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# Colonial, Anticolonial, and Postcolonial Myth and Memory in the French-Algerian Narratives of Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, and Assia Djébar 1942-1999

Gina Marie Breen

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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COLONIAL, ANTICOLONIAL, AND POSTCOLONIAL MYTH AND  
MEMORY IN THE FRENCH-ALGERIAN NARRATIVES OF ALBERT  
CAMUS, FRANTZ FANON, AND ASSIA DJEBAR 1942-1999

A Dissertation

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in

The Department of French Studies

by

Gina Marie Breen

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2006, 2007

M.A., Southern Illinois University, 2010

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For Tom and Margaret

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## ABSTRACT

Algeria exemplifies a unique case of colonial domination, and of the problems that the colonial system generates. 132 years of colonial rule and settlement led to one of the bloodiest and most difficult battles of decolonization fought in the twentieth century. After eight years of war (1954-1962), which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, Algeria became independent. As the postcolonial society abandoned the French language in an effort to promote Algerian nationalism and create an Arab-Algerian identity, Algeria entered another violent civil war in the 1990s. Thus today, more than fifty years after Algeria gained independence, and twenty years after the brutal war, I question for the first time how three prominent French-Algerian figures, Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, and Assia Djebar discuss these events and address how their writings provide us with a unique representation of Algeria's evolution as a contentious postcolonial, francophone, literary space.

Through a comparative analysis of literary and non-literary texts, this study investigates why it is necessary for these three French Algerian authors to mythologize their Algerian home, or adopted home, in order to comprehend their experiences and address fundamental events. I will observe how their memories, and inclusion of autobiographical details, are essential to their view of Algeria. In doing so, we will see how Algeria has evolved from a colonial site to a region that epitomizes transnational and transcultural identity.

This study will demonstrate how these writers and their publications evoke similar or dissimilar images of Algeria as they describe or defend their individual or chosen communities. Despite their designation as a colonial, anticolonial, or postcolonial figure, I will prove that their legacies are inspired by both mythology and memory as

narrative devices in order to create an Algerian mythopoetics which I define as the process of how they create repeated commonplaces to describe people, or a place, or a historical event and transmit them throughout the decades in their writing.

## INTRODUCTION

“La guerre de libération nationale, comme thématique dominante, comme toile de fond ou comme réminiscence: présence à la mesure de l'événement lui-même. La prendre en charge dans toutes les œuvres où elle apparaît serait prendre en compte la quasi-totalité de la littérature depuis 1954.”

Christiane Achour “La Guerre de libération nationale dans les fictions algériennes.”

The French colonization of Algeria began in 1830 and lasted until 1962. Algeria became France's most valuable colony. In fact, it was more than a colony, as it was divided into three *départements* making it an integral French territory. In this dissertation I refer to French Algeria to mean *L'Algérie Française*, the name given to Algeria during French occupation. One hundred thirty two years of colonial rule and settlement led to one of the bloodiest battles of decolonization fought in the twentieth century. After eight brutal years of war (1954-1962) between the French military and the Algerian nationalists, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, Algeria became independent. The trauma associated with this oppressive colonial relationship, as well as the unprecedented revolutionary events that led to independence, prohibited a smooth transition to democracy. The difficulties inherent in abandoning all facets of “Frenchness” while promoting Algerian nationalism and establishing an Arab-Algerian identity, led to another bloody and violent civil war in the 1990s, between the Algerian government and Islamist rebels. Still, despite the post-independence strife of the 1990s, it is the long, tedious, and combative eight-year journey towards Algerian independence that continues to haunt the French-Algerian discourse more than fifty years later. These battles thus serve as the catalyst for this project.

This dissertation explores the scope of French-Algerian myth and memory and proposes concurrently to analyze the colonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial narratives of

Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, and Assia Djebar. This study demonstrates how these three writers and their publications, which represent a fifty-year period, evoke similar images of Algeria as they describe and defend their individual communities. Through a comparative analysis of literary and non-literary texts, this study investigates why it is necessary for these three authors to mythologize their Algerian home, or adopted home, in order to personalize their experiences. By recognizing both the complexity and importance of their hybrid, cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, it is possible to observe how their memories and inclusion of autobiographical details are essential to their alternative view of Algeria. However, despite their distinct Algerian heritages, I hope to prove that the legacies they share are inspired by mythology and memory, which they use as narrative devices to create a hybrid collection of elements that can be said to form an Algerian mythopoetics. For this project I define mythopoetics as the process of creating repeated commonplaces to describe a place, or historical event, which are then transmitted from one author to another. This project thus reveals Algeria as a geographic and literary space that has evolved from a unique colonial site to a region that now epitomizes transnational and transcultural identity.

The three writers in this project were born in three consecutive decades of the early twentieth century, representing three distinct generations. In order to create an appropriate historical trajectory for the French-Algerian experience through the decades, it is necessary to address the writers chronologically. I discuss how they perceive and portray Algeria, how they imagine Algeria, and how they discuss the Algerian War. I analyze a selection of their narratives that include novels, essays, newspaper articles, autobiography, and political theory.

It is no surprise to learn that the unparalleled events in Algeria and their after-effects led to multiple scholarly investigations. Algeria inspires remembrance, particularly because it differed significantly from other French colonies. Indeed, Algeria suffered from extreme colonial violence. In “Intimate Acts and Unspeakable Relations: Remembering Torture and the War for Algerian Independence” nineteenth and twentieth century French history scholar, Joshua Cole, explains, “histories of memory often focus on moments of intense violence, and it is no accident that much historical work on memory has focused on particularly traumatic episodes of conflict.” (125) While interdisciplinary studies on Algeria have proliferated in recent decades, we witness muted anniversaries of Algerian Independence. To that end, historian Jo McCormack believes, there has been insufficient work of memory on the Algerian War and she asserts in *Collective Memory* “these memories have been repressed or occluded” (3) resulting in perpetual divisions on both sides. Despite the vast research undertaken by postcolonial scholars devoted to identity construction during the colonial and postcolonial periods, none have adequately addressed the continued existence of myth and memory in French-Algerian literature from the Post World War II period before the War of Independence, until the twenty-first century. This is not the only way to imagine Algeria, but scholars have neglected the connections between the colonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial literary spaces. For example, Jean Déjeux, or more recently, Philip Dine, have identified and discussed “The French Colonial Myth of a pan-Mediterranean civilization” but they have not focused the same attention on how myth and memory were also used as narrative devices in anticolonial and postcolonial literature. In acknowledging the increased interest in memory and the potential negative impact it poses to the discipline

of history, my work intersects by focusing on the link between the two. My project shows the importance of remembering the past for a present function. By exploring empire, exile, I create a new collection of memories from before, after, and during the Algerian War of Independence and the Civil War of the 1990s.

My work supplements the field of francophone literature and postcolonial studies in a variety of ways. By examining these three exemplary authors together, I provide, for the first time, the connections between these three representations of French Algeria throughout the twentieth century. It is a commemorative task that does not assert or reject one identity over another. Instead, it combines multiple versions of history. I introduce a different approach to French Algerian literature. I contribute a selection of materials that reflect how their discourse changed with history, allowing us to observe the construction of the Nation.

### **Corpus and Chapter Overview**

The writers I have chosen distinguish themselves through their diverse writing styles, genres, and biographies, yet Algeria is their shared former home and therefore the common denominator for this project. Naturally, by focusing on their biographies or on autobiographical material in the corpus, it will allow me to compare their experiences in Algeria, and their opinions on the Algerian War of independence for an overall clearer representation of how they use myth and memory to present their French Algeria.

My first chapter begins with the author Albert Camus who was born in Mondovi, Algeria in 1913 to white European settlers of Spanish and French origin – hence his status as *pied-noir*. His Spanish mother, who worked as a house cleaner, was illiterate

and deaf and his French father was a soldier and laborer. Having participated in the French military invasion of Morocco in 1907, he was later employed in the Algerian wine industry. He died in 1914 in the Battle of the Marne during World War I when Camus was one year old. Since his family did not possess land, Camus also qualifies as a *petit colon*. Following the death of his father, Camus moved with his mother and brother to the working class Belcourt area of Algiers (next to the Arab quarter) to live with his grandmother and uncle.

Despite his humble background, Camus received scholarships that provided him with a prestigious French education at the Catholic Algiers Ecole/Lycée d'Alger, and at the University of Algiers where he studied philosophy. However, in 1930, Camus learned he was suffering from tuberculosis and had to leave his family home. Despite suffering from bad health, Camus eventually completed his education and became actively involved with politics. He joined the Communist Party for a short time before somewhat abandoning politics for his professional and literary career, working as a journalist, playwright, and teacher. At the beginning of his writing career, Camus expressed concern regarding the lack of equality between French and Algerians. He was particularly empathetic towards the population in the Kabyle region of Algeria because this mountainous region they suffered greatly during colonialism.

In 1940, Camus moved permanently to France where he began to publish a wide variety of literary texts including novels, plays, short stories, and essays, which earned him a Nobel Prize in 1957. However, Algeria haunted Camus throughout his life, contributing to an unsettled legacy in his writing. His untimely death occurred three years

after he received the Nobel Prize, when he was killed in a car accident at the age of forty-six.

In Camus' first novel, *L'étranger*, (1942) he provides readers with a first person narrative of protagonist Meursault, a *pied-noir*, who apathetically murders an Arab man on the Mediterranean beach, not long after attending the funeral of his mother. This novel serves as a necessary starting point not only because it is set in Algeria and is one of the most widely read French novels of the twentieth century, but also it is Camus' first literary publication. Thus the year 1942 marks the beginning of this project's chronology.

Primarily known for the senseless, unexplainable murder and criticized for its potential colonialist sympathies, the novel is presented in simple prose but nevertheless is profoundly complex. Camus underscores the apathy of the atheistic protagonist towards the environment and people around him. In beginning by questioning the title - who is the outsider? Is he a stranger to himself and to society? - I also raise questions about the position of the *pied-noir* in Algerian society. Second, I will address the main ideas and themes, including views on organized religion and the death penalty, in this novel. Ultimately, this short text will open my discussion of the representation of French colonialism in Algeria and it will begin my analysis of Camus's mythopoetics. Since the story takes place prior to the Algerian War, it is beneficial to begin to chart the changes in Camus' Algerian representations from this point onwards.

I will then discuss Camus's collection of short stories, *L'Exil et le royaume*, which was published the same year that Camus won the Nobel Prize for literature. In fact, similar to the aforementioned novel, the stories demonstrate the author's penchant for philosophy as he incorporates notions borrowed from existentialism and the theatre of

absurd; however, Camus remains focused here on the question of morality. He presents characters that are faced with moral dilemmas, and as we will see, this is a prime example of how his writing replicates his personal experience with such questions of conscience. It is also no surprise that this was his last literary publication before his death. Camus felt “exiled” morally or geographically as he was searching for answers to the looming moral, political, ethical question concerning Algerian nationality, identity, and independence. Short stories set in Algeria, entitled “L’Hôte” “Les Muets” and “La Femme Adultère” (whose protagonists are *pied-noirs*), will be particularly useful to this project.

*Chroniques Algériennes* is of a different nature in that it is not a work of fiction and thus different from the work discussed above. An important political work by Camus, it was published during the Algerian War. This is an extremely pertinent document for this project because Camus details his personal, yet controversial statements over a twenty-year period (from the late 1930s to the late 1950s) here. Two years before his untimely death in 1960, perhaps in an attempt to clarify his ambivalence on the issue, Camus pointedly addresses the question of Algerian independence from France. At this time, he specifies his opinions on terrorism and violence. He paradoxically stipulates his lack of support of, or rather his staunch opposition to, the war while demonstrating a sincere anticolonial stance and dismay at colonial oppression.

*Le Premier Homme* is unfinished; Camus was working on this semi-autobiographical novel the year before his death. It was his “site of recollection” as he stylized the memory of his Algiers childhood (Just, 70). The “roman inachevé” differs significantly from Camus’s other writing in that it is deeply personal and provides an insight into his impoverished beginnings. An example of autofiction, Camus presents his

story through the semi-fictional protagonist Jacques Cormery. He describes his journey through childhood and school and also touches on his relationships with family, friends, and teachers. Rescued by Camus's daughter Catherine, it remained unpublished because of political strife in Algeria post-independence, finally emerging more than thirty years after his death.

While Camus's works are diverse, those that focus on his native-land present an ambivalent vision of Algeria. His nostalgia, combined with colonial sympathies and a much-criticized portrayal of Arab characters distinguishes Camus' Algeria from that which Fanon and Djébar depict in their writings.

Frantz Fanon was born into a bourgeois family in Fort-de-France, Martinique in 1925. This Caribbean island was a former French colony until 1946. Today, it is an integral part of France, constituting one of France's twenty-seven overseas regions. Taking these facts into consideration, it is therefore unsurprising to learn that Fanon belonged to a social class that encouraged assimilation to French culture. However, Fanon's teacher Aimé Césaire changed the course of Fanon's education culturally, historically and politically with the philosophy of negritude. In fact, Fanon voluntarily left Martinique in 1943 to fight with the Free French Forces during World War II. He then stayed in France to study medicine and psychiatry at university in Lyon. After experiencing racism first-hand in France, Fanon began writing *Peau noire, masques blancs* which was published in 1952. He then briefly returned home to Martinique but felt that he did not belong and therefore left shortly thereafter in 1953 for Algeria where he began work as chief of staff in the psychiatry ward of the Blida-Joinville hospital. After the Algerian war broke out in 1954, Fanon treated both French torturers and Algerian

victims of torture. Finally, in 1956, Fanon left his position at the hospital because he refused to support the French, as he fervently believed his allegiances lay with the Algerian people.

Writings from the years following Fanon's departure from the Algerian hospital have been published posthumously in 1964 in *Pour la Révolution Africaine*, but more relevant to this project is *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, published in 1959, which describes the organizing and the uprising of the Algerian people. These publications provide us with examples of Algerian oppression that sparked the violent revolution. Fanon encouraged such revolution, as he believed that violence begets violence in the colonial process. Fanon's radical criticism of colonization and desire for decolonization is most apparent in *Les Damnés de la Terre*, which included a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1961, just before Fanon's untimely death.

Fanon's writings differ significantly in content from those of Camus. Firstly, Fanon is not a writer of fiction, but as his profession indicates, he asserts the psychological perspective of the Algerian issues and promotes his political agenda, thus constructing hybrid texts that blend psychology and political theory. Fanon differs from Camus in that his intentions are clear because he is not writing fiction. He directly discusses nationalism and colonial power in Algeria and for this reason we must compare this to the literature of the period.

In addition to Fanon's tenure in France and Algeria, he worked in Tunisia for a period of time training nurses for the FLN. He also served as an ambassador to Ghana, but after he was diagnosed with leukemia, Fanon sought medical treatment in the United

States, where he died two months later in December 1961. At the request of the FLN, his body is buried in Algerian soil.

Assia Djebar was born Fatima-Zohra Imalayen in Cherchell, Algeria in 1936 to an Arab father and Berber mother. The daughter of an “instituteur”, Djebar was afforded the opportunity to attend a French elementary school where her father worked. She also attended a private Quranic school for a time, and like Camus, she attended the University of Algiers. In 1955, Djebar became the first Algerian to gain entrance to the *École Normale Supérieure*. However, as she was undertaking her studies during the Algerian War, she demonstrated with Algerian compatriots and refused to take her exams. This prohibited Djebar from completing her studies because she was forced to leave the university system.

In 1957 she published her first novel *La Soif* and while she continued to support the resistance movement, she worked in Switzerland and Tunisia as an investigative journalist and simultaneously pursued her literary career. In 1962 Djebar accepted a position at the University of Algiers teaching history, but left again for Paris in 1966, returning again in 1974 to teach French literature and cinema at the University of Algiers. In 1976 she released her first film *La Noubia des femmes du Mon Chenoua* and in 1979 she won the Grand Prix de la Critique Internationale at the Venice Film Festival. In the 1980s Djebar began to publish literature once again focusing on ordinary Algerian people, particularly Muslim women. In addition to these themes, the effects of war are also prominent issues in Djebar’s writing.

In 1995, Djebar accepted a position at Louisiana State University as director of the Center for French and Francophone Studies before accepting an endowed

professorship (Silver Chair) at New York University in 2002. In 2005, Djébar became the first woman and second person from the continent of Africa to be elected to the Académie Française. Assia Djébar died February 2015.

In 1996, Djébar published *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* where she describes the Islamist conflict and subsequent civil turmoil that erupted thirty years after Algerian independence. A blend of fiction and memoir, she weaves her political views into her narrative through her poignant descriptions of loss. The tragic death of many prominent Algerian writers and intellectuals, whom she considered dear friends, prompts her to speak, and write, just as they did. Aside from the mournful commentary on postcolonial society in Algeria, this text also contains pertinent material on the other writers discussed in this dissertation because she mentions Albert Camus' unfinished text and her friendship with Josie Fanon, Fanon's French wife.

In 1999, while at Louisiana State University, Djébar published an essay entitled *Ces voix qui m'assiègent...en marge de ma francophonie* where she discusses the limitations and functions of language, including the languages in which she thinks, speaks and writes. She also links this to her role as a Muslim Algerian woman and ultimately demonstrates her acquisition, use, and respect for the multiple voices she inherited. It gives valuable insight into Djébar's creative method.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE COLONIAL ORIGINS OF ALBERT CAMUS

### 1. Introduction

The first of the three writers addressed in this project is Algerian born Albert Camus, a *pied-noir* whose parents were of French and Spanish origin. The Larousse Dictionary defines the term *pied-noir* as “Français d’origine européenne installé en Afrique du Nord, et plus particulièrement en Algérie, jusqu’à l’indépendance de ce pays”. *Pied-noir* is an important term in this project, and I will define it in greater depth as I analyze Camus’s publications. However, while the term is used to refer to people of European origin, like Camus’s parents, who settled in French North Africa during French rule, it is more commonly used to refer to people of French origin living in Algeria. In 1962, after the Algerian War of Independence, *pied-noir* was also used to refer to those who left Algeria and returned to France.

Born in 1913, Camus grew up during the French colonial occupation of Algeria. He died in 1961 during the Algerian War, one year before Algerian Independence. Despite having moved to France in the 1930s before eventually settling there in 1942, Camus often chose Algeria as the setting for his literary texts. In fact he has four publications set in Algeria – *L’Etranger* (1942), *La Peste* (1947), *L’Exil et Le Royaume* (1957), and *Le Premier Homme* (1994), three of which I discuss in this project. He also has several non-fiction publications, including essays and lectures that discuss Algeria. I will also discuss one of these – *Chroniques Algériennes* (1958), which is a collection of political articles Camus wrote when he worked as a journalist. He always considered Algeria his home, returning often to visit his mother who remained in Algiers. However,

Camus's personal politics and his literary depictions of Algeria, or Algerians, gained him considerable notoriety throughout his career.

