second chapter moves from the role of violence in the colonial novel to that of poverty. The colonized, as a result of colonization, were forced to live destitute lives filled with both violence and economic hardship. Poverty, as a thematic element in this literature, is catalyzed by the unjust colonial regime's apathetic attitude toward the colonized population's welfare. It provides essential contextual information, but at the same time moves the characters to action or inaction; poverty regulates the characters' activities. For example, in telling the story of Omar in Dib's *La grande maison*, hunger and starvation play a vital role in the narration and in his development as a character. The first and last lines of the novel convey the difficulty for the colonized to fulfill a basic necessity of life. Therefore, characters are defined by whether they eat or not and by what they eat. The spiraling descent into poverty, from which an escape seems impossible and perilous, constantly affects the colonized in both the literature and parallels the historical and social climate. Poverty resulting from joblessness forces the colonized to resort to a life full of hunger and suffering which inevitably defines the characters in this literature. The disillusionment of the colonized, in regards to his poverty, brings with it despair, leading people to declare that, "Ce travail me démolit la poitrine. Je n'en peux plus. Mes jambes sont sans force.

Tout ce que je gagne ne suffit pas pour acheter assez de pain. Je travaille autant que je peux pourtant. Et à quoi ça sert ?” (Dib, *La grande maison* 12).

Moving on from the colonial period, the third chapter focuses on the postcolonial literature by the authors of this corpus. This chapter analyzes the role of memory and representation as well as the plagues of colonialism in these novels. The narrative modes used by the authors to represent the trauma of colonialism demonstrate the inability to escape the past as it plays an important role in the movement toward a national identity; it shapes and creates individuals and collectives. Likewise, the characters in these novels have been molded into who they are through the suffering they have endured. Just as memory and representation affect the characters and modes of narration in the postcolonial novels, the plagues of colonialism continue to do so as well with some minor differences. Violence is no longer acted out amongst the colonized but only against the colonizer, as a form of resistance. The violence enacted by the colonizer, now, in addition to attempting to maintain power relations, aims at quelling the rebellion. Torture, as a form of violence, no longer looks to create docile bodies or to demonstrate the power of the colonial regime, but to acquire information. Poverty, as in the colonial sphere, is prevalent in the postcolonial novels in this dissertation; the themes of unemployment and hunger have not been resolved with the outbreak of the war, but have, in fact, intensified. The already difficult to obtain food rations during the colonial period become even more scarce with the war. With Bachir’s return to Tala, his native village in Mammeri’s *L’opium et le bâton*, the reader is exposed to this harsh reality where everything is rationed, allowing the inhabitants to only consume a single meal per day.

These chapters have demonstrated how this literature is affected by the thematic elements discussed in the colonial and postcolonial period. However, the extreme suffering of the colonial

body only truly takes on a powerful meaning once expressed through storytelling itself. Through their novels, the authors have brought to the forefront the pains of their brothers and sisters, and in doing so, have created a collective memory. The act of storytelling by these authors, therefore, becomes the transmitter and creator of a collective consciousness. In addition to the narrative modes and actions of the characters, suffering has, in fact, structured the plot. The novels, for the most part, do not follow the typical Freytag pyramid plot which begins with exposition leading to rising action and then reaching the climax before arriving at the falling action and dénouement. They do begin with an exposition which introduces the setting and the characters in an often ethnographic fashion. During the exposition the reader learns of the obstacles or challenges which face the characters, which concentrate on the plagues of colonialism. The action then rises as the story progresses, based on suffering until it reaches a climax. At this point, the suffering begins to fully affect the plot as the novel rarely comes to a resolution because the suffering itself has not been eliminated in the falling action.

La grande maison, if read separately from the Dib's Algerian trilogy, reaches a climax as Omar wonders why there are those who eat and those who do not. However, there is no falling action or resolution. Similarly, *L'incendie* reaches a vibrant climax with the eruption of the *incendie*; however, the novel never comes to a resolution as the suffering due to torture increases in the attempt to find the culprit. When read together, the trilogy, more closely resembles the Freytag pyramid as the first novel is the exposition, the second the climax, and the final paragraphs of *Le métier à tisser* comes close to a dénouement with Omar declaring, "LES A-ME-RI-CAINS !" (203). It is the hope for a better future devoid of suffering which brings the trilogy to a conclusion. The plot of the other colonial novels focuses on the thematic elements of suffering and end with a partial resolution because the anguish of the characters still continues.

Similarly, Mouloud Mammeri's postcolonial novel *L'opium et le bâton* does not come to a full and complete conclusion as the war was left unresolved; the novel simply ends with an ellipsis.