This chapter contains an analysis of a selection of his fiction and non-fiction writings - both early and later - that explicitly discuss Algeria, Algerians, Algerian landscape, and the Algerian War. The purpose of this analysis is to uncover Camus's interpretation of French Algerian colonial history, exploring his use of myth and memory as narrative devices to convey the evolution of his Algerian identity and his mythopoeics, which he shares with fellow writers Frantz Fanon and Assia Djebar. Camus uses mythology to write about memory and re-appropriate his Algerian community. Therefore, Camus's representations maintain a colonial influence despite his best efforts to adjust, or rather amend his approach to Algerian history and politics, and overcome his origins. I argue that it was impossible for Camus to move beyond the *pied-noir* status quo. Thus, it was difficult for Camus to escape the existing state of affairs in Algeria and embrace change with regard to social and political issues. Camus could not conceive of an Algeria without his *pied-noir* settler community.

As this chapter focuses on Camus's representation of his Algerian homeland through myth and memory, I will define both and address the opposing discourses surrounding Camus and his publications that discuss Algeria. Indeed, much has been written on the French literary traditions that have emerged from Algeria in the last century, namely *L'Algérianisme*, which was established in 1921 and supported a colonial rhetoric, *L'Ecole d'Alger*, which emerged in 1935 in opposition to *L'Algérianisme*, and *Littérature de combat*, which developed after the 1945 uprisings and also opposed the colonial ideology of *L'Algérianisme*. Scholarly discourse from Ena Vulour *Colonial and*

*Anti-colonial Discourses* (2000), Azzedine Haddour *Colonial Myths: History and Narrative* (2000), and Peter Dunwoodie *Writing French Algeria* (1998) provide the definitions, origins, and writers involved in the development of these literary traditions. For example Haddour explains how *L'Algérianisme* appropriated Louis Bertrand's mythopoetics, while *L'Ecole d'Alger* wanted to counteract the myths of colonizer versus colonized. According to Haddour: "The writers of the *Ecole d'Alger* envisaged a Mediterranean free from racial tension." (24) Dunwoodie places writers such as Albert Camus, Gabriel Audisio, and Jean Sénac within this literary tradition. He also highlights how these writers turned away from Algerianist concerns towards a myth of the Mediterranean. Haddour associates writer Jean Amrouche with *Littérature de combat* and credits this school with a focus on decolonization.

In the last fifty years many scholars have discussed Camus's position within colonial and postcolonial literature, as well as his place within the Francophone or North African literary traditions. While his publications that focus on Algeria have earned him both praise and criticism at the time of publication, many Postcolonial critics believe his writings are a source of evidence that unveiled Camus's colonial sympathies and true Algerian politics. Conor Cruise O'Brien's *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and Emily Apter's "Out of Character: Camus's French-Algerian Subjects" condemn Camus's depictions of Algeria whereas David Carroll's *Albert Camus, the Algerian* and Germaine Brée's *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays* offer more sympathetic perspectives.

Much attention has been paid to Camus's battles with his cultural and political identity but my contribution to the field will specifically address Camus's appropriation

and mythologizing of his *pied-noir* community, an area that I believe many scholars have overlooked on account of his ambiguous connection to colonialism. Critics agree that Camus's fictional and imaginary Algeria shares similarities with his real Algeria but I argue that the "myth of French-Algeria" to which O'Brien refers to in *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* is the specific myth of the impoverished community of his childhood, that undoubtedly has its foundations in French colonialism, but that also does not fully support the colonialist ideology (23). This myth is the one constant force that returns time and again throughout his writings and it enables him, or his protagonists, to recount *pied-noir* memories. Furthermore, I will highlight the connection between myth and memory as literary devices for we cannot have one without the other. Essentially I will prove that myth and memory are inseparable in Camus's literature, as they are in the work of Djébar and Fanon. Moreover, I will not read Camus primarily as part of the French national literary heritage. My project will examine all Camus's writings from a francophone perspective, which is from the point of view of a French-educated Algerian writing about his native country, Algeria, which has remained a contentious and divided literary space on account of French colonialism and the difficult battle for Independence.

## 2. *L'Etranger*

### 2.1. Historical Background

Although Camus had worked for a short time as a journalist in Algeria, *L'Etranger* was his first literary publication. Written between 1937 and 1940, Camus wrote this novel before and published it during World War II when he was living and working intermittently between Algeria and France. *L'Etranger* was published in 1942 by prestigious French publishing house Gallimard.<sup>1</sup>

Camus was politically active in Algeria. In 1935 he became a member of the Algerian Communist Party, which at the time followed an anti-colonial policy. As general secretary he gave what has become a controversial lecture at the newly founded Maison de la Culture in Algiers in 1937, which was funded by the Communist Party. In his lecture entitled “La Nouvelle Culture Méditerranée,” Camus discusses the rehabilitation of Mediterranean Culture, proposes a meeting of the East and West, and more specifically promotes Mediterranean humanism. Neil Foxlee explores the ambiguities of Camus’s position regarding French Algeria and the Mediterranean in his 2010 publication *Albert Camus’s ‘The New Mediterranean Culture’: A Text and its Contexts*.

In 1938 he wrote for left-wing newspaper *Alger Républicain*. He also published articles in *Misère en Kabylie* in support of the Arab population who suffered from the discriminatory colonial practices in Algeria. Camus continued moving back and forth for several years, briefly returning to Algeria in 1941 to teach in Oran, before returning to France and settling there permanently in 1943. Camus’s political engagement led him to

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Gallimard, from the Gallimard publishing house was travelling with Camus in 1960. They were both killed in the car crash.

participate actively in the Resistance Movement in France. It is evident then that by 1942 Camus had already expressed various political opinions relating to world events, but more importantly he had exposed his French Algerian predicament. Camus appeared torn between two countries, physically and professionally speaking. Not only had he demonstrated he was a politically conscious writer who chose to articulate his commitment to the Arab cause in Algeria, but he also promoted North African assimilation with his lecture on Mediterranean culture. Thus, by 1942 Camus had already illuminated aspects of his French Algerian conflict that would continue to unfold for decades to come.

## **2.2. Qu'est-ce qu'un *pied-noir*?**

Amy Hubbell, author of *Remembering French Algeria* (2015), provides a thorough analysis on the origin and evolution of the term *pied-noir*:

The once pejorative term “Pieds-Noirs” is packed with conflicting myths of its origins... The predominantly held source of the term is that native Algerians saw the black boots of the French soldiers during the conquest in 1830 and called the colonists “Pieds-Noirs.” The second major myth is that the Pieds-Noirs stomped their grapes to make wine, leaving a black resin on their feet. (9)

According to Hubbell there is debate as to who coined the term *pied-noir*. She suggests there is evidence that Algerians used the term first but states this may be unlikely because of the “linguistic gap between colonizer and colonized in the early nineteenth century.”

(9) Evidently the term evolved throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reaching peak popularity during the Algerian War of Independence. Synonymous with *petit colon* or *petit blanc*, Camus wishes to highlight this particular aspect of *pied-noir* society by inferring the working class status of a great majority of French citizens living

in Algeria in the early 1940s. Hubbell uses explanations from Marie Cardinal in her book *Les Pieds Noirs*:

On dit que ce sont les Arabes qui nous ont appelés comme ça du temps de la Conquête, parce que les premiers colons débarquaient avec les souliers noirs... En vérité, ce sont les Français de France qui nous ont donné ce nom. (10)

She reconfirms the distinction among *pieds-noirs* by summarizing the words of historian Jean-Robert Henry, who she says believes:

the French gave this term [*pied-noir*] to the “*Français d’Algérie rapatriés*” in order to show themselves superior to those colonists who were soiled by Algeria: they were both planted in the soil and dirtied by the country. (10)

Hubbell asserts that the origin of the term *pied-noir* stems from the colonialist desire to differentiate the classes of French Algerians. It was often used by pure, rich, colonial *français de souche* to refer to the *Français d’Algérie/pieds-noirs* who were laborers or those working more menial tasks. When disenfranchised Muslim Algerians began using the term *Français d’Algérie* to advocate for their rights during the Algerian War, *pieds-noirs* were then forced to reclaim the once derogatory term. Moreover, the mass exodus of *pieds-noirs* from Algeria to France in 1962 was an important reason for them to hold on to their cultural identity, as they were exiled and forced to assimilate to life in France. Hubbell later points out, however, that, “conglomerating all the *Français d’Algérie* under the rubric of Pied-Noir erases the great variety of cultures, classes, and ethnicities” (12). Camille Brière, author of *Ceux Qu’on Appelle les Pieds-Noirs* (1984) describes the difficulties *pieds-noirs* faced integrating into French society after the war, “Après l’exode de 1962, une large fraction de l’opinion publique métropolitaine considéra les « Pieds-Noirs » comme des étrangers. On les confondit avec les musulmans Nord-Africains...” (15). For Camus there is diversity among French-Algerians. His mother and grandmother

were Spanish, while his father was French. There are those similar to Camus who exiled themselves in France before and during the Algerian War, and there are those who felt compelled to unite with their fellow French-Algerians as they moved back to metropolitan France after the war. However, there are also those *pieds-noirs* who were born at the turn of the twentieth century and whose identity was formed mostly by French-Algeria. In many ways Camus embodies all of these French-Algerians because his family was from France and Spain, and he was born in 1913, moved to France as an adult with the intention of staying there, while expressing his nostalgia for his homeland and questioning his French Algerian identity in his writing. Hubbell explains why repatriation to France was not as simple as it may seem:

The shift to France was more problematic for middle-aged “*rapatriés*” (thirty to fifty years old) who felt firmly implanted in Algeria at the time of exodus. This generation experienced World War II in Algeria and felt their histories were irrevocably interdependent, and yet they felt culturally distant from the motherland. (14)

Camus’s mother fits this definition as she remained in Algeria when it became an independent state.

I would like to elaborate on the term *pied-noir* with reference to Camus and his family because I have a specific definition of *pied-noir* in this project. Firstly, I acknowledge Hubbell’s definitions – the first is certainly the most common, but it is important also to consider the second definition, as this links directly to Camus’s familial history, which he expresses and mythologizes in his literature. At the very beginning of *Albert Camus: une vie* (1996) Camus’s biographer Olivier Todd informs us that Camus’s father was a vineyard employee, as well as a French soldier. This information is extremely important because it explains why Camus uses this specific *petit colon* version

of *pied-noir* in his mythopoetics. In his discussion of Camus's poor beginnings, cultural historian scholar Jason Strachan provides a thorough examination of *pied-noir* terminology in his article "From Poverty to Wretchedness; Albert Camus and the psychology of the *pieds-noirs*" (2013). Strachan points out that Camus's writings manifest the poverty he experienced but Strachan argues that Camus also presents the psychological forms of poverty. Strachan refers to a 1959 article by French Caribbeanist Gabriel Debien who claims the term *pauvre blanc* "evokes the idea of psychological misery and rootlessness and expresses an anemic life of low-paid, non-professional labor, conducted in close proximity to blacks" while *petit blanc* was used by blacks to refer to "those whites who have not yet made their fortune, without means, but not without ambition, distant and aloof. It designates the newly arrived, without a firm place in the colonial hierarchy" (Strachan).

While Strachan does not provide a thorough analysis of the term *pied-noir*, in terms of origins, he demonstrates how despite the spatial and racial differences the terms *pauvre blanc* and *petit colon* may still correspond to aspects of Camus's experience as a European, or French descendent growing up in a French colony in the early twentieth century. Strachan relates the term *pauvre blanc* to Camus's situation because his life was a "life spent in close proximity to non-White communities" (Strachan). However, although it seems Strachan prefers the term *petit blanc*, he overlooks the resonance of space and race in these definitions. He fails to address adequately the differences between colonialism in Algeria or other African countries, versus colonialism in the Caribbean or Indochina. Strachan also neglects the distinct features of the Wars of Independence that took place on these three continents. In fact, he never mentions that *pied-noir* may have

been a term used first by Arabs to refer to the French. Thus, it is imperative to use the term *pied-noir* when referring to Algeria, as it is specific to that region. Certainly, my definition of *pied-noir* refers to the combination of terms and definitions Strachan provides, but my definition also focuses on how it is used and mythologized by whites to distinguish themselves from other whites in Algeria. In fact Olivier Todd shows us that we can trace Camus's *pied-noir* mythology back to his father's poor origins. He recounts: "Né en 1885 à Ouled-Fayet, département d'Alger, Lucien Camus descend des premiers arrivants français. Ni colon ni propriétaire mais salarié, en France il serait contremaître." (14-15) Todd outlines clearly Camus's humble beginnings in Algeria, including his father Lucien's modest origins, before his untimely death in the Battle of the Marne, when Camus was one year old. He belongs to what we term *pied-noir* because he is of European ancestry but he was not part of the colonizing force. He was a vineyard worker who owned no property. Todd even suggests Camus's great-grandfather father lied about his origins in order to leave France:

Orphelin à un an, il fût placé dans une pension par ses frères et sœurs. Un grand-père venait du Bordelais, un bisaïeul de l'Ardèche. Les prolétaires connaissent mal leur généalogie. La famille Camus se croit d'origine alsacienne. Un pauvre exilé politique venu d'Alsace ou de Lorraine a plus de prestige qu'un miséreux de Bretagne ou du Bordelais. (16)

According to Todd, Camus's ancestors mythologized their beginnings before he began to mythologize *pieds-noirs* in his literature.<sup>2</sup> Camus enhances the mythical construction of the *pied-noir* community that see themselves as dispossessed and almost equals to Arab

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<sup>2</sup> John Foley also addresses this issue of origins in *Albert Camus; From the Absurd to the Revolt* (2008). He suggests Camus was culturally *pied-noir* on account of his Spanish and French heritage. However, he calls attention to the fact that many of the French *pieds-noirs* were refugees arriving in Algeria after the loss of Alsace and Lorraine in the disastrous Prussian War in 1871. He adds in parentheses "(it is significant that Camus believed that his French ancestors belonged to this group of refugees)." He reminds us that Camus's status as the son of a widowed illiterate mother "would have found himself at the bottom end of the economic scale." (142)

Algerians, while still possessing a small degree of power that Arabs lack. They have a unique cultural identity and memory that stems from French colonial power but centers around their work in Algeria as pioneer builders or soldiers. Essentially, Camus's *pied-noir* mythology begins with the French colonial connection but furthers the belief that these French or European ancestors heroically transformed the land we now call Algeria. Camus uses this mythology in his narrative to remind French readers of their colonial heritage and express his beliefs about the *pied-noir* community of his ancestors. Simultaneously, he wishes to contest the previous mythologies that discuss French Algeria by rewriting the myth and highlighting the marginality of the *pied-noir*. This is precisely what we see with Meursault's predicament in *L'Etranger*. Camus uses Meursault's status as an absurd hero as a disguise. His objective, however, is to highlight the struggles inherent within the *pied-noir* community and clearly differentiate them from rich elites. His narrative rewrites the myth by highlighting the differences that exist specifically between white Algerians.

In his article, Strachan also addresses the lack of insider commentary on the *pied-noir* community. Only those who did not belong to the community had discussed the *pied-noir* identity previously. For this reason Camus reclaims his heritage by counteracting the traditional French Algerian narrative. Camus's narrative *L'Etranger*, which is based on a specific mythology, is impossible without an appeal to French Algerian history and personal memory. Personal and collective history and memory facilitate Camus's myth. Camus use of other themes in his fiction, such as the absurd, also elevates the myth of *pieds-noirs* to a level where it is considered true by French readers and becomes symbolic. Conor Cruise O'Brien suggests this mixture of thematic

elements contributes to the success of *L'Etranger* (27). Readers receive and reflect on the statements about mortality but this is coupled with distortion and the exotic setting, all of which are essential factors in Camus's new *pied-noir* mythology.

### **2.3. The Myth of the *pied-noir* via the Memory of "l'étranger"**

*L'Etranger*, which is set in French Algeria, is a first person narrative by the *pied-noir* protagonist named Meursault who murders an Arab on the Mediterranean beach a few days after his mother's death. The novel, which is divided into two parts - before and after the murder - offers two very different readings. Critical opinion is also divided. Many scholars, such as English Showalter, Jr. in *The Stranger; Humanity and the Absurd* (1989), Rene Girard, "Camus's Stranger Retired" (1989), Adele King *Camus's L'Etranger: Fifty Years On* (1992), and Jean-Paul Sartre "Explication de *L'Etranger*" (1947) acknowledge how the novel may be read through the philosophical lens of Absurdism or Existentialism. The theme of the absurd dominated Camus's early literature that includes the philosophical essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), published the same year as *L'Etranger* (1942), and the play *Caligula* (1944). Patrick McCarthy, author of *Camus: The Stranger*, notes how the concepts of the Absurd and Existentialism emerged in French writing in the late 1930s, associating Camus (and Sartre) to the mode of nihilism (7). In other words, these critics contemplate whether the novel exposes the protagonist's inner dilemma first and foremost. For example, Meursault is unaffected by his mother's death and refuses to conform to society's norms at her funeral (he does not cry). Frequently, these critics perceive Meursault's indifference as an example of heroic stoicism and thus central to the novel. Analyzing Meursault's detachment and refusal to behave or react a certain way through the absurd does not effectively consider the murder

on the beach. An absurd reading views the murder as a symptom of the human condition and ignores the *pie-d-noir* aspect of Meursault's characterization. Peter Schofer questions the connection between the role of the absurd in the novel in "The Rhetoric of the Text: Causality, Metaphor, and Irony."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there are critics such as Michel Grimaud who inquire whether Camus could have told the story differently. Scholars believe the novel's depiction of crime and punishment conceals or reveals Camus's political opinions related to French colonialism. For example, Giraud suggests in "Humanism and the 'White Man's Burden': Camus, Daru, Meursault and the Arabs" that Camus was unaware of the racial overtones of his novel, while Patrick McCarthy suggests the murder is "an expression of the violence that lay beneath the surface of assimilation" (10).

Contemporary critical analyses of Meursault's behavior (including his actions at his mother's funeral, his relationships with females, and his interactions with his neighbors and colleagues) produce two results. The most common interpretation is that Meursault's portrayal of Algerian reality denies the Arab community and celebrates the *pie-d-noir* community. A second reading places Camus's publication firmly within the absurd/existential mold where the individual contemplates his or her mortality. I argue that both of these interpretations are incomplete. In fact I offer a third interpretation of how and why Camus blends assimilationist and exclusionary mythologies in order to present what I consider the *pie-d-noir* myth and memory. My reading offers a modification of the former interpretation. This project focuses on how Meursault's demeanor imitates specifically that of a *pie-d-noir* citizen or settler descendent in a colonized nation, akin to Camus's personal experience. Meursault's characterization as a *pie-d-noir* is not possible without the use of myth or memory. These narrative techniques

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<sup>3</sup> For more see *Camus's L'Etranger: Fifty Years On*.

enable Camus to tap into the truth of his *pied-noir* culture and community. The novel is not so much a celebration of the *pied-noir* culture and community or an example of the absurd hero as much as it is an expression of the atypical, yet marginal position of native French Algerians of modest birth whose identity crises stem from their European roots and repressed colonialist mentalities. Camus draws attention to the value of labor within his *pied-noir* community. Meursault's preference for the periphery of society highlights *pied-noir* marginality.