The intricacies and complexities of this literature surrounding suffering demand further research in light of 21st century relations between France and Algeria. The Algerian war and colonialism cannot be overlooked, especially in consideration of François Hollande's official declaration recognizing the suffering of the Algerian population as a result of colonialism as well as an official recognition of the events from 1954-1962 as a war. Similarly this tragic history, for both France and Algeria, must be told as argued by François Hollande who declared: "l'Histoire, même quand elle est tragique et douloureuse, doit être dite" (qtd. in Le Roux). The authors of this corpus have endeavored to tell this story to transform individual into collective suffering. The historical suffering in this literature is exhibited on both an individual and a collective level, but the pain of individual traumatic experience can only be transformed into a collective one through the act of storytelling.

Future research could be conducted on this topic to elaborate on the theme of suffering in order to bring to light more of the tragic story of colonial Algeria. This research could include the postcolonial literature chronologically distanced from the colonial period. An analysis of the residual effects of the plagues of colonialism could be conducted in Leila Sebbar's *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père*, a semi-autobiographical novel which follows Sebbar as a child. Her father is an Algerian *instituteur du bled* while her mother is French. In this novel she addresses the complexities of language and education, which were crucial elements in this dissertation. Also, further research could be done on a vast array of Assia Djebar's literature, in particular *L'amour, la fantasia*. This novel, published in 1985, which in addition to discussing women's roles in Algeria, looks at language in detail. Similarly, the recently published

novel *Meursault, contre-enquête* by Kamal Daoud, a response to Camus' *L'étranger*, could be analyzed in relation to the suffering of colonialism. Using the baseline of the colonial works of this corpus opens up many possibilities for reading or rereading postcolonial novels which have been greatly influenced by the founding fathers of the Francophone Algerian novel.

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APPENDIX: BRIEF HISTORY OF COLONIAL ALGERIA

Rooted so deeply in the historical and societal concerns of the time period, the Algerian Francophone novel contributes to the discourse of colonial and postcolonial Algeria; it is a reactionary genre, a response to the historical and societal issues which surround the novels and their authors. It is for this purpose that a brief introduction to the history of the colonization of Algeria will be presented here.

Prior to the colonization of Algeria by French forces, Algeria fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire from 1525 until the invasion by the French in 1830. Although Algiers had been ruled by the Ottoman Empire and had served as their headquarters in the Maghreb for over 300 years, the Turkish population in the area accounted for a merely .5% of the general population. This is due to the fact that the whole of Algeria remained at this time, like other Arab areas, a tribal entity, demonstrated in the Algerian Francophone literature prior to the nationalist movement of the mid-20th century. Thus, the majority of the population associated itself with one tribe or another neither declaring themselves neither Ottoman nor French. This tribal identity significantly influenced the colonization efforts by the French.

The invasion of Algeria began on June 14, 1830, at Sidi-Ferruch, as a result of a disagreement between Hussein Dey of Algiers and Pierre Deval, a French official, regarding non-payment of accrued debts from 1795-1796 by the French Republic. The quarrel resulted in what is now known as the fan affair, a simple excuse for Charles X to expand his popularity and the French empire in order to secure North African resources. In 1834, France had annexed the occupied areas, and by 1848, Algeria had become an official and integral part of France with the creation of *départements* in Algiers, Constantine, and Oran. The initial conquest of Algeria proved to be a failure in “French policy, behavior, and organization,” but according to the

constitutional monarchy under Louis-Philippe, “the occupation should continue for the sake of national prestige” (Metz). According to the French, “Algeria was no El Dorado; in the early years of the French occupation it was not even an inviting land” (Talbot 10). Algeria would remain under colonial rule for the next 132 years, during which it would suffer much injustice and inequality.

Algeria differed from other French colonies in that it was the closest to Metropolitan France; it was merely a day’s journey from Marseille to Algiers. Algeria was also the only African French colony to receive departmental status, and because of this, it had a large population of European settlers which later became known as the *Pieds Noirs*; “with nearly 900,000 inhabitants, one third of them Arabs, Algiers was France’s second largest city, bigger than Lyon or Marseille” (Morgan 119). Algeria constituted an integral entity to the French state; François Mitterand’s book *Présence française et abandon* published in 1957 states, “Sans Afrique, il n’y aura pas l’histoire de France au XXI^e siècle” (qtd. in *Culture*, Said 178). In addition, French propaganda during the Algerian war declares “un même cœur un seul drapeau” and likewise depicts the Cross of Lorraine⁷⁵ connecting Dunkerque to Tamanrasset, the two extremes of France and Algeria in order to demonstrate the concept that everything in between these two cities constitutes France.

⁷⁵ The Cross of Lorraine originally symbolized Joan of Arc. This symbol came to signify the regaining of lost territory as represented by Lorraine’s history. De Gaulle chose the Cross of Lorraine because it represents patriotism and nationalism.

VITA

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