Discussion on *L'Etranger* usually begins with the ominous and ambiguous title that is imperative to my argument and analysis. The Larousse Dictionary defines the noun as:

Quelqu'un qui n'appartient à la nation, où on vit, ou par rapport à laquelle on se place, qui a trait aux relations avec les autres pays; extérieur, qui n'est pas de la nature propre de quelque chose, qui n'est pas impliqué dans une action, qui est à l'écart, qui n'est pas accessible à un sentiment; insensible, qui est inconnue à quelqu'un ou peu familier

Translated into English as *The Stranger* or *The Outsider*, this definition suggests "*L'Etranger*" to whom the title refers is someone who does not belong to a particular nation. From the outset the title is applicable to both Meursault and the Arab as they are both outsiders in French-Algeria, depending on your perspective of colonialism.

In many ways it is possible to see how the above definition and plot summary present difficulties and disagreements for scholars. Further complicating a universal interpretation is the fact that certain aspects of the plot are not commensurate with Camus's earlier writings as a journalist in Algeria. Although the writings differ in genre, some *pied-noir* characters view Arabs with disdain in *l'Etranger*, whereas *Les Chroniques Algériennes* presents Arabs in a more sympathetic light, as I will discuss in

more depth in the third section of this chapter. Jan Rigaud, author of “The Depiction of Arabs in *L’Etranger*” also observes this inconsistency “when *L’Etranger*, his first published novel, appeared in 1942, Camus the novelist, had seemingly ignored the Muslim community which had previously earned the sympathy and commiseration of Camus the journalist” (185). The difficulty for most critics is that *pied-noir* Meursault murders an Arab and is then condemned to death, even though this would not have occurred at the time of writing and publication. According to Conor Cruise O’Brien Camus was well aware that a *pied-noir* in French Algeria would not be sentenced to death for killing an Arab in the late 1930s, early 1940s: “In practice, French justice in Algeria would almost certainly not have condemned a European to death for shooting an Arab who had drawn a knife on him and who had shortly before stabbed another European.” (22) This begs the question as to why Camus would deliberately misrepresent the French Algerian judicial system at this time? Camus justifies his portrayal by claiming Meursault is punished for not playing by the rules, however for Cruise O’Brien this is the beginning of Camus’s mythologizing: “But the presentation in this way of a court in Algeria trying a crime of this kind involves the novelist in the presentation of a myth: the myth of French Algeria.” (23) In the preface of an English language edition of *L’Etranger*, published in 1955, Camus wrote “the hero of the book is condemned because he doesn’t play by the game. In this sense he is a stranger to the society in which he lives; he drifts in the margin.... He refuses to lie.” Camus confirms the stranger in the title is Meursault, not the Arab. This belated attempt by Camus (thirteen years after publication) to explain his characterization of Meursault as someone who does not fight against the status quo enables Camus to avoid overt discussion of the colonial reality in Algeria at

this time, while simultaneously allowing him to write about history and the impact of social conflict on French-Algerian identity. Camus's reluctance to discuss the colonial themes directly in his novel positions him as a critical target. It seems he would rather fuse the themes of the absurd and humanism than explain the murder of the Arab. Consequently, I believe Camus's novel interweaves Absurdism and Humanism with colonial justice in an effort to distort the conflict within his *pied-noir* community in French Algeria superficially. Meursault moves from a state of self-indulgence in the first half of the novel to awareness and lucidity in the second half. He is condemned not only for his crime, but for being an outsider. Initially, Camus suppresses the racial, cultural, geographical, and religious conflict as he depicts Meursault's indifference as superseding the violent act, yet still makes him pay for the crime nonetheless. Camus's unconventional story deliberately incorporates true and false representations of French Algeria (for example his authentic treatment of Meursault's lifestyle versus his inaccurate depiction of crime and punishment) so together they may tell the complex tale of a nation that was built on truth and lies, thus creating a mythologized nation.

The novel is told through Meursault's memory. Meursault's first interaction with another character in the novel is the conversation he remembers having with the caretaker at the Marengo home where his mother was living before she passed away. This conversation stands out for Meursault, who often has difficulty remembering accurately. For example, the novel opens with "Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas." (9) Meursault's memory at the beginning is already forgetful or proves unreliable, even with regard to a specific timeframe regarding his mother's passing. Although he tries to blame this on the time it takes to deliver the telegram, the fact

remains that he does not verify the specific time of death. He even forgets his initial conversation with the caretaker: “Je l’ai interrompu « Ah! Vous n’êtes pas d’ici? » Puis je me suis souvenu qu’avant de me conduire chez le directeur, il m’avait parlé de maman.”

(15) However, this passage is important because it is the first time that Meursault distinctly remembers and recounts words that were spoken. His memory of this particular conversation is clear. It is not a vague recollection, like the episode when he first learned about his mother’s death. Camus reveals Meursault’s indifference at the death of his mother and his lack of desire to see her body through the theme of the absurd. However, I believe the premise of this particular conversation with the caretaker is to highlight the  *pied-noir*  community that existed in Algeria. It is also the community to which Camus and his family belonged. For this reason he includes specific details related to their employment and lifestyle. At the beginning of the novel Meursault explains the difficulty involved in asking for leave for his mother’s wake and funeral: “J’ai demandé deux jours de congé à mon patron...Mais il n’avait pas l’air content. Je lui ai même dit: « Ce n’est pas de ma faute. »” (9) He must answer to his boss and he needs to maintain his position so he even apologizes for requesting leave, despite the fact that he has a valid “excuse”. Meursault also includes details about his daily routine, including his friends’ and neighbors’ names (Emmanuel, Raymond) that are usually European, and the restaurant where he eats lunch “chez Céleste”. (9) Meursault’s act of remembering certainly conjures up the image of a settler community in Algiers. This is evident by Meursault’s acknowledgement of the caretaker’s attempt to bond or converse with him, as well as the informality of their dialogue, compared to that with the director: “J’ai dit au concierge, sans me retourner vers lui: « Il y a longtemps que vous êtes là? » Immédiatement, il a

répondu: « Cinq ans » – comme s’il avait attendu depuis toujours ma demande. Ensuite, il a beaucoup bavardé.” (15) Additionally, the objective of this passage is to compare life in the “colony” with life in the “motherland”. Although Meursault does not compare Algeria directly to France, he points out the difficulties inherent to his life in Algeria - such as his financial instability and thus his inability to care for his mother, his sparsely furnished apartment, his need for employment, his difficulty with transportation, the influence of the climate on Christian burial procedures. It is not explicit but we are to assume that life in France is different, and perhaps easier. Meursault achieves this by referring constantly to the unbearable heat and sunlight. The glare of the sun bothers him and the intense heat makes him sweat profusely. He is distracted by the sun at his mother’s funeral and uses it in court as his excuse for killing the Arab. He frequently contrasts the city and the countryside. He also comments on how other *piets-noirs* have difficulty dealing with their jobs and the climate, which suggests the significance of cultural difference.

When the men discuss burial procedures over a cup of coffee “Il m’avait dit qu’il fallait l’enterrer très vite, parce que dans la plaine il faisait chaud” (15-16) Camus demonstrates the varying opinions among French settlers in Algeria. For example Meursault indicates how the destitute caretaker refers to the Arab nurse, how he compares French and Algerian burial customs, and how he speaks about Arabs and old people in relation to his power over them: “J’avais déjà été frappé par la façon qu’il avait de dire : « ils », « les autres », et plus rarement « les vieux », en parlant des pensionnaires dont certains n’était pas plus âgés que lui. Mais naturellement, ce n’était pas la même chose. Lui était concierge, il avait des droits sur eux.” (16) Through

Meursault Camus presents the nostalgia some *pieds-noirs* have for France. Meursault recalls his interaction with the caretaker: “C’est alors qu’il m’avait appris qu’il avait vécu à Paris et qu’il avait du mal à l’oublier.” He also describes the need some have to compare ways of life “À Paris, on reste avec la mort trois, quatre jours quelquefois. Ici on n’a pas le temps.” (16) This is an example of how settlers perpetuate a collective myth of their homeland. Although the Parisian is the outsider here, he promotes the myth of the Other. This genre of national myth glorifies France, Europe, and their past spent there.

The brief descriptions of Meursault’s job at the factory, his interactions with his boss, his lack of personal transportation and need to take the bus, his need to borrow clothes from his coworker, and the conversation with the director and the caretaker are the first examples of *piéd-noir* culture that we see in Algeria. In fact, aside from the few lines of European indulgence by the caretaker, the only examples of culture that Camus provides his metropolitan French readers are those of Algerian culture, and specifically *piéd-noir* culture. He does not write from the perspective of the Arab or the *grand colon*, he writes from the perspective he knows well. We never hear the director’s memories or the Arab’s thoughts, only Meursault’s and occasionally his friends’ who we are to assume belong within his social class and thus *piéd-noir* community. For this reason I argue that this myth of the absurd hero, which Camus promotes, is secondary to the myth of the *piéd-noir*. Camus must first illustrate Meursault’s daily life that is epitomized by his *piéd-noir* culture in order to reject it with his estrangement. It almost seems as if Meursault’s economic and political detachment as a *piéd-noir* contributes to his irrational actions. Firstly, we must be made aware of the prohibitive nature of Meursault’s existence, which is a by-product of his culture, in order to comprehend his need to rebel and pursue

freedom and passion. As a *pied-noir* himself it is only natural that Camus explores the myth of the *pied-noir*. Camus's representation of Meursault, and the *pied-noir* community in Algeria, is a unique hybrid that categorizes *pieds-noirs* as colonized colonizers. The beginning of the novel, with particular reference to Meursault's description of his job and his conversation with the caretaker aforementioned, demonstrates how *pieds-noirs* must maintain employment to earn modest salaries, while simultaneously grappling with their position in the French and Algerian communities, trying to find where they belong among Europeans and Arabs.

It is necessary to reiterate the definition of myth that is pertinent to our argument. The Oxford Dictionary defines myth as “a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people, or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, a widely held or false belief or idea, a misrepresentation of the truth”. I refer to myth as a traditional narrative that communicates a particular ideology. In the case of Camus I believe he expresses events or dramatizes particular situations in French Algeria by either omitting or adding true or false historical details to support his ideas. His narrative portrays the myth of *pied-noir* society by creating a *pied-noir* character, but more specifically his narrative is a representation of his mythopoetics, which is the medium through which we read and interpret his mythology. Camus's poetics gives way to myth because, as religious scholar Karen Armstrong explains in *A Short History of Myth* (2005), “Mythology was...designed to help us cope with the problematic human predicament” (6). I also use Barthes's theory from *Mythologies* to argue that myth, or mythopoetics, is a special type of speech “le mythe est un système de communication, c'est un message” (193). For Barthes, myth is a way of saying something and transforming history. It

presents an ethos or ideology of the storyteller that must be believed by the audience or reader. For Barthes myth is also indiscreet. Myth does not hide or disappear; it is only altered:

la parole mythique est formée d'une matière *déjà* travaillée en vue d'une communication appropriée: c'est parce que tous les matériaux du mythe, qu'ils soient représentatifs ou graphiques, présupposent une conscience signifiante, que l'on peut raisonner sur eux indépendamment de leur matière. (195)

I will show how Camus's narrative uses and transforms preconceived ideas (myths) to speak about the *pied-noir* community through Meursault's (and other characters') words.

In *L'Étranger* Meursault represents the impoverished descendant of colonizers who, on account of their poverty, now share many more attributes with the colonized than they do with the colonizers. I believe that Meursault's lack of memory is directly related to colonialism, rather than absurdism. In *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur* Albert Memmi declares: "Le colonisé semble condamné à perdre progressivement la mémoire." (121) In fact the conversation between Meursault and the caretaker pointedly highlights the lack of rights and opportunities of a *pied-noir*, and particularly those of a recent settler who is further discriminated against on account of his blatant lack of established Algerian roots. Meursault reminds us that the director of the home has considerably more power than the caretaker. This is evident from their speech and brevity of the encounters. Meursault's encounter with the director only takes up one small paragraph of the novel:

Le directeur m'a encore parlé. Mais je ne l'écoutais presque plus. Puis il m'a dit: « Je suppose que vous voulez voir votre mère. » Je me suis levé sans rien dire et il m'a précédé vers la porte. Dans l'escalier, il m'a expliqué: « Nous l'avons transportée dans notre petite morgue. Pour ne pas impressionner les autres. Chaque fois qu'un pensionnaire meurt, les autres sont nerveux pendant deux ou trois jours. Et ça rend le service difficile. » Nous avons traversé une cour où il y avait beaucoup de vieillards, bavardant par petits groupes. Ils se taisaient quand

nous passions. Et derrière nous, les conversations reprenaient. On aurait dit un jacassement assourdi de perruches. A la porte d'un petit bâtiment, le directeur m'a quitté : « Je vous laisse, monsieur Meursault. Je suis à votre disposition dans mon bureau. En principe, l'enterrement est fixé à dix heures du matin. Nous avons pensé que vous pourriez ainsi veiller la disparue. Un dernier mot: votre mère a, paraît-il, exprimée souvent à ses compagnons le désir d'être enterrée religieusement. J'ai pris sur moi de faire le nécessaire. Mais je voulais vous en informer. » Je l'ai remercié (12-13)

This paragraph conveys the stark contrast between *pieds-noirs*. We witness Meursault's personal account of how he interacts with another French Algerian of a superior rank or class. Meursault's conversation with the director deals with the logistics of his mother's funeral. It is formal in nature and Meursault does not really speak to the director. Essentially, he is told what will happen. He is not given a choice. His role in this conversation is to listen to the directions of how things will proceed at the home. Meursault's memory of the interaction insinuates that the director commands order, while he obeys or vaguely acknowledges the proceedings. Meursault does not really communicate verbally with him. Meursault rises at his suggestion of seeing his mother's body. He does not discuss or show his true feelings to the director. The residents also appear to follow a behavior code when they fall silent as the director walks through the hallway.

Another example of the oppression within the French community in Algeria is expressed through Meursault's descriptions of his work environment. As I explained earlier, Meursault must be careful he does not take too many liberties with his job. If he does, he risks losing his employment. I wish to repeat once more a line from opening page of the novel where we learn that attending a funeral was not even an acceptable excuse: "J'ai demandé deux jours de congé à mon patron et il ne pouvait pas les refuser avec une excuse pareille. Mais il n'avait pas l'air content. Je lui ai même dit « ce n'est

pas ma faute » Il n'a pas répondu" (9). In this sentence Meursault also highlights the power dynamics between him and his French boss, whom he must obey.

When Meursault remembers his conversation with the caretaker he appears sympathetic to his situation. The caretaker feels destitute; he cannot afford to pay for his lodgings "il m'a appris qu'il était entré à l'asile comme indigent. Comme il se sentait valide, il s'était proposé pour cette place de concierge. Je lui ai fait remarquer qu'en somme il était pensionnaire. Il m'a dit que non." (16) Once again Memmi's portrait of the colonized bears resemblances to Camus's portrait of the *pied-noir* who does not possess the same rights as the *grands colons*, who typically are the bosses at the factories where the *petits colons* like Meursault work. In fact he has very little authority in French Algeria: "Le colonisé ne jouit d'aucun des attributs de la nationalité; ni de la sienne, qui est dépendante, contestée, étouffée, ni, bien entendu, de celle du colonisateur. Il ne peut guère tenir à l'une ni revendiquer l'autre." (96) Camus presents the *pied-noir* as outside the margins of both French and Arab, hence the title.

The aforementioned passage, which also discusses customs of burial, including mention of a priest, is directly associated with Catholicism, the religion of the French colonizer. More specifically, this discussion points to the *mission civilisatrice*, France's mission to civilize the Indigenous population and convert them to Western thought and Christianity, only granting equal rights to those that fully assimilated.<sup>4</sup> Camus's reluctance to broach the topic fully is evident again when he claims Meursault and his mother are not religious "Maman, sans être athée, n'avait jamais pensé de son vivant à la religion" (13). Camus avoids a strong association with religion precisely because it was

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<sup>4</sup> The "Mission Civilisatrice" can be traced back to the Middle Ages, however, it was the rationale used by France to colonize in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Algeria, Indochina and Western Africa.

one of the tenets of colonialism used as justification for colonists' actions. By rejecting religion in this way Camus insinuates that complete assimilation to "French" life is somehow impossible or unnecessary in the colony.<sup>5</sup> Living in Algeria allows *pied-noirs* to take what they want from French culture. Distance affords them the opportunity to amend their lifestyle, while climate forces them to adapt. For example we see the burial customs change because of the heat, but some religious aspects, such as the vigil, remain. In this instance Meursault epitomizes what Memmi defines as "le colonisateur qui se refuse" because he has difficulty being pigeonholed and I believe this is where he begins to immerse himself fully into myth construction. Meursault's behavior after his mother's funeral changes abruptly. At the Marengo home he was pleasant even though he did not express emotion and dozed off. When he returns to his daily routine and begins a new relationship and makes new friends, he not only embraces absurdity but also officially begins mythologizing his *pied-noir* existence. Overall, Camus demonstrates the complexity of the *pied-noir* myth through Meursault's power to possess a job and reject religion, but also his lack of power is apparent by his subordinate position at the factory.

Meursault's indifference toward religion also appears in the second half of the novel when Meursault interacts with his lawyer. His behavior implies religious assimilation within his French Algerian community differs from person to person or family to family. More significantly, all of Meursault's interactions (with the director and caretaker of the home, his boss, and his lawyer) demonstrate how religion differs with respect to class. The lawyer and magistrate, presumably *grands colons* who typically occupied these positions, do not understand Meursault's denial of Christianity. His lawyer is shocked that he does not fit the stereotype: "Je n'ai jamais vu d'âme aussi

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<sup>5</sup> I will also address Camus's opinions on religion in my analysis of *Le Premier Homme*.

endurcie que la vôtre.” (109) Moreover, Meursault’s problem is not so much that he does not care about religion, it is that he does not recognize where he belongs in a country where inhabitants practice two religions. Once again Camus positions Meursault as ambivalent and in the middle but beneath Meursault’s ambiguity is this space that prohibits unity because the myths fail to tell the story. It almost seems as if Meursault understands the fallacy of the colonial myths. Certainly he considers religion a delusion. Religion echoes Meursault’s failure to render a valid argument for the murder.

It is conceivable that in these earlier passages from the first half of the novel Camus wants to distinguish Meursault from the caretaker on account of their Algerian ancestry or time spent living in Algeria. Meursault, whose family may have lived in Algeria for several decades or multiple generations, is perhaps much more tolerant or neutral than the recent settler who has only lived there five years. Camus continues to mythologize Meursault’s lowly *pied-noir* status in the second half of the novel by calling attention to the traditional colonial myth - by pointing out that the majority of prisoners are Arab: “Le jour de mon arrestation, on m’a d’abord enfermé dans une chambre où il y avait déjà plusieurs détenus, la plupart des Arabes.” (115) Camus complicates the myth even further by stating the difficulty for Meursault is not that he killed an Arab. His problem stems from the fact that he does not react appropriately to the death of his mother. Meursault recalls: “Les instructeurs avaient appris que « j’avais fait preuve d’insensibilité » le jour de l’enterrement de maman.” (100) We reach the climax of the *pied-noir* myth in the second half of the novel. It is also here that Camus falls short of fulfilling the *pied-noir* myth or where Meursault fails to fulfill the model *pied-noir* from the French perspective.

In order to accept his fate Meursault must participate in his neighbor Raymond's schemes. He must write a letter to Raymond's mistress, give a false statement to the police and later commit a violent act so that Camus proposes a mixture of multiple mythologies to legitimize his representation of Algeria. After all it was imaginative command of cultural representations that facilitated the colonial process. Camus builds on the myths already rooted in French Algerian society to establish the myth of the  *pied-noir* because he represents his own culture and history best. Meursault, like Camus, is a victim of what historian Benjamin Stora calls a "mosaic" society/people. Writing in *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History*, Stora explains how Algeria is composed of many cultures where each group struggles to distinguish itself and thrive.

As mentioned above, in *Colonial Myths; History and Narrative*, Azzedine Haddour outlines the competing Algerian mythopoetics of *L'Algérianisme*, *L'Ecole d'Alger* and *Littérature de combat*. He begins by discussing Louis Bertrand's mythopoetics of 'Latin Algeria'. He explains how his myth was "ultimately an instrument of imperialist ideology which works to consolidate the hegemonic powers of a declining France in the late nineteenth century Europe. It conveys a colonialist ideology promoting colonial settlements." (27) Essentially, Bertrand's myth was closely associated with assimilationist laws, which expropriated the colonized. However, Haddour points out that Bertrand's myth looks back to Latin domination, but also reflects the hopes of  *pieds-noirs* "confronted with a nascent Algerian nationalism." (27) Haddour summarizes the literary schools throughout the twentieth century:

*Algérianisme* was established in 1921; this literary school appropriated Bertrand's mythopoetics as a mobilizing force of colonial ideology. The mythopoetics of *Algérianisme* replicated the impetus of the assimilationist laws which expropriated the colonized and promoted colonial settlements in Algeria. The

*Ecole d'Alger* emerged in 1935 to oppose the colonialist rhetoric of *Algérianisme*. The mythopoetics of the *Ecole d'Alger* posed 'the non-disjunction of opposites' it projected a vision of a reconciled Algeria negating the initial antagonisms between colonizer and colonized. (24)

According to Haddour and Peter Dunwoodie, author of *Writing French Algeria*, Camus was considered a writer of the *Ecole d'Alger* that promoted the idea of a Mediterranean utopia free of racism. As Haddour explains, *Littérature de combat* was a counter myth that "developed after the 1945 uprisings" when French police fired at Algerian protestors in the town of Sétif, resulting in retaliation riots and attacks being carried out on French settlers. The writers of this literary school, led by Jean Amrouche, rejected assimilation and colonialist ideologies and instead advocated for decolonization.

As indicated earlier with reference to the incomplete readings of *L'Etranger* as solely an example of the absurd or a celebration of *pied-noir* culture, I do not believe this novel exhibits the criteria necessary to apply one interpretation over another. Camus's publications do not fit neatly into one of these established categories of myth relating to French Algeria. The critical debates demonstrate the complexity of Camus's mythopoetics. According to Haddour, Louis Bertrand's myth of *L'Afrique latine* "promoted colonial settlements and aimed at substituting one type of people by another, the native Algerians by Western settlers." (25) Camus does not substitute one race or culture for another in this novel. Camus does not alter the division of race, culture, and wealth. He does not distort societal positions beyond the poor *pied-noir* perspective. Certainly, though, Camus creates distance between the French and Algerian characters, and problematizes the *pied-noir*/Arab relationship. First of all there is a physical distance between the characters. For example Meursault describes the situation at the beach: "J'étais assez loin de lui, à une dizaine de mètres. Je devinais son regard par instants,

entre ses paupières mi-closes...L'Arabe n'a pas bougé. Malgré tout, il était encore assez loin." (93-94) Camus uses this physical distance to highlight the lack of understanding between the two cultures, as they are unable to bridge the gap. They can neither move towards one another physically nor metaphorically. Colonial power dynamics prevent characters from interacting effectively. This is also apparent when Meursault sets the scene on the day of the murder "Ils nous regardaient en silence, mais à leur manière, ni plus ni moins que si nous étions des pierres ou des arbres morts" (79). This description is highly problematic but it reinforces the awareness *pieds-noirs* have of the Other. Camus's delayed decision to explain how Meursault was the outsider does not lessen the impact of the violent murder for readers today. Meursault's description foretells the ominous situation to come when he inflicts the most violence. *Pieds-noirs* commit more violence in *L'Etranger* than Arabs and in the novel *pieds-noirs* commit violence uniquely against Arabs.

Meursault's friendship with his neighbor Raymond is also central to the plot development. Raymond Sintès, Meursault's *pied-noir* neighbor, is a shopkeeper, known in the neighborhood as a man that lives off women: "Dans le quartier on dit qu'il vit des femmes. Quand on lui demande son métier, pourtant, il est « magasinier ». En général, il n'est guère aimé." (47) Meursault explains that his relationship with Raymond developed through brief conversations in which he would listen to Raymond, because he has no reason not to do so: "il me parle souvent et quelquefois il passe un moment chez moi parce que je l'écoute. Je trouve ce qu'il dit est intéressant. D'ailleurs, je n'ai aucune raison de ne pas lui parler." (47) Raymond's violence towards his mistress, and the subsequent retaliation by her brother, initiates Raymond and Meursault's first

conversation. Meursault presents himself as a naive friend who soon becomes a crucial ally for Raymond, writing a letter on his behalf. Meursault's (and Marie's) inability to speak out against the episode of domestic violence, or his failure to disagree with Raymond at any time during their conversation, highlights the power and significance of this *pied-noir* bond. Drinking wine and eating boudin together, Meursault and Raymond discuss Raymond's attack on his girlfriend: "Il l'avait battue jusqu'au sang. Auparavant, il ne la battait pas. « Je la tapais, mais tendrement pour ainsi dire. Elle criait un peu. »" (51-52) This relationship and initial encounter are notable because they proceed Meursault's violent act. The fact is that the violence always originated with a *pied-noir*. It is important to add that Raymond uses Meursault to give a false police statement and he gives Meursault his gun at the beach, further enabling him to commit the violent act, contributing to his downfall.

Even though Camus chooses to deprive Arabs of a voice or a name, he is also reluctant to present Meursault as a hero. I agree with Edward Said's statement in *Culture and Imperialism* that it is important to remember Camus's colonial ties. He concludes that literature set in a colony, written by an author somewhat representative of the colonizing force must be read as such because "it is a much graver mistake to read them stripped of their affiliations with the facts of power which informed and enabled them" (161). For this reason I believe it is essential to identify Camus's *pied-noir* myth as a hybrid myth that has a double function of both exposing and suppressing aspects of colonialism. Incorporating citizens born in Europe and Algeria, Camus's mythopoetics adopts, as Said notes, aspects of the colonist doctrine, but refuses to insinuate racial prejudice or motive. Undoubtedly Camus's status as *pied-noir* prevents him from

providing another outlook but he deliberately sets out to portray Algeria as a land that impedes a sound existence. It is not possible to live a happy and stable life. Algeria is imperfect. Camus's Algerian reality is complex because Arabs and *pieds-noirs* are deprived of their identity. Any other representation of Algeria or Algerians would equally misrepresent Camus's version of Algeria, as well as the truth.

This novel is not an example of autofiction (although Camus employs this technique in his posthumous publication *Le Premier Homme*, which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter). Although autobiography and fiction are both constructs, the genre of autofiction combines two contradictory notions by fusing reality (fact) and fiction. Typically authors write in the first person. They may even use their first name. Or, they may choose a character to recount aspects of their lives. Serge Doubrovsky first used the term in 1977 when referring to his novel *Fils*. The genre has become popular within contemporary French literature. It is also a technique used among Anglophone Postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, and V.S. Naipaul. The reality is that Camus uses many autobiographical elements in this novel to create the myth of the *pied-noir*. English Showalter Jr addresses this in *The Stranger: Humanity and the Absurd*, (1988):

Camus modeled Meursault on himself in certain respects [...] Like Meursault, Camus had worked as a clerk in a shipping office. Meursault had never known his father, nor had Camus [...] The silence that Meursault ascribes to his mother recalls Camus's description of his own mother, who was nearly deaf. Moreover, her family's names, Cardona and Sintes, have been retained [...] Camus used material he had seen and known firsthand to give an air of authenticity to *The Stranger*." (2-3)

While it is true that all novelists combine fictive events with real ones, Camus's use of autobiography in *L'Etranger* is distinct because he romanticizes his Algerian homeland

through descriptions of the landscape and simultaneously presents many indictments of society with his depictions of mixed race/class relations. For example, in the first half of the novel Meursault enjoys one of several trips to the beach with his girlfriend Marie, “Le soleil de quatre heures n’était pas trop chaud, mais l’eau était tiède, avec des petits vagues longues et paresseuses.” (57-58) He presents this excursion as pleasant and relaxing. In the second half, however, Camus presents Meursault as an outsider, disillusioned by his criminal act and unsure if he should shake his lawyer’s hand “En sortant, j’allais même lui tendre la main, mais je me suis souvenu que j’avais tué un homme” (100). In the second part of the novel when Meursault refuses to lie, Camus once again alludes to the myth of the *pied-noir* by expressing the complexity of *pied-noir* life. In his refusal to answer the questions posed by the police or lawyers Meursault avoids acknowledging how he truly feels living alongside another race and culture. As I have already established - the murder of the Arab is Camus’s way of dealing with the guilt of his community. Meursault did not instigate the murder, but he carried it out based on the word of his fellow *pied-noir*. Therefore, he is equally to blame. Camus believes Meursault must suffer the consequences of his actions, but as he builds excitement for a French Algerian way of life and subsequently destroys them through his descriptions of climate and land, he reinforces the futile nature of this space. Meursault sets the scene before he kills the Arab:

C’était le même éclatement rouge. Sur le sable, la mer haletait de toute la respiration rapide et étouffée de ses petites vagues. Je marchais lentement vers les rochers et je sentais mon front se gonfler sous le soleil. Toute cette chaleur s’appuyait sur moi et s’opposait à mon avance. Et chaque fois que je sentais son grand souffle chaud sur mon visage, je serrais les dents, je fermais les poings dans les poches de mon pantalon, je me tendais tout entier pour triompher du soleil et de cette ivresse opaque qu’il me déversait. A chaque épée de lumière jaillie du

sable, d'un coquillage blanchi ou d'un débris de verre, mes mâchoires se crispaient. J'ai marché longtemps. (92)

He describes the natural forces as hostile. The sun, sea, and sand are his adversaries. He seems to blame his surroundings, suggesting they push him to his breaking point. Camus demonstrates how nature has significant power over mankind.

The “authenticity” to which Showalter refers is essential because it is what drives the plot and it is precisely how Camus contributes to myth making and thus begins to develop his mythopoetics. Without Camus’s authentic memories and the evolution of Algerian myth, Meursault’s story cannot exist. In *Literature and Development in North Africa: The Modernizing Mission* (2008) Perri Giannucci also emphasizes Camus’s *pied-noir* predicament in his reading of *L’Etranger*. We both interpret the novel in terms of postcolonial estrangement as opposed to “existential alienation” and agree that Camus’s later novels address this issue even more directly (6). Giannucci underscores how the novel deals with land displacement, violence and murder as hallmarks of *pied-noir* society, however, I believe he overlooks how Camus uses mythology and personal memory or experience to challenge and legitimize this narrative, ultimately betraying his cultural group by exposing the truths.

In 2013 Kamel Daoud published a novel that retells Camus’s *L’Etranger* from the Arab Algerian perspective. *Meursault, Contre-Enquête* begins where *L’Etranger* ends. It is a counter-investigation of the murder on the beach. We learn about Moussa, the Arab that Meursault killed on the beach, through the memories of his brother Haroun. Seventy years after the death of his brother, Haroun provides commentary on the continued failures in Algeria that have spanned from colonialism to the current postcolonial society. Rejecting Camus’s absurd account of Moussa’s death, Haroun needs to give his brother a

name and identity. Through another appeal to memory and a presentation of Arab Algerian myth, the novel reveals how Algerians are still obsessed with origins. In an effort to settle the score Haroun kills a Frenchman but his objective is to show how absurd Algeria has become. He too believes the land Camus envisioned through Meursault in *L'Etranger* and the land his fellow Algerian citizens idealize does not exist. Initially Daoud insinuates the structure and style of *L'Etranger* dazzles to the point that we forget the premise of the novel “Le premier savait raconter, au point qu’il a réussi à faire oublier son crime” (11). His critique of Camus soon becomes more pointed when he claims Camus does not belong in Algeria because he is a *pied-noir*,

Je me dis qu’il devait en avoir marre de tourner en rond dans un pays qui ne voulait de lui ni mort ni vivant. Le meurtre qu’il a commis semble celui d’un amant déçu par une terre qu’il ne peut posséder. Comme il a dû souffrir, le pauvre! Etre l’enfant d’un lieu qui ne vous a pas donné naissance (13).

Camus, and Meursault, may have been born in Algeria but they do not share the same claim to the land as Moussa. Citing his reasons for Meursault’s story and violent act he says “Dès que sa mère est morte, cet homme, le meurtrier n’a plus de pays et tombe dans l’oisiveté et l’absurde” (14). Daoud was given the prestigious Prix Goncourt, but his novel also motivated a *fatwa* issued by an Algerian imam named Abdelfatah Hamadache, leader of the Salafist group Islamic Awakening Front. Homage to Camus or rebuke, Daoud reminds us that Meursault and Haroun must understand their own identity and unravel the myths of their cultures before they can understand the Other.

It is the presentation of Algerian duality as legitimate and illegitimate that distinguishes Camus, Fanon and Djébar as French Algerian writers. They are all insiders and outsiders to Algeria as they write about how their years spent there, as well as their exile, informed their Algerian identity. Meursault must go through a process of

acknowledging and rejecting his *pied-noir* privilege that comes from his settler, colonial ancestors. Indeed, this dichotomy underscores Camus's ambivalence and ambiguity, which will reappear in his later writings. In each chapter Camus highlights the differences between the Algerian classes and races, for they dominate every aspect of life. Meursault dates Marie Cardona whose name indicates her *pied-noir* heritage since her surname Cardona is a city in the Catalonia region of Spain. This is the same for Emmanuel and Céleste, two characters with whom Meursault interacts. Meursault feels it is necessary to point out that the nurse at the home is Moorish and his neighbor Raymond dates a Moor. In fact these colonized women are victimized in more ways than one as they suffer from disease and domestic violence. Meursault's initial observation of the nurse is stereotypical: "Près de la bière, il y avait une infirmière arabe en sarrau blanc, un foulard de couleur vive sur la tête." (14) The caretaker feels it is important to point out her physical impairment: "C'est un chancre qu'elle a" (14). Unable to comprehend the infirmity of the nurse Meursault turns around to look at her "Comme je ne comprenais pas, j'ai regardé l'infirmière et j'ai vu qu'elle portait sous les yeux un bandeau qui faisait tour de la tête. A la hauteur du nez, le bandeau était plat. On ne voyait que la blancheur du bandeau dans son visage." (14-15) We do not know why she covers her face but the bandage draws attention to her and what it may conceal. Her face is partially hidden to conceal evidence of cancer or a venereal disease. Singled out in the narration by her scarf, her bandage, and her voice. Although she is not exactly alienated from society, her presence provides a necessary contrast with *pied-noir* characters. The Algerian nurse, whose job is to heal people, cannot heal herself. She has physical limitations and must wear a white bandage on her face. Raymond's girlfriend suffers physically too, in the

form of beatings. Meursault recalls his conversation with Raymond, when he learns of how he treated his mistress and wanted to punish her: “Il l’avait battue jusqu’au sang.”

(51) All of the authority figures in the novel are white and of European origin – the priest, the caretaker, the director of the home, the policemen, and the lawyer. Arabs are always presented as outcasts, flawed characters who are partially excluded because they do not belong in the space. They are denied an equal existence, but Arab women suffer more than Arab men. In discussing both *L’Etranger* and *La Peste* Said also reflects on the structure of civil society in Algeria,

The structure of civil society so vividly presented – the municipality, the legal apparatus, hospitals, restaurants, clubs, entertainments, schools – is French....In thus confirming and consolidating French priority, Camus neither disputes nor dissents from the campaign for sovereignty waged against Algerian Muslims for over a hundred years. (181)

In *Culture and Imperialism* Said critiques Camus’s work as “affiliated historically both with the French colonial venture itself (since he assumes it to be immutable) and with outright opposition to Algerian independence.” (175) Through demonstrating how Camus’s novels detail distinctly the French imperial conquest, Said urges us to not overlook the effects of colonial power on Camus’s thematic choices.

It is important then to remember that this is Camus’s first major literary publication, which was set in Algeria and published in France while Algeria was still considered an integral part of France, *l’Algérie Française*. As we have observed, Meursault’s selective memory and consideration of history are based on Camus’s *pied-noir* background as the offspring of low-paid, European descendants who also made sacrifices for the war. Not completely devoid of colonial bias, nor overly sympathetic to the indigenous population, it is clear that Camus wanted to offer an alternative reaction to

the colonial situation and injustices. In doing so he fails to fulfill any singular myth model. I disagree with Conor Cruise O'Brien's critique of Camus in *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* when he describes him as a *pied-noir* "consciously frozen in historical immobility and incapable of directly confronting the problem of the European-Arab relation which continued to work in his subconscious and surfaced in his fiction as an admission of historical guilt." (25) However, I acknowledge that Camus's mythopoetics is affected by colonialism, which contributed to his oppressed identities and the belief that a French Algerian homeland was impossible. It was necessary for Camus to put his community on display and exploit specifically the memory of *le petit/pauvre blanc* because this further demonstrates Camus's working class roots. Camus proves that the innocent victim does not exist, nor does this French Algerian nation where two communities can live side by side. He explores the political and cultural context of the era and illustrates the racism and truth of the colonial relationship between the colonizers and colonized in the form of the *pieds-noirs* and the Arabs. A metaphor for Camus's *pied-noir* mythopoetics comes from Meursault's lawyer when he says with reference to the image of the trial is "Tout est vrai et rien n'est vrai!" (141). There are many misunderstandings surrounding Camus, his origins, and colonialism in Algeria. For this reason Camus demonstrates the persistence of identity conflict within the *pied-noir* community as they try to separate themselves from metropolitan or *grands colons* and native Algerians. Camus must play up *pied-noir* victimization, yet display nostalgia for colonial heritage. He rejects certain myths and embraces others, thus perpetuating a plurality, or hybrid status.

### 3. *L'Exil et le Royaume*

#### 3.1. Historical Background

*L'Exil et le Royaume* is a collection of six short stories published by Albert Camus in March 1957, seven months before he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. In his famous acceptance speech, which he dedicated to his former teacher, Louis Germain, Camus addressed the Algerian situation in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech by discussing the role of the writer and the importance of truth. He communicating his belief that the writer has a social duty he said he felt writers are committed to bear witness to history. At a press conference following the award ceremony an Algerian journalist questioned Camus on the Algerian Revolution that was taking place at that time. Camus's response was famously misreported as "I believe in justice but I will defend my mother before justice", which was then misunderstood as Camus's support for French Algeria. According to Neil Foxlee in *Albert Camus's "The New Mediterranean Culture": A Text and Its Contexts* (2010) Camus said, "At this moment bombs are being thrown into the trams of Algiers. My mother may then find herself in one of those trams. If this is justice then I choose my mother." (250) *L'Exil et le Royaume* follows the publication of *La Chute* in 1956, a philosophical novel originally intended for the short story collection. This collection was Camus's last official literary publication before his death in 1960.

I include this publication in my project because three of the six short stories, namely "La Femme Adultère", "Les Muets" and "L'Hôte", are set in Algeria. Written at the beginning of the armed struggle, the stories were published three years into the Algerian War, a controversial moment for both Camus and Algeria. The timing of this publication contributed to the fact that critics inadequately addressed the colonial themes

Camus presents, however, these stories are pertinent to my project because they demonstrate the moral dilemmas the characters face in this colonial situation. As Christine Margerisson states in “Sous le regard des hommes: “La Femme Adultère”” this collection is the first time that Camus confronts colonialism directly. Consequently, these stories are vital to our understanding of Camus’s mythopoetics. Despite the decade and a half in between, these stories begin where *L’Etranger* ends, with respect to Camus’s Algerian mythopoetics. I will demonstrate that these later Camus publications reflect his personal and professional ambivalence even more as they echo his public silence, which lead to his condemnation of violence on both sides, resulting in his eventual opposition for independence. I argue that this collection presents the evolution of the *pied-noir* myth Camus first presented in *L’Etranger* fifteen years earlier. As the title of the collection suggests, Camus’s dilemma surrounding his Algerian identity still exists. He must then exploit his insider and outsider French Algerian status, because it is this duality that allows Camus to mythologize the now dystopic Algerian spaces. Ultimately, this section will show that Camus legitimizes *pieds-noirs* through his presentation of *pied-noir* poverty, self-exile, or solitude.

### **3.2. “La Femme Adultère”**

The protagonist of “La Femme Adultère” is a woman named Janine, who is married to Marcel, a merchant. Urban dwellers, we meet them as they travel south together on business. Leaving the luxuries of city life behind, we witness their first encounter with the harsh Algerian countryside. The story is told in the third person, but Janine’s point of view remains the focus of the story. The adultery in the title is symbolic. It refers to Janine’s spiritual self-awareness that arrives at the end of the story, but more

specifically it refers to her true desires that are never realized, remaining fantasies throughout the story. Although Janine eventually accomplishes her desire for freedom when she temporarily escapes from her hotel room in the middle of the night, she still remains incapable of voicing her true opinions. I argue that Janine's metaphorical "adultery" arises from her unfortunate position in French Algerian society. Janine's adultery symbolizes her *pied-noir* displacement, but Camus uses Janine to represent the trapped existence of the *pied-noir*, which in this scenario is epitomized by the French-Algerian women. Thus, this story is important because Camus alludes to colonialism, and underlines the differences of gender, commenting on the roles attributed to men and women in a patriarchal society.

On the surface the couple and the story seem insignificant; Janine and Marcel are ordinary people. When we take a closer look, however, it is apparent that Camus uses realism and the banality of their existence to tell a much more somber tale. The binaries that exist in this story are binaries that *pieds-noirs* and Arabs both experience – freedom versus imprisonment, acceptance versus choice, silence versus communication, and knowledge versus impotence. By concentrating specifically on the life experiences of a female French-Algerian protagonist Camus is able to circumvent the traditional myth of the *pied-noir/petit bourgeois* male, which is represented more subtly by her husband Marcel, the salesman. At first glance the protagonists in this story differ significantly from those we observe in *L'Étranger*. Not only does the story focus on a female character, but through his presentation of Marcel and his occupation as a traveling salesman Camus demonstrates how the financial standing of *pieds-noirs* has become more precarious during the war. Their journey together throughout the harsh Algerian

landscape highlights their modest lifestyle, but also shows how they are isolated from others who share their social and cultural status. The sentiments they express during their travels indicate that they are isolated from their community and even from each other.

Janine and Marcel's marriage difficulties echo the Algerian situation at the time of writing. Janine is trapped in her marriage, as *pieds-noirs* are trapped in Algeria. Janine represents the *pied-noir* specifically because she does not earn her own living. She simply follows her husband. Similar to the relationship between *grands* and *pauvres/petits colons* Janine and Marcel's relationship is based on need. She married Marcel not because she loved him but because he loved her and needed her, "Elle suivait Marcel, voilà tout, contente de sentir que quelqu'un avait besoin d'elle" (30). Like the impoverished *pied-noir*, Janine does not control her own finances. Surrounded by expectations and obligations, Janine lives in relative silence. She is incapable of speaking her mind, "Elle parlait, mais sa bouche n'émettait aucun son" (29). She does not dare argue with her husband, or speak to the others with whom she shares a common space. She is completely alone. Camus capitalizes on Janine's lack of affinity with both her husband and the Arabs at the beginning of *L'Exil et le Royaume* to establish the condition of the *pied-noir* that will reappear throughout the collection.

Camus's decision to use a female protagonist may initially garner more sympathy from the reader. Forced to choose between lying or telling the truth, Janine remains silent and Meursault tells the truth. It is possible to view these differences as an evolution in Camus's Algerian mythopoeics, because Meursault is honest and Janine has reached the point where she cannot be fully honest. Her situation is so difficult that she has become mute. She is physically isolated from other Algerian women. It is conceivable also to

interpret Meursault and Janine's positions as similar or unchanged because they both exhibit qualities of the absurd hero as they represent disillusioned and isolated protagonists. However, despite moving from the estranged male to the estranged female and the 1940s to the 1950s, Camus's protagonists still face the similar issues relating to French colonialism. By using a female protagonist to represent the *pied-noir* community Camus has the ability to underscore other aspects of *pied-noir* life and culture that was not possible with Meursault.

In addressing Camus's presentation of Janine within the context of colonialism and gender, Christine Margerisson claims critics must address Camus's unusual choice of protagonist, especially considering how colonial spaces are entirely masculine.

Margerisson points out that this novel is nothing like Djébar's presentation of women during the colonial period (in *L'Amour et La Fantasia*). She clarifies Camus's depiction of Janine in this short story: "Janine, cette « femme adultère », se retrouve dans un espace social exclusivement masculin où les femmes algériennes sont totalement absentes. De plus, elle est présentée non comme femme, mais comme femme-type que, non seulement, on rencontre à la périphérie du mythe colonial, mais qui a une place précaire dans la hiérarchie sociale; la femme bourgeoise qui se tient hors de la sphère politico-coloniale." (88-89)

Margerisson then introduces the stereotype that women may be more racist than men in the colonial context: "La femme est associée avec un stéréotype plus étendu qui combine le racisme et le parasitisme". (95) However, she proposes Camus's presentation of Janine, as a woman, is insufficient because she is not the traditional *femme fatale*.

Margerisson criticizes Camus's overall treatment of Janine as a woman, especially because she is portrayed as older, heavier, unattractive, and unnecessary. Certainly

Margeris's overall interpretation of Camus's Algeria seems just as limiting and pathetic as his female protagonist. Her use of stereotypes is reductive. For example, she compares thematic elements in the story to widely held beliefs about female body image and age: "Ces éléments thématiques dans le texte qui remettent en question l'appropriation de la région par le corps et le regard se rapportent au fait qu'il s'agit là d'un corps "menopausé" aux chevilles enflées – un corps de *femme* trop gros et trop vieux." (103) She bases aspects of her analysis on presuppositions directly derived from certain expectations about women's physical attributes.

Camus's descriptions of Algerian land, the kingdom inferred in the short story collection title, do not present Algeria as the Mediterranean utopia he discussed in speeches or presented in publications in previous decades such as *L'Envers et L'endroit* (1937) a collection of semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional, philosophical essays and *Noces* (1938), a collection of four narratives that supplement Camus's philosophy presented in *L'Envers et L'endroit*. In fact, Camus has adjusted his stance. Shifting entirely from the mythology associated with *l'Ecole d'Alger*, he describes the land as a dystopia. Relaxing beach scenes filled with descriptions of heat and sunshine, as seen in *L'Etranger*, are nonexistent in "La Femme Adultère". Janine and her husband Marcel share a bus ride in the Sahara desert with Arabs: "L'autocar était plein d'arabes qui faisait mine de dormir, enfouis dans leurs burnous" (12). This 1957s Algeria is the direct antithesis of Camus's 1940s Algeria. Taking place during a sand storm, the setting is cold and harsh in terms of climate, but also in terms of life:

il lui semblait qu'elle voyageait depuis des jours avec cette escorte muette. Pourtant, le car était parti à l'aube, du terminus de la voie ferrée, et, depuis deux heures, dans le matin froid, il progressait sur un plateau pierreux, désolé... Mais le vent s'était levée et, peu à peu, avait avalé l'immense étendue. A partir de ce

moment, les passagers n'avaient plus rien vu; l'un après l'autre, ils étaient tus et ils avaient navigué en silence dans une sorte de nuit blanche, essuyant parfois leurs lèvres et leurs yeux irrités par le sable qui s'infiltrait dans la voiture. (12)

This difficult environment seems arduous for those *pieds-noirs* who work in business, especially for women like Janine who accompany their husbands on a trip. Camus's use of climatic contrast helps reinforce how aspects of Meursault's advantageous French Algerian status are unimaginable in this environment. Told through an omniscient narrator, we see Janine and Marcel sitting beside each other on the bus but we read Marcel's physical description first:

Janine regarda son mari... Marcel avait l'air d'une faune boudeur. A chaque défoncement de la chaussée, elle le sentait sursauter contre elle. Puis il laissait retomber son torse pesant sur ses jambes écartées, le regard fixe, inerte de nouveau, et absent. (11)

Not only does Camus compare Marcel to a mythological creature (a faun), he presents him as a sullen one who is oblivious of the cramped conditions of the bus in which they are making their journey. He does not realize that his heavy weight is pushing against his wife. This representation of Marcel, as the white colonizer, is not positive. Marcel's statement "Quel pays!" (12) may be read as a curse on Algeria. These first two words of direct speech in the story confirm Marcel's place in this society as someone who does not belong and someone who is not pleased with his surroundings. His blatant dislike for Algeria and Arabs, along with his snobbery and his occupation, makes him comparable to Raymond in *L'Etranger*. Marcel's remarks and sighs such as "des bergers" and his lack of tolerance for another religious group as evidenced by his critique of the Koran also seem more characteristic of Raymond who physically assaults his Arab girlfriend in *L'Etranger*. Marcel is controlling and critical. He does not feel out of place:

Il empêcha sa femme de boire de l'eau. « Elle n'est pas bouillie. Prends du vin. » Elle n'aimait pas cela, le vin l'alourdissait. Et puis, il y avait du porc au menu. « Le Coran l'interdit. Mais le Coran ne savait pas que le porc bien cuit ne donne pas de maladies. Nous autres, nous savons faire la cuisine. ». (20)

Camus uses Janine and Marcel's thoughts and interactions to identify colonial myths. For example, their aforementioned conversation, which is dominated mostly by Marcel's point of view, conveys a European stereotype of Arabs and their religion. In stark contrast to this representation of *pieds-noirs*, Camus also uses Janine independently to defy the traditional colonial myth and demonstrate once again the complexity of *pieds-noirs*. Janine is not a tourist in Algeria; she is a resident there, yet she is uncomfortable and feels out of place adhering to the traditional European, or *pied-noir*, lifestyle and diet: "Le porc, quoique bien cuit, et le peu de vin qu'elle avait bu, lui donnaient aussi de l'embarras." (21)

When Camus describes the Marcel and Janine's marriage and the bus journey between the French-Algerian couple and the Arabs we conceive these situations as inevitable occurrences that eventually lead to acceptance, or some sort of understanding. In addition to the uncomfortable bus journey, Janine and Marcel's marriage is also an allegory for the colonial relationship: "Vingt cinq ans n'étaient rien puisqu'il lui semblait que c'était hier qu'elle hésitait entre la vie libre et le mariage, hier encore qu'elle pensait avec angoisse à ce jour où, peut-être elle vivait seule" (13). Camus further complicates these intracolonial (within French-Algerians) and intercolonial (between French-Algerians and Arabs) relationships by the fact that Janine and Marcel do not reproduce. The fact that Marcel and Janine do not procreate forces Janine to question her past and her future: "Qu'aurait-elle fait d'ailleurs, seule à la maison? Pas d'enfant! N'était-ce pas cela qui lui manquait? Elle ne savait pas." (30) Undeniably, this episode shows the

inadequate future that lies ahead for Algerian citizens, specifically French Algerians. Without children there is no continuity, no permanent attachment to place. It also symbolizes the lack of harmony among the people of this nation, even those on the same side. It portrays Algeria as a barren land, inhospitable to new life, or certainly a place where life is temporarily suspended – at least on the outside: “En tous lieux, désormais, la vie était suspendue, sauf dans son cœur où, au même moment, quelqu’un pleurait de peine et d’émerveillement.” (28) Since Janine represents the *pied-noir* community and would have to birth the children, she is presented as more vulnerable and more at risk in the colonial situation:

Elle marchait sans voir personne, courbée sous une immense et brusque fatigue, trainant son corps dont le poids lui paraissait maintenant insupportable. Son exaltation l’avait quittée. A présent, elle se sentait trop grande, trop épaisse, trop blanche aussi pour ce monde où elle venait d’entrer. (28)

Camus specifically compares Janine and Marcel’s discontentment in the desert with Meursault’s indifference and violence to show how much more troubling Algeria has become in terms of *pied-noir* identity. Unlike the racist discourse in *L’Etranger*, Marcel’s racial epithets are much more direct in “La Femme Adultère”. He assigns stereotypical colonialist judgements to Algerians. For example when the bus breaks down Marcel suggests the bus driver is incapable of fixing it. He says to Janine: “Tu peux être sûr qu’il n’a jamais vu un moteur de sa vie.” (17) He insults them by calling them “bergers.” In the end, though, the driver manages to fix the bus. The next day, when they have arrived at their destination, Marcel critiques Arabs sense of time compared to that of Europeans. He urges the Arab to drink his coffee faster: “Marcel pressa le vieil Arabe d’apporter le café. Celui-ci approuva de la tête, sans sourire, et sortit à petits pas. Doucement le matin, pas trop vite le soir. (20)

Indeed, as we have established earlier, many *pieds-noirs* were leaving Algeria at this time, opting for exile in France during the war. Janine barely exists within the French community. While she has less value than Marcel because she does not work or earn a living, we are to assume that as a white woman she has more value, or power, than the Arabs. As a woman, and particularly as a childless woman, Janine lies on the fringe of colonial society and Arab society. In some respects she is an intermediary and Camus places her between the Arabs and Frenchmen on the bus. Colonialism reduces or erases some of Janine's power because of her femininity. She was duped by the false promise colonialism presented: "Elle savait seulement que ce royaume, de tout temps, lui avait été promis et que jamais, pourtant, il ne serait le sien, plus jamais..." (27).

Described as "grande et forte" Janine differs significantly from Marie in *L'Etranger* (13). It is clear that her function as a woman in the story differs significantly from that of Marie who is a secondary character. She is tall and strong as opposed to feminine and sexy. We can see the evolution of Camus's Algeria through the descriptions of women, including their demeanor and their physical attributes, as well as their relationships with men. It is inaccurate to say that women have become more important, because still they do not possess equal power, but it is remarkably different. For instance, Marie needs Meursault in *L'Etranger*, but here Marcel needs Janine. The role of Camus's female protagonists then is to highlight the truth about *piéd-noir* society. Janine represents the seriousness of the *piéd-noir* predicament at this time in a way that it is not possible with a character that shares similarities with Meursault. Although Janine has imposed self-exile through her marriage to Marcel, her physique is an example of the evolutionary exile that she must endure. Camus wants us to compare Janine to Meursault

as they are both strangers in this land, uncomfortable and displaced by their personal desires. Camus presents Janine's yearning for the past through her recollection of youth. As she remembers her body and her early, happier days of marriage, Camus mythologizes Algeria's colonial past as positive. The present tells a much more sober tale of Algeria. Myth collides with Janine's memories in the present day to form what is known as "*nostalgérie*", a term that was invented by a French Algerian poet named Marcello Fabri in 1938. Fabri's poem *Nostalgérie*, which describes the physical longing for Algeria by someone who now lives in France, may explain Camus's experience at his time of writing. It expresses a longing for the past, an Algeria that no longer exists.

While Janine does not expressly yearn for Europe, she simultaneously and contradictorily longs for another Algeria and tries to affirm her status within the *pied-noir* community. In general, Janine wishes to gather her sense of belonging in Algeria and she achieves this by evoking the concept of *nostalgérie* through her sightings or her imagination. These imaginings typically involve descriptions of people or illustrations of the landscape. One such example is when Janine notices another European on the bus:

Janine sentit soudain qu'on la regardait et se tourna vers la banquette qui prolongeait la sienne, de l'autre côté du passage. Celui-là n'était pas un Arabe et elle s'étonna de ne pas l'avoir remarqué au départ. Il portait l'uniforme des unités françaises du Sahara et un képi de toile bise sur sa face tannée de chacal, longue et pointue. Il s'examinait de ses yeux clairs, avec une sorte de maussaderie, fixement. Elle rougit tout un coup... (13-14)

While Janine seems disappointed that she does not recognize his ethnicity immediately, she is glad to be recognized and receive attention from this other *pied-noir* man, who happens to be a soldier. She is happy at this moment to see another European, among a bus full of Arabs. We then observe another example of Janine's *nostalgérie* when she imagines herself as a vivacious young girl amid a thriving environment:

Elle imaginait, derrière les murs, une mer de palmiers droits et flexibles, moutonnant dans la tempête. Rien ne ressemblait à ce qu'elle avait attendu, mais ces vagues invisibles rafraichissaient ses yeux fatigués. Elle se tenait debout, pesante, les bras pendants, un peu voûtée, le froid montait le long de ses jambes lourdes. Elle rêvait aux palmiers droits et flexibles, et à la jeune fille qu'elle avait été. (19-20)

Camus's use of repetition here strengthens Janine's appreciation for Algeria and the nature it has to offer. It also convinces us of her unhappy, lifeless marriage and the dire state of affairs in Algeria.

It is important not to define this story, or this collection, in relation to Camus's other publications. However, as aforementioned there are both similarities and differences between *L'Etranger* and "La Femme Adultère" that demonstrate Camus's use of myth. The stories relate to one another in that the protagonists in both find themselves estranged in French Algeria. Meursault's situation is unexplainable, but the difference in "La Femme Adultère" is that Janine finds herself here for Marcel, and also "par hasard" at the same time. In other words Janine actively reflects on her situation and seeks answers for her position and her future in Algeria, which Meursault does not do in *L'Etranger*.

Camus uses colonial myths that emerge from the different French Algerian discourses of *L'Algérianisme* and *L'Ecole d'Alger* to describe the evolution of Algeria that includes the potential loss and the subsequent acceptance of exile for the *pied-noir* community. Perhaps the biggest difference between Janine and Meursault's existences lies in their sense of belonging to the Algerian nation and in their relationships with fellow French Algerian and Arabs. This is where Camus's mythopoeics changes most from his earlier publication. For example, Meursault exists alongside Arabs and the other French Algerian characters. Meursault may seem complicit as he maintains a degree of

silence by refusing to lie, but even though Arabs are always silent in *L'Etranger* they were always visible. More precisely, although Camus never presents French Algerians and the Arabs as equals, they both existed in the Algeria he depicts in *L'Etranger*. In this story, however, Janine exists only among the French men – her husband Marcel and the French soldier. The others ignore her presence. There is a heavy silence that affects everyone in the story – even among the Arabs on the bus. Silence is reflected in the masking of the Arabs and the mutedness of Marcel. With the outside forces Camus alludes to the many outside voices commenting on the political situation. He also continues to problematize the way in which *pieds-noirs* identify Arabs.

The fifteen-year gap in publication between the *L'Etranger* and “La Femme Adultère” and the use of a female protagonist enable Camus to highlight cautiously the changes that have taken place in Algeria. Camus’s physical descriptions of Algeria also reveal the transformation of his mythopoetics. Camus’s depiction of Janine as a woman is complex and contradictory because she is older and larger. Her larger stature represents her *pied-noir* community. She also personifies *pied-noir* Algeria through her attachment to Marcel and their financial attachment to France. She looks back on a time when she was young and happy in Algeria. She is old now and her health is suffering. She finds herself stuck, torn between loyalties, and she must accept her fate. Just like Algeria, Janine is no longer robust. Their power and their dreams are dwindling. Janine’s uncertain future in terms of marriage, financial stability, and freedom parallels the future of her *pied-noir* compatriots in Algeria. Janine and Marcel’s passive nature and complete lack of heroism have replaced Meursault’s strength of character in his refusal to lie. As Janine questions her role as Marcel’s wife and her presence on this trip, Camus indicates

that dreaming of the past has no use. It is too late now. The reference to Janine's adulterous moment at the fort is an example of the absurd. As she climbs to the top of the fort to enjoy the nice view of the desert, something stirs inside her. When she goes back alone the second time (the more intense, and thus adulterous episode) we become aware that her adulterous cry is one of someone who yearns for freedom. She feels a profound need to release herself from her personal confines. Her experience on top of the fort exhibits her true desires. Camus teases us with her whimsical, fantastic experience that does not lead to change. Yet, despite the choices made in the past or the choices to be made in the future, Algeria will never be the same. This story demonstrates how business, relationships, desires, and roots have all changed in recent years. As Camus unfolds the myth, the truth becomes clear. Janine and Marcel have an ill-fated marriage due to lack of intimacy and lack of children. Their relationship echoes the relationship between Algeria and France, and ultimately the failures of colonialism. Janine's attachment to Algeria is in opposition to Marcel's disdain for Algeria and Algerians. Their feelings of love or hate shall remain until there is a final divorce or separation. Just as it would take up too much energy for Janine to regain her voice in her marriage, Camus implies the same can be said for Janine's French-Algerian compatriots in their fight for their Algerian home. In the end the *pied-noir* will still refuse to discuss the truth and live in denial. The story ends with Janine's final utterance to her husband "ce n'est rien" (35).

### 3.3. "Les Muets"

In the third story of *L'Exil et le Royaume* we witness once again the theme of silence that was present in "La Femme Adultère". However, in "Les Muets", Camus presents silence as having a double function for the group of *pied-noir* wine cooperage

workers who must return to work after going on a twenty-day strike that failed to increase their salaries. Told through the third person, the narration focuses on Yvars and his particular situation at the cooperage. It also portrays aspects of Yvar's family life. Set in 1950s Algeria I argue that this story is yet another example of Camus's *pied-noir* mythopoetics. In fact this story particularly blends myth and memory as Camus returns to the Belcourt area of Algiers, where he grew up. The story is based on his uncle Etienne's similar experience at a cooperage factory. This short story helps translate to metropolitan French readers the dire economic situation facing working class *pieds-noirs* at this time and enables Camus to reply to critics who accused him of being a privileged reactionary. Biographer Todd suggests "Les Muets" was Camus's response to critics who accused him of writing from a privileged position, and not fully understanding the situation, thus idealizing the poor: "Avec « Les muets », il crie: voici les miens!" (654)

As the story opens we have an insight into the daily life of Yvars who cycles to work and is bitter about the contents of his packed lunch "Il pensait alors avec amertume au contenu de la musette. Entre les deux tranches de gros pain, au lieu de l'omelette à l'espagnole qu'il aimait, ou du bifteck frit dans l'huile, il avait seulement du fromage" (63). This opening is reminiscent once again of *L'Étranger* and "La Femme Adultère" as the protagonist embarks on a journey at the beginning of the story. As we draw comparisons with Meursault's diet and Janine's dietary constraints, the omniscient narrator indicates Yvars is more direct about his disdain for his current economic situation. He acknowledges his bitterness at not being able to enjoy the lunch he could in the past. The story overtly discusses contemporary issues facing factory workers in Algeria at this time. Camus distinguishes his Algerian mythopoetics through images of

the Mediterranean sea and swimming that serve as metaphors for escapism, anger, and failure. Just as in *L'Etranger*, Yvars associates happiness with sunshine, women, and water. “L'eau profonde et claire, le fort soleil, les filles, la vie du corps, il n'y avait d'autre bonheur dans son pays”. However, these sensations and experiences are ephemeral. These forms of escapism lack luster with time. He continues “Et ce bonheur passait avec la jeunesse” (64).

Camus mythologizes Yvars's *pied-noir* life by providing particular details of his daily routine at home and at work. He and his wife enjoy a glass of “anissette” on their terrace after work, a common aperitif of the *pied-noir* community. The luxuriousness and contentment the personal and family space provides changes when Yvars arrives at the factory. The factory space represents Algeria as there are workers that belong to every level of society. Yvars works with fellow *pieds-noirs* who have French, or Italian names such as Esposito and Marcou, but there are the bosses Monsieur Lassalle and also an Arab whose name is Saïd. Unlike the characters in *L'Etranger*, this Arab character has a name. It suggests camaraderie among the factory workers because Camus initially presents them as having the same status. However, as the story progresses, Camus highlights the difference between Saïd and Yvars by returning to the contents of their lunchboxes:

Saïd dit qu'il avait mangé ses figues. Yvars s'arrêta de manger. Le malaise qui ne l'avait pas quitté depuis l'entrevue avec Lassalle pour laisser seulement place à une bonne chaleur. Il se leva en rompant son pain et dit, devant le refus de Saïd, que la semaine prochaine tout irait mieux Tu m'inviteras à ton tour, dit-il. Saïd sourit. Il mordait maintenant dans un morceau du sandwich d'Yvars, mais légèrement, comme un homme sans faim. (74-75)

This literal and metaphorical breaking of bread with the Arab character suggests there is an understanding among French Algerians and Arabs who live in the same quarter and

work together, a situation Camus experienced in the Belcourt quarter of Algiers. They go on strike together against their bourgeois employers and they share lunch with one another. Nonetheless, the power dynamics and Christian imagery of the offering (when Yvars breaks his bread/sandwich in half) also reinforce colonial inequality and show how ultimately the Arabs and French Algerians are still not on the same level, even in the 1950s, one hundred and twenty years after French colonization began in Algeria.

Camus presents the theme of silence, to which the title refers, as a contradiction. Silence has power over words because the workers' actions, demands, and beliefs speak louder. Silence is a tool of communication that is recognizable irrespective of linguistic background or social or economic standing. However, the defeat of the strike demonstrates the lack of production inherent in silence as the silence spreads from workmen to machines, and vice-versa. It is possible, therefore, to analyze Camus's representation of silence as self-criticism in his refusal to speak on the Algerian situation. At the same time, however, Camus shows the precarious nature of Algerian industry at this time. The threatening of the cooperage and their livelihood brings working class Algerians together but the idea of change and the difficulties associated with that lead to silence and feelings of resignation:

Changer de métier n'est rien, mais renoncer à ce qu'on sait, à sa propre maîtrise, n'est pas facile. Un beau métier sans emploi, on était coincé, il fallait se résigner. Mais la résignation non plus n'est pas facile. Il était difficile d'avoir la bouche fermée, de ne pas pouvoir vraiment discuter et de reprendre la même route, tous les matins, avec un fatigue qui s'accumule, pour recevoir, à la fin de la semaine, seulement ce qu'on veut bien vous donner, et qui suffit de moins en moins. (66)

As these feelings of fatigue accumulate, the idea of change remains distant and difficult to imagine. Camus questions the strength one needs to continue, when one knows the situation will not improve. Sophie Bourgault offers a similar reading of silence in "Les

Muets”, however, she presents an additional interpretation of Camus’s silence, “Thus what *Les muets* intimates is that silence can be a sign of alienation and suffering, but can also be a nonviolent means of protest and revolt” (132).<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the story Camus shows that there are no winners in this conflict; the cooperative owner is sympathetic, but cannot raise wages; the workers feel humiliated because their strike failed. Camus conveys the hopelessness of *pied-noir* workers, yet we see that solidarity can cut across class or ethnicity. In the end, though, it is too late for Yvars and Fernande to leave Algeria and escape the social and economic conflict. Camus suggests they ought to have sought exile in France when they were younger, just as he did: “Il aurait voulu être jeune, et que Fernande le fut encore, et ils seraient partis, de l’autre côté de la mer” (80).

### 3.4. “L’Hôte”

“L’Hôte” is the fourth story in *L’Exil et le Royaume*. As we read the opening lines that describe a deserted plateau covered in snow, Camus brings us back to the harsh Algerian climate, which provided the décor for “La Femme Adultère”. We learn that after months of a drought the area experiences a blizzard. The three protagonists of the story are a *pied-noir* teacher named Daru, who is forced by the *pied-noir* police officer of Corsican origin named Balducci to host an unnamed Arab who has been charged with murder. As the narration unfolds in the third person we learn that Daru must host the Arab in his small one bedroom lodging that adjoins his classroom before delivering him to the French Algerian authorities the next day. Camus creates the myth of the *pied-noir* by focusing on Daru the “instituteur” who endures an impoverished lifestyle.

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<sup>6</sup> Bourgaud, Sophie. “Affliction, Revolt, Love; A Conversation between Camus and Weil.” *The Originality and Complexity of Albert Camus’s Writings*. Ed. Vanborre, Emmanuel Anne, 2012.

From the outset, we observe several examples of colonialism. This is the first time Camus presents education as a form of colonialism, which is perhaps the most essential element of colonialism for the *pied-noir* community. The irony of course is that Camus blends the geography of France and Algeria in the opening paragraphs. Similar to “La Femme Adultère” he presents the harsh Algerian landscape in winter, and he evokes France’s geography “Sur le tableau noir les quatre fleuves de France”, a land so different from Algeria in terms of natural resources (83). Through climate and space this scene also highlights the physical distance between France and Algeria and between French Algerians and their Arab counterparts at this time, “L’instituteur calcula qu’ils ne seraient pas sur la colline avant une demi-heure...La neige était tombée brutalement à la mi-octobre, après huit mois de sécheresse” (83). Stuck in the Algerian mountains in a blizzard Daru, and the parents of his pupils with whom he shares his rations, are lucky to have enough provisions to last a few days:

Heureusement la camionnette de Tadjid, le village le plus proche au nord, avait apporté le ravitaillement deux jours avant la tourmente...Il avait d’ailleurs de quoi soutenir un siège, avec les sacs de blé qui encombraient la petite chambre et que l’administration lui laissait en réserve pour distribuer à ceux de ses élèves dont les familles avaient été victimes de la sécheresse. En réalité, le malheur les avait tous atteints puisque tous étaient pauvres. (84-85)

Camus emphasizes Daru’s poverty, but he also compares his situation to that of other *pieds-noirs* or Arabs who have little food to eat. Daru’s status as a teacher only yields him a slightly larger portion of wheat, which he shares with his fellow *pieds-noirs*, or Arabs, it is not clear. Camus then draws a comparison between Daru and a monk who has considerable luxuries:

devant cette misère, lui qui vivait presque en moine dans cette école perdue, content d’ailleurs du peu qu’il avait, et de cette vie rude, s’était senti un seigneur,

avec ses murs crépis, son divan étroit, ses étagères de bois blanc, son puits, et son ravitaillement hebdomadaire en eau et en nourriture. (85)

Camus contrasts Daru's poverty with his power. He shows us that Daru lives a very modest lifestyle, compared with Janine and Marcel, Meursault, and Yvars, yet, he still has considerable power over the Arab and felt like a Lord: "s'était senti un seigneur" (85). His position as a teacher, however, grants him less power than Balducci, a police officer, who is more representative of a colonial figure. Camus always presents a clear hierarchy within the colonial framework. Camus suggests Daru's goodwill and general sense of compassion towards the Arab, which is anticipated through the title, may be the result of his Algerian birth, "Le pays était ainsi cruel à vivre, même sans les hommes, qui, pourtant, n'arrangeaient rien. Mais Daru y était né. Partout ailleurs, il se sentait exilé" (85). Daru feels a connection with this land. We are to assume this is not the case for Balducci who he calls "le vieux corse" (88). Since we know he is older, it is possible he came directly from Corsica and was not born in Algeria. Contrary to the narrations discussed previously, Camus wants us to be aware that Daru is "Algérien de souche". The conflict is that Daru and the Arab both belong there and have accepted their exile there.

Camus further illustrates this idea of origins and identity, as related to the *pièd-noir* myth, by introducing the conflict between Balducci and Daru. Camus introduces two *pièd-noirs* to represent the colonial institution, because it is twofold. On one side there is Balducci who believes the Arab must go to prison and on the other there is Daru who believes the Arab should be welcomed and released. The binary of freedom versus imprisonment, discussed in "La Femme Adultère", reappears in this story too. In stark contrast to Janine, however, Daru does not question his personal sense of freedom. He is comfortable in his isolated Algeria space. He accepts his choice. Nevertheless, Camus

introduces the myth of the *pied-noir* via Daru's conflict of rebellion versus obedience.

Daru's difficulty arises from not having the power to ignore or disobey Balducci.

Simultaneously, he is uncomfortable with the power to control the Arab's future.

Daru's dilemma refers to the ambiguity of the title of the story "L'Hôte". L'hôte translates as either guest or host, which supports Daru's desire to offer shelter/host his guest, but the following mention of the crime, war, and revolt complicates the situation. Camus questions the legitimacy of Daru and the Arab in this colonial schoolhouse space. Despite Balducci's advice, Daru wants to give the Arab the choice between freedom and imprisonment. Daru also hopes he does not have to make the decision himself. He wishes the Arab would run away. Daru is another *pied-noir* contradiction. Like Meursault, Yvars, and Janine, he is burdened with having to decide between expressing his opinion or remaining silent. This is how Camus mythologizes the *pied-noir* predicament in *L'Exil et le Royaume*. Daru exiles himself to silence by living alone. He shows empathy towards the Arab and feeds him. He tries to understand the predicament of the Other, if only half-heartedly or superficially:

Dans la chambre où, depuis un an, il dormait seul, cette présence le gênait. Mais elle le gênait aussi parce qu'elle lui imposait une sorte de fraternité qu'il refusait dans les circonstances présentes et qu'il connaissait bien: les hommes, qui partagent les mêmes chambres, soldats ou prisonniers, contractent un lien étrange comme si, leurs armures quittées avec les vêtements, ils se rejoignaient chaque soir, par-dessus leurs différences, dans la vieille communauté du songe et de la fatigue. Mais Daru se secouait, il n'aimait pas ces bêtises, il fallait dormir. (96)

The problem with Camus's mythopoetics in this story is that he does not consider adequately the Arab's crime. Certainly Camus does not devote the same attention to the murder in "L'Hôte" as he does in *L'Etranger*. Camus focuses on the *pied-noir* and neglects to comment sufficiently on the fact that the Arab has supposedly killed his

cousin. Daru's reluctance to judge the Arab shows how the *pied-noir* consciously chooses not to make a decision about the Arab's fate. Daru wants to maintain his power and his position as a schoolteacher but does not want to speak on matters of justice. As Connie R. Anderson explains in "Camus and the Colonial Tradition: Revisiting 'L'Hôte'": "L'Hôte provides compelling evidence that the man behind the strong, unequivocal public statements against Algerian independence was prey to great doubt and painful inner division about what his stance should be" (92). Anderson believes critics have failed to address the complexity of this short story. She cites there is evidence to suggest Camus presents colonial views, but she uses his early career in journalism as evidence that Camus deplored injustice in his homeland.

The three short stories examined here from the collection *L'Exil et le Royaume*, which are all set in Algeria, show that Camus's narration continues to present the myth of the *pied-noir* he established in his first literary publication, *L'Etranger*. We can attribute certain narrative details to Camus's evolution and thus continuation of his colonial sympathies. In reference to "L'Hôte" specifically Anderson claims, "At first sight...Camus fails the post-colonial litmus test" (92). In direct opposition, however, Anderson demonstrates, as have I, that Camus still manages to convey "the complexity surrounding Algerian independence and the imminent expulsion of the *pieds-noirs*" (94). The problem is that each time Camus illustrates the ambiguity of the situation he invalidates the clemency through unfavorable descriptions of the Arab or by exaggerating the role of the *pied-noir*. Daru and Yvars show compassion towards Arab characters, but they still condescend through their questioning of Arabs (Yvars questions Saïd and Daru questions the Arab prisoner) or through their ability to speak Arabic (Daru can speak

some Arabic but the Arab cannot speak French). This questioning is a means of understanding the Other, but Camus's narration implies a level of judgment that threatens to negate Yvars and Daru's open-mindedness and humanity.

We must remember that none of these stories end with resolutions, possibly because as Susan Tarrow highlights "All the stories in *Exile and the Kingdom*... deal with people who do not belong in the world in which they find themselves" (157). Similar to Meursault, the protagonists in these stories that are set in Algeria suffer from estrangement, but they are also passive so they personify perfectly Camus's views on Algeria. They fail to react in a timely manner, and their neutrality makes them victims of their  *pied-noir* society. They are victims of French colonialism. They mirror Camus's personal confrontations because they all hesitate with regard to their future. They imply a certain degree of hopefulness, but their true inner feelings remain hidden.

Returning once more to the myth of the nation, I believe Camus presents Algeria as a space that promotes feelings of exile because his homeland did not really exist. Camus was aware that there was not a singular Algerian nation. French Algeria was a nation based on myths of two cultures – an Arab world and a  *pied-noir* world. Tarrow explains that in 1950 Camus "would write in his notebook: "Yes, I have a native land: the French language."" (157). This indicates that the French language created a sense of belonging for him, not necessarily the geographical place. It is clear then that Camus's goal in *L'Exil et le Royaume* is to demystify the image metropolitan readers had of French Algeria. He shows how French Algeria was a myth created and perpetuated by the French – colonials and teachers etc. because, as Camus demonstrates in this story, they had the capacity to control the narrative in their positions of authority (for example as

teachers or law enforcement officers). For example Balducci informs us of the Arab's crime, but there is no evidence. Daru the schoolteacher must believe and obey Balducci's orders. In *L'Etranger* this is apparent in Meursault's interactions with his boss, the director of the home, Raymond and his lawyer. This is also visible in "Les Muets" when Yvars communicates with his employers. Certainly, the narratives contain obvious distinctions between *pieds-noirs* and Arabs, but as we progress from *L'Etranger* to *L'Exil et le Royaume* these differences often seem less significant than those between the different social classes of French-Algerians.

According to historian Ernest Renan's 1882 lecture "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" nations developed from the needs of various social groups to have a collective identity. Essentially, a nation can only succeed if there is solidarity. Renan also addresses the idea that race and language invite people to unite but he believes they are not the basis for unification, as they do not force people to unite, "Ce que nous venons de dire de la race, il faut le dire de la langue. La langue invite à se réunir; elle n'y force pas" (45). Renan highlights the role religion used to play in society. He said it was tied to the state, or the social group, but also to the family. Today, however, it does not provide the basis of a nation, "La religion ne saurait non plus offrir une base suffisante à l'établissement d'une nationalité moderne" (47). In stark contrast to the homogenizing image we have of a nation today, Renan believed a nation included a mixture of races and linguistic backgrounds. In fact, his notion of colonialism was the reverse of what we have accepted as the *mission civilisatrice*. Renan notes how colonizers would integrate the natives and adapt their language and customs etc, not vice-versa. For Renan the future of the nation depends on the ability of the group to agree upon the past sacrifices and work towards the

future, continuing this common existence together. Another dimension of Renan's nation is that it is necessary to forget as well as remember, a notion that is entirely paradoxical and seemingly unrealistic in a postcolonial society. In some respects it is feasible to equate Renan's viewpoint with the concept of transnationalism, which originated from a scholarly article entitled "Trans-National America" by Randolphe Bourne in 1916. Transnationalism perceives people and economies through their interconnected boundaries. Ultimately, though, Renan explains the nation is a soul, a spiritual principle "Une nation est une âme, un principe spirituel" which I consider a synonym for myth (50). Renan's myth of the nation as a soul means that the nation should not be defined by race, religion or language. Instead, the essence of the nation is what people share and what they imagine they share. They must build their nation by remembering and forgetting simultaneously. It becomes their community of choice, which they chose for themselves. They combine the past and present and collect their memories to live together undivided.

Therefore, Camus's depictions of French Algeria in these literary publications do not coincide with Renan's definition of what is a nation. The land both divides and unites the inhabitants preventing a lasting unity among the variety of languages, races, and religions. Occasionally Camus reflects upon the progress they have made together, conveying some hope of a future together. In the end though, Camus shows the impossibility of a united Algeria, because there is still a strong sense of fear and hesitation among his *pied-noir* community – of Arabs and other French-Algerians. Their lack of trust in each other as well as the Other derives from the inability to find the balance between what one should forget and what one should remember, proving the

difficulty inherent in memory and ultimately the necessary creation of the myth of the French Algerian nation that does not and cannot exist.

## 4. *Chroniques Algériennes*

### 4.1. Historical Background

Camus's final publication, *Chroniques Algériennes*, is a volume of articles written between 1939 and 1958 that focus explicitly on Algeria. Published one year after the short story collection *L'Exil et le Royaume* and two years after Camus, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, was famously misquoted by *Le Monde* journalist Dominique Birmann. In December 1957 Birmann quotes Camus as saying: "J'ai toujours condamné la terreur. Je dois condamner aussi un terrorisme qui s'exerce aveuglément dans les rues d'Alger par exemple, et qui un jour peut frapper ma mère ou ma famille. Je crois à la justice, mais je défendrai ma mère avant la justice" when he actually said: "En ce moment, on lance des bombes dans les tramways d'Alger. Ma mère peut se trouver dans un de ces tramways. Si c'est cela, la justice, je préfère ma mère."

Originally titled *Actuelles III* the articles comprise Camus's writings for *Alger Républicain*, a daily newspaper founded in 1938 with links to the Algerian Communist Party. The collection also features some of Camus's publications that were featured in the clandestine French newspaper, *Combat*, which was created during the Resistance Movement of World War II. Camus also served as editor-in-chief to *Combat* and editorial writer between 1944-1947. His writings for *Combat* present the evolution of his support for revolutionary transformation in the postwar period to doubts about the radical left. His writings there depict contemporary themes such as liberation, deportation, and the free press. Camus's career as a journalist, and his writings as a journalist, are often overlooked. Nonetheless, this period of Camus's life is important to document because his articles, his attitude towards journalism, his writing conditions, and indeed critical

reception aid in contextualizing this publication.

Biographer Olivier Todd tells us Camus happened upon this early career because he was unable to take the prestigious *agrégation* exam to become a philosophy teacher. Todd mentions Camus's lack of devotion to journalism, explaining that he wanted to save his energy for a novel, plays, and essays. Yet Todd underscores how Camus distinguished between “petits Blancs et gros colons” and how they were “allergiques aux hommes politiques” (177). On the one hand Todd makes it seem as if Camus was dedicated to this profession. He continues: “Un politique dissimule la vérité. Un journaliste tente de la cerner.” (177) On the other hand Todd includes an excerpt from a letter Camus wrote to Jean Grenier lamenting his disappointment with journalism, even though it offers a lot of freedom:

Camus ne veut pas se donner totalement au journalisme. Il souhaite consacrer l'essentiel de son énergie à son œuvre, qui se dessine en triptyque avec un roman, une pièce de théâtre, un essai [...] Journaliste débutant, il n'est ni enchanté, ni pris par son nouveau métier: « Je fais du journalisme [...] écrit-il à Jean Grenier, - les chiens écrasés et du reportage – quelques articles littéraires aussi. Vous savez mieux que moi combien ce métier est décevant. Mais j'y trouve cependant quelque chose: une impression de liberté – je ne suis pas contraint et tout ce que je fais me semble vivant. » (179)

According to Todd, Camus's attitude towards journalism was ambiguous. He claims Camus wanted to expose the truth that politics conceals, and he appreciated the freedom the occupation provides him, yet ultimately, he says, journalism was not Camus's passion. In contrast to Todd, Robert Zaretsky portrays Camus's humble beginnings as a journalist in a much more positive light. He maintains journalism provided Camus with the perfect foundation for writing. He believes journalism made Camus a moralist.

Writing in *Albert Camus: Elements in a life* (2010) Zaretsky informs us: “But his life as a journalist helped make Camus a moralist. A moralist, unlike a professional philosopher,

is ill at ease in the world.” (45) As confident as he had become as a writer, Zaretsky says Camus became *mal dans sa peau* by the scenes he witnessed in the Kabyle region. He even suggests the extent of the malaise in the Kabyle region led Camus to silence: “This kind of moral discomfort, this unease in the face of suffering, this malaise that pushes you to silence, hindered as much as it helped Camus.” (45)

#### **4.2. Reading Myth Through Journalism**

This collection of articles in *Chroniques Algériennes* is essential to this project because not only do they chronicle Camus’s concern for impoverished Algerians, but also they show Camus’s investigative work in the Kabylia and highlight his efforts to report the precariousness of the situation facing the Kabyles. He searches for a solution to Algeria’s social and political problems. In spite of this, Camus’s position as a  *pied-noir* weakens his critique of colonialism and his concern for justice because his overall objective for writing appears to be motivated by his fear for the future of the  *pied-noir* French Algerian. Hence, both Camus’s criticism and support of French governance must be discussed, as well as the timing of this publication. I argue that Camus’s ambivalence concerning decolonization demonstrates how Algeria was becoming less and less accommodating to  *pieds-noirs*. Even though Camus engages in journalism, as opposed to fiction, he still contributes to the same mythopoetics visible in his literary publications  *L’Etranger* and  *L’Exil et le Royaume*. The arguments Camus advances throughout his twenty years as a journalist facilitate a clearer understanding of his overall mythopoetics as we see the shifts that take place. At first Camus denounces the misery he sees in the Kabyle region, while working as a journalist. He tells the truth about what he experiences and proposes reforms that he hopes the French government will undertake in order to

eliminate the suffering taking place there. Writing in 1955, during the war, Camus's reporting changes from the socialist point of view to a colonial sympathizer as he accuses the Kabyles of being oppressors because they use violence. Camus's decision in 1958 to publish *Chroniques Algériennes* shows, for the first time, his desire for an Algerian future where both Europeans and Algerians could live together in a community. It also confirms his belief that Algeria never belonged to *pieds-noirs*, nor did *pieds-noirs* belong in Algeria. Camus's French Algeria was a colonized land. *Pieds-noirs* had no claim to the land.

#### **4.3. The Myth of the *piéd-noir* via The Myth of the Kabyle**

At the beginning of the volume Camus justifies his decision to publish these articles, despite the recent uprising among French settlers, which led to De Gaulle's return to power. He declares: "Ce volume était déjà composé et sur le point de paraître lorsque les événements du 13 mai ont éclaté" (7). On May 13, 1958, an insurrection of French settlers began in Algeria. Much to the dismay of French Algerians, their insurrection ignited Algerians, eventually leading to their Independence four years later. Camus maintains the directness of his volume needed to be heard: "un commentaire direct de ces événements et que, dans la confusion actuelle, la position et les solutions de synthèse qui sont ici définies devaient l'être plus que jamais." (7) He claims change has aroused both hopes and fears among Algerians, but he urges readers to recognize the facts in order to achieve an acceptable future: "celui où la France, appuyée inconditionnellement sur ses libertés, saura rendre justice, sans discrimination, ni dans un sens ni dans l'autre, à toutes les communautés de l'Algérie." (7) This short commentary at the beginning of the volume is an early indication of Camus's mythopoetics in this

publication. This short note conveys a degree of hesitancy that is evident also in his literary publications. Additionally, Camus hopes his note will have the power to influence reader interpretation by outlining his motivation for publishing.

Camus opens the preface by pointing out that his articles discuss Algeria over a twenty-year period: “depuis l’année 1939, où presque personne en France ne s’intéressait à ce pays, jusqu’à 1958, où tout le monde en parle” (11). According to John Foley in “Camus and Algeria” which appears in *Albert Camus; From the Absurd to the Revolt* (2008) “Camus was sent to the region to report accurately on the conditions there.”

Essentially, he was asked to counteract the articles that appeared in the bourgeois press “extolling “the delights of the Kabylie”” (150). Todd corroborates Foley’s point:

“Avantage, Camus voyage souvent en car avec des guides sympathisants, marche dans la plaine et la montagne, loge au hasard des hôtels. Il n’est pas encadré par des fonctionnaires...” (192) Despite his need for Arabic and Berber interpreters, Foley and Todd assert Camus’s independence as a journalist. He studies education, salaries, and work conditions, enabling him to assert his position immediately: “il mêle statistiques et choses vues dans une enquête réussie.” (193). Camus published over one hundred fifty articles for *Alger Républicain*, discussing crime, welfare aid, government budgets, elections, and other social issues in North Africa. He also worked as a courtroom reporter. Camus’s articles in this collection summarize his overall opinion that condemns oppressive French policies and that he disapproves of surrender. His justification for this position is to be well received on both sides, otherwise Algeria will satisfy no one.

Camus condemns extremism on both sides, however, he also suggests: “il faut se résigner à ne plus témoigner que personnellement” (13). Camus follows this statement with

condemnation for terrorism carried out on the behalf of others, declaring those who are not personally affected by the situation cannot effectively judge it. Todd provides Camus's statement, where he acknowledges criticism he received from the right: "Il paraît que c'est, aujourd'hui, faire acte de mauvais Français que de révéler la misère d'un pays français." (195)

The introduction and the prologue both indicate Camus's loyalty to his *pied-noir* community. His refusal to acknowledge the opinion of outsiders also contributes to a unique rhetoric that may encourage and negate some of his anticolonial intentions – depending on your point of view. Once again Camus's mythopoetics is contradictory. At first he crowns himself a hero of Algerians, or at least points out his humanism that is not always appreciated: "J'ai essayé, depuis longtemps, on le verra, de faire connaître au moins leur misère et l'on me reprochera sans doute mes sombres descriptions" (20). He seeks praise for being the martyr that travels to the region to observe the horrific scenes. He professes his love for native Algerians: "C'est à eux et aux miens que je continue de penser en écrivant le mot d'Algérie et en plaidant pour la réconciliation" (21), but not without recognizing his own people "Mais les trois quarts des Français d'Algérie leur ressemblent." (22) Despite Camus's wavering back and forth between his love for Algerians and his love for *pieds-noirs*, he emphasizes his beliefs constitute "une politique de réparation, non à une politique d'expiation." (23) John Foley declares that Camus became unpopular with the French authorities in Algeria because of his critical reporting. Nonetheless, I interpret Camus's denial of guilt here as his denial of *pied-noir* guilt. He removes colonial blame from his French Algerian counterparts, remains in France to work and expose the truth thus mythologizing himself and his community once again,

positioning *pieds-noirs* as heroes trying to bridge the gap between the elites and the truly impoverished.

When discussing Camus's position on the Algerian conflict it should be noted clearly that Camus was not silent. Critics often neglect his journalism and erroneously have focused only on his literary narratives and equated his indirect style with silence. Writing in 2007 in *Albert Camus the Algerian* David Carroll says the collection of political essays "was largely ignored when it first appeared and has still not been given the attention it deserves." (63). According to Carroll, in 1957 Tunisian theorist and novelist Albert Memmi said that Camus's refusal to support either the French or Arab side in the war "was untenable" and the leftist colonizer "will slowly realize that the only thing for him to do is remain silent" (109). Of course Carroll reminds us that Camus remained silent after this 1958 publication until his death in 1960. However, Carroll also acknowledges that Camus provides significant information in these essays that both identify the problems of French colonialism, and the problems that may ensue if Algeria became independent. Carroll addresses Camus's rejection of FLN leadership and its use of terrorist tactics, in addition to the detrimental effects French colonialism produces for Arabs and Berbers. It is possible that this genre, which permits a direct style and the use of facts, could provide Camus with a platform to share his views in a manner that is not possible with literature. For this reason it is necessary to address the content to determine the commonalities and contrasts with the *pied-noir* mythopoetics of his literature discussed above.

#### 4.4. “Misère de la Kabylie”

Camus includes a brief outline before his first article. He informs us that these articles were written for a newspaper (*Alger Républicain*) “qui à l’époque groupait les socialistes et les radicaux”. In addition to his early political leanings, Camus admits, “Trop long et trop détaillé pour être reproduit en entier, ce reportage est réimprimé ici à l’exclusion de considérations trop générales et des articles sur l’habitat, l’assistance, l’artisanat et l’usure.” (31) It is clear that Camus provides us in 1958 with a personally edited version of his articles originally published in 1939. According to Jeanyves Guerin, author of “Camus the Journalist” that appears in *The Cambridge Companion to Camus* (2007), Camus “kept only seven of the eleven” articles that make up the series. It seems possible then that Camus’s double editing lends itself well to myth creation as he manipulates the original version and exploits his initial journalistic intentions.

As Camus begins to chart the devastation in the Kabyle region he writes in the first person. The beginning of the series on the Kabyle is entitled “Le Dénouement”, an indication of the extreme devastation he will discuss. Guerin believes the existence of these articles by Camus “support the view that he did not wait for the outbreak of war before taking an interest in the land of his birth.” (82) I believe, however, that Camus’s journalism offers a unique interpretation of Camus, often masked in his literature. For example his anti-bourgeois reporting where Guerin claims he “refuses to present with some kind of exotic gloss” suffers from personal, political, and media bias (82). Camus’s summation of the economic misery in the overpopulated Kabyle region in the beginning of the series “Kabylie est un pays surpeuplé et elle consomme plus qu’elle produit.” (33) appears to impart blame on the locals, rather than express empathy. Camus explains the

Kabyle soil does not support crops and the region lacks industry. This extreme poverty forced the residents to emigrate to another region where they became prosperous for a short time, before eventually gaining more debt, causing misery once again. According to Foley the misery “was aggravated by the fact that although the price of the wheat had increased, and the price of olives and figs had not [...] exacerbated by the total indifference of Algeria’s political elite” (150). Foley highlights the strengths of Camus’s critique of the French government. Similarly, Guerin favors Camus’s reporting style including his “conscience-stricken confessions” and “wealth of statistics” (82). Camus provides the names of French politicians, including the French President at the time (M. Albert Lebrun). Indeed it is true also that he writes with conviction, condemning the harsh realities of Kabyle existence. He acknowledges the military servicemen and reminds us that Kabyles fought for France too. He also promotes integration in the school system.

The problem with Camus’s reporting arises from certain statements that can be interpreted as anti-Kabyle or not anticolonial enough. For example, Camus underscores the issues Kabyles face, but at times he reverts to playing devil’s advocate. It seems he writes in order to inspire a reaction, or an answer to his questions involving education funding, tax breaks, and unions. With reference to Camus’s journalism in general Guerin claims: “The aim was to make readers think, to challenge, to point out the discourse and the truth about war.” (83) I agree with Guerin on this point and believe Camus was employed for this reason, however, no matter how extensive the list of statistics Camus provides, his overall critique of French colonialism is incomplete and insufficient. He does not address fully the root of the problem, only the result. The statistics expose the

reality of the situation, but they also convey Camus's ideology and communicate his feelings on war and the distressing Kabyle lifestyle. He advocates continually for reform of policies, yet as Conor Cruise O'Brien reminds us, Camus makes it clear in the foreword that he does not support certain reforms or specific negotiations with the FLN: "He makes it clear he rejects this independence and therefore the negotiation." (90)

Additionally, I agree with David Drake's critique of Camus's Algerian humanism. In his article "Sartre, Camus and the Algerian War" (1999) Drake claims:

Camus in his writings on Kabylia stressed, as I have mentioned, the human dimension of the deprivation which he witnessed. For Camus, the misery was the result not of a colonial system but from the failure of the French authorities to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Kabylia. (18)

Drake compares Camus's support for policy reform with Sartre's emphatic criticism of the colonial system. I believe Drake's summary demonstrates Camus's journalistic utopia. Camus supports French colonialism and his promotion of an Algeria where French Algerians and the indigenous population could live together in harmony.

Camus continues his evaluation of Kabylia by suggesting there is a possible solution to the problem inflicted by the current policies – charity. He reports nuns and priests helped the poor with charitable dinners, "Les sœurs blanches et le pasteur Rolland contribuent aussi à ces œuvres de charité." (38) After considerable examples of misery and a lack of sound resolutions it is difficult to interpret these articles as anything other than an expression of colonial guilt. Recognizing the gravity and complexity of the situation Camus tries to mobilize everyone to help through charitable acts. The lack of a solid political solution indicates how Camus is deeply moved by the Kabyle plight, but it also seems like he acknowledges the difficulty involved with reaching some sort of resolution with the government. There are several instances where Camus presents

himself as an accomplice to both sides of the warring factions, defending French policies, yet advocating for the Kabyles. Moreover, when Guerin points out that Camus used pseudonyms it weakens his reporting, especially since he presents the suffering of the Kabyles to French readers or *pieds-noirs*.

It would be remiss of me not to discuss the questionable timing of this re-edited publication in 1958. As we have established Camus presents statistics in an attempt to convince us how dire the situation is in Kabylia. He calls upon readers to imagine the situation but I am troubled by how Camus mythologizes the Kabyles. On one occasion he says “Et tout est à l’avenant.” (43). Camus insinuates the Kabyles are punished for running afoul of the law; that is their normal existence, because of the extent of their poverty. I perceive Camus’s presentation of Kabylia as a voluntary penal colony where residents exile themselves from *pieds-noirs*, separating themselves from the rest of Algeria and in return the law and the land punish them for doing so. They are almost all unemployed and rarely receive grain distributions. They cannot pay if they are arrested, but Camus points out that they will be lucky enough to eat in prison if they are caught for stealing. In a somewhat similar vein, this notion of exile in the countryside reminds us of the narratives where *pieds-noirs* protagonists Meursault, Janine and Daru endure voluntary exile. Camus shows that the Kabyles are compelled to steal a few items from the forest to alleviate the famine, but they may die from the necessary consumption of poisonous plants. I do not believe Camus’s representation always demonstrates significant sympathy for the Kabyles. On the contrary – Camus suggests Kabyles must begin to improve their situation themselves: “Il faut partir de ce principe que si quelqu’un peut améliorer le sort de Kabyles, c’est d’abord le Kabyle lui-même.” (66) Through his

troubling accounts of life in the Kabylie, Camus depicts himself as the white colonizer, who reports on the situation, fully understands the situation, wants to resolve the situation and hence considers himself qualified and indeed welcome to offer a solution.

As Guerin highlights Camus's initial date of publication, I assert it is equally important to remember that Camus was writing this article around the time when he was writing *L'Etranger* (1942). As aforementioned in the first section of this chapter, *L'Etranger* is the publication that provides Camus's most direct portrayal of white privilege. The manner in which Camus exhibits colonial sympathies and anticolonial sentiments justifies the harsh criticism bestowed upon him by Edward Said and Conor Cruise O'Brien. I believe this era was the beginning of Camus's self-exploratory Algerian journey. By writing about another Algerian group he reveals his own professional *pied-noir* identity, which he was beginning to develop at this time.

Patricia Lorcin defines the Kabyle Myth perpetuated by the French in *Imperial Identities; Stereotyping, Prejudicing and Race in Colonial Algeria* (1995). Lorcin describes the different groups that made up the Algerian population at the beginning of the French conquest in 1830. She then explains how the French constructed the Kabyle Myth through their positive approach to Berbers, despite the fact that Berbers, Arabs, Jews, Infidels, Andalusians, Turks, and Kouloughlis were spread throughout the region: "To this ethnic dichotomy the French added a socio-geographic one, namely that Arabs were nomadic plain-dwellers and Berbers sedentary mountain-dwellers, a division that was inaccurate in its exclusiveness....Misleading blanket qualifications of this sort distorted reality and created a binary imagery which was mythical." (2) Lorcin later adds that it was the positive approach of the French to the Berbers "that has stimulated

scholarly interest in French attitudes towards the indigenous population of Algeria...It is the Manichean dichotomy that has come to be known as the ‘Kabyle Myth’” (2). I argue that Camus plays directly into this French stereotype. Even though he is a *pied-noir*, he is guilty of mythologizing Kabyles and Kabylia in his journalism. Although he appears to criticize their family size and their lackadaisical attitude to finding a solution to their famine and poverty, he highlights their work ethic, their lack of rebellion, and their ambition to continue regardless of unemployment and starvation. Camus constructs the myth of the *pied-noir* within the myth of the Kabyle. Like the Arab in *L’Etranger* and Saïd in “Les Muets” they are worthy of justice and although they are different, they still form part of the Algerian community, the Algerian nation. Just as the myth of the Kabyle was one of assimilation, in that it “provided an ideological basis for absorbing Kabyles into French colonial society to the detriment of the Arabs.” (2) Camus’s articles from the late 1930s begin constructing the myth of the *pied-noir* within the myth of the Kabyle. He accomplishes this by using a similar rhetoric and by expressing outrage at social injustices akin to that in his literature. Although they do not suffer the same plight, Camus takes great lengths to report on all aspects of their lifestyle including education, wages, and their political, social and economic future.

I believe Camus’s conclusion of “Misère en Kabylie” shows that he is just as guilty of not addressing fully the plight of the Kabyles as others he criticizes. Concerned more with being “un bon Français” he praises himself for having explored the region and written about the facts, rather than ignoring the situation (86). At the same time he is fearful and reluctant to fully address the situation, which is further emphasized by Guerin’s remarks on pseudonyms and deliberate refusal to provide an indictment. One of

his most sympathetic critics, David Carroll, says “In his essays, Camus expresses reluctance to speak about Algeria because of a fear that his criticisms of the criminal actions of either side in the war could provoke or be used to justify the terrorist acts on either side” (110) In many ways his reaction reminds me of Meursault’s demeanor in *L’Etranger*. Camus’s journalism is similar to his literature. Faced with a dilemma, he vows to tell the truth and not lie, however, his truth is still a mythical construct.

#### **4.5. “Crise en Algérie”**

This series of articles entitled “Crise en Algérie” was originally published in May 1945 in France in *Combat*, the clandestine Resistance newspaper. Camus joined the Resistance in 1943 and continued to write for *Combat* after liberation, becoming editor-in-chief. According to Guerin “His role was simultaneously to run the editorial team, to engage in debate and to bring in new ideas.” (84) These six articles, out of an original eight, are the result of a survey Camus took, travelling more than 1500 miles along the Algerian coast and inland territories over a three week period. The articles appear six years after the “Misère de la Kabylie” series was published in the newspaper *Alger républicain*. They coincide also with the Sétif and Guelma Massacres of May 1945, where police fired at demonstrators, which then led to riots, and counter attacks on French settlers.

John Foley declares, “In these articles we see much of the same language that we saw in the articles on the famine in the Kabylie.” (151) However, although the style is similar, Camus opens this series of articles with a stronger tone than he does in “Misère de la Kabylie”. He starts off by urging caution in response to recent events. He explains the consequences that different reactions may have and also acknowledges the clichés

that exist and the differences between those and the truths, or facts. In his second attempt at reporting on the situation he avoids focusing only on one region. This time Camus refers to French ignorance and denial of Algeria's existence. He addresses the crisis that is now taking place throughout the country as a whole, calling still for social reform.

I view Camus's second attempt at reporting and explaining the situation to the French as an opportunity for him to invoke the significance of his *pied-noir* status, and thus mythologize his community and his experience. As Edward Hughes states in "Le Prélude d'une sorte de fin de l'histoire": Underpinning Assimilation in Camus's *Chroniques algériennes*" Camus's reporting on the disastrous economic circumstances in Kabylia in 1939 went largely unnoticed (8). Writing six years later for *Combat* Camus has the opportunity to make his voice heard in France. At this time Camus's visibility in France and reputation as a journalist has the potential to influence French readers even more than before. When Camus explains the existence of Algeria to French readers, including its differences from France, he promotes Algerians and their traditions, "Il s'agit au contraire d'un peuple de grandes traditions et dont les vertus, pour peu qu'on veuille l'approcher sans préjugés, sont parmi les premières." (95) He also promotes his specific community of French Algerians. He insinuates that *pieds-noirs* like him do not stereotype Arabs, this is reserved for those French citizens who do not understand the situation, nor share his Algerian roots. He underscores specifically that Algeria must be viewed and treated differently from metropolitan France but Camus's mythopoetics is already troubling at the beginning of the series of articles. He claims France needs to reconquer Algeria, "De ce point de vue, les Français ont à conquérir l'Algérie une deuxième fois." (96), which, allegedly comes from his objective viewpoint, "Mon projet,

dans les articles qui suivront, est d'appuyer cette tentative, par le simple exercice d'une information objective." (97) Camus does not give a lot of details about the nature of this conquest, but the sentiment of Camus's articles indicate the need to re-conquer stems from the lack of equality that exists in Algeria. He wishes for more harmony among the inhabitants of Algeria. We should assume Camus's vision of re-conquering would avoid making the same economic and political mistakes again. He proposes a new beginning for a more inclusive and united future.

Indeed, throughout this series of articles, Camus speaks again of the economic, political, and social hardships affecting indigenous Algerians. He is outspoken about Algeria's needs, but his articulation of what Hughes terms an "oblique colonial apology" proves his personal assimilation to colonial policies fuses with his refusal to support Algerian autonomy (12). It is important also to point out that Camus draws upon his experiences in France during Nazi Occupation. He appeals to his metropolitan French readers to take these matters seriously because they experienced something similar: "Ce sont des souffrances qui ne peuvent nous laisser indifférents, puisque nous les avons connues." (97) At the same time, Camus finds himself in a difficult position as he is forced to side with the French government and support Algerian reform amid this crisis. In stark contrast to this French collaboration, Camus speaks highly of Algerian politician Ferhat Abbas and Amis du Manifeste, the political party that rejects assimilation. Foley still approves of Camus's journalistic presentation of the crisis in these articles. Nonetheless, despite the commendation of Camus's journalism by Foley and others, I wish to highlight my reservations of Camus's terminology and overall discussion of Algerian justice that pertain to the myth of the *pied-noir*.

At a certain point in these articles Camus begins to break away from his *pied-noir* status because this French position holds more weight with his readership. I feel that this is the beginning of Camus's French-Algerian predicament, which Hughes calls "deeply Eurocentric" (12). Camus uses the Second World War to convince French readers of the seriousness of the situation and remind them of the possible consequences involved if a sustainable solution is not found. The problem is that Camus's reformism "continues to operate within colonial parameters" (12). Hughes is one of the few critics to address Camus's constraints at this time. By pointing out Camus's precarious position as a French Algerian who moved to France in the 1942, Hughes also reminds us of Camus's privilege as a *pied-noir*. His reporting on Algeria's misery epitomizes his personal struggle to legitimize his past in Algeria as the descendent of poor *pied-noir* settlers. He tries to maintain a fragile balance between the various communities. He tries not to distance himself too much from the various social groups within Algeria. He wants to keep communication open between him and the French, the French Algerians, and the Algerians. He must maintain this fragile balance at all times so as not to disrupt his position within France and Algeria, and his relations with the people of both countries. His decision to publish these articles in 1945 and again in 1958 demonstrates the importance of timing. In both circumstances he capitalizes on the political situation. In 1958 he wants to argue again for economic and social reforms like he did in 1945 to avoid further marginalization among his community and reject independence, promoting assimilation only.

#### 4.6. “L’Algérie Déchirée”

This series of articles entitled “L’Algérie Déchirée” appeared in *L’Express* between October 1955 and January 1956 and according to Camus it sums up his previous positions and arguments: “elle reprend et résume les arguments et la position que j’ai exposés dans le même journal” (131). Similar in approach, but different in length and style to the others previously discussed here, these much shorter articles convey a change in Camus’s attitude. Finding himself in an even more precarious position than before, as he is writing during the Algerian War, Camus appears ambivalent. He is angry at the manner in which French officials are dealing with the crisis, “La France, on le voit, continue. Mais derrière elle, l’Algérie meurt [...] Mais l’heure n’est pas à l’indulgence. L’ordre du jour, pour l’Algérie, c’est le sang. Les trois votes de l’Assemblée (Nationale, au Palais Bourbon) vont se payer par de nouvelles morts.” (133) He criticizes their handling of the crisis, mocking the time French officials take to react or make a decision. He accuses them also of contributing to more Algerian deaths, hence encouraging Algerians to take up arms and revolt: “Aux bavardages répond le hurlement solitaire des égorgés, au maniement du dictionnaire celui des armes.” (134) Camus contrasts the two worlds that collide in this crisis, but his exasperated tone implies he has become jaded at continually having to voice his opinion and explain the severity of the escalating crisis. Camus’s attitude is typical of someone who has grown accustomed to expressing his ideology repeatedly in this manner.

Although Camus conveys hope of a resolution and reminds French readers of the bloodshed that occurs in Algeria, these articles still contribute to his *pied-noir* mythopoetics. No matter how much empathy Camus has towards Arabs, his presentation

of the crisis is problematic. His concern always lies with his *pied-noir*, settler community. He defends the attitudes of French settlers more than other groups. For example, Camus only questions if French people have thought about the anguish of Arabs after he questions if metropolitan French readers have thought about the French Algerians who made sacrifices for them in Algeria:

Mais qui pense au drame des rappelés, à la solitude des Français d'Algérie, à l'angoisse du peuple arabe? L'Algérie n'est pas la France, elle n'est même pas l'Algérie, elle est cette terre ignorée, perdue au loin, avec ses indigènes incompréhensibles, ses soldats gênants et ses Français exotiques, dans un brouillard de sang. (134)

Camus's statement that Algeria is not France, not even Algeria, is significant for two reasons. Camus calls attention to the differences between the two countries, despite the fact that colonization brought about this current situation being discussed. However, although he recognizes that Algeria does not resemble Algeria anymore in the sense that his homeland is unrecognizable to him and neglected by the government, Camus fails to acknowledge that this has been true for the Kabyles since French colonization of Algeria began in 1830. He rarely criticizes French administration, only pointing to the root of the problem in the form of a rhetorical question. Thus, Camus fails continually to address the colonial practices that led to this situation. Instead, he chooses nostalgia over reality. Even in journalism he engages in "*nostalgérie*". Camus continues, "Elle est l'absente dont le souvenir et l'abandon serrent le cœur de quelques-uns, et dont les autres veulent bien parler, mais à condition qu'elle se taise." (134) His concern for *pieds-noirs* appears again and again. Often he masks his specific concerns with a consideration for everyone, but overall Camus's motivation for an end to bloodshed and a resolution to the

humanitarian crisis is to allow “plus d’un million de Français” to live in peace in Algeria as they have done since they arrived there.

Just as he did in the previous articles, Camus confronts misrepresentations of Algeria by the French. His tone is serious and he provides pertinent analogies and examples for French readers, but his journalism is weakened by his pseudo-political remarks, or his recognition that he must not completely disrespect France or their colonial efforts. Camus plays directly into the image of the colonizer because he only presents that perspective. He writes an article entitled “La Bonne Conscience” where he addresses French stereotypes and defends *pieds-noirs*. He does not give readers an objective, unbiased point of view. This article in particular confirms that he writes from the *pied-noir* perspective. This article shows how concerned he is about the future of *pieds-noirs* and how he wants to support them by clarifying any misrepresentations that may exist about them:

A lire une certaine presse, il semblerait vraiment que l’Algerie soit peuplée d’un million de colons à cravache et à cigare, montées de Cadillac. Cette image d’Epinal est dangereuse. Englober dans un mepris général, ou passer sous silence avec dédain, un million de nos compatriotes, les écraser sans distinction sous les péchés de quelques-uns, ne peut qu’entraver, au lieu de favoriser, la marche en avant que l’on pretend vouloir. Car cette attitude se répercute naturellement sur celle des Français d’Algérie. (139)

This article demonstrates Camus’s desire for a clear conscience and this genre exposes his strong ties to colonialism whereby we witness a traditional *pied-noir* mythopoetics, as opposed to the *petit blanc* evident in his literature.

## **5. *Le Premier Homme*: Myth and autobiography**

Camus's posthumous, semi-autobiographical work is perhaps the most important for this project because it provides us with the most comprehensive version of Camus's mythopoetics. Camus shares his memories and experiences as an impoverished *pied-noir* growing up in colonial Algeria. Blending imagination and memory, he produces a narrative that explores and mythologizes his personal origins, his family, community, and French Algerian history. Writing in the third person Camus describes specific events relating to his education and his family life through protagonist Jacques Cormery.

According to Olivier Todd, Albert Camus began working on this manuscript in 1952. Writing in *The Development of Albert Camus's Concern for Social and Political Justice* (2007), Mark Orme explains Camus's never-ending preoccupation with his Algerian roots. Orme recalls Camus's early plans, published in *Carnets*, "Interestingly, plans to write a work of this sort are already in place as far back as 1946, at which point, in his private notebook, Camus outlines his intention to produce a "Novel on Justice" (CA2, 89): a project envisaged as an experiment in self-justification." (25) This focus on his formative years and his subsequent desire to assess his past meant Camus carried around his unfinished manuscript with him for years and it was found alongside Camus's body at the site of the car accident, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1960. Camus's wife and friends hesitated to publish the manuscript initially because it was unfinished. Another reason they declined to publish was because Camus's reputation in Algeria during and after the War of Independence remained negative. Camus's daughter Catherine published the manuscript in 1994, more than thirty years after her father's untimely death. The publication of this novel coincided with the Civil War of the 1990s as well as the

subsequent shift in postcolonial thought, all of which revived interest in Camus and Algeria. Although Debra Kelly claims there was a “return to Camus” in the 1970s, 1980s and again in the 1990s, her article “*Le Premier Homme* and the literature of loss” specifically addresses how Camus reentered the discussion with the publishing success of *Le Premier Homme* in 1994 and Todd’s biography *Albert Camus, une vie* in 1996.

The first section of Camus’s narrative is entitled “recherche du père” but he opens instead by mythologizing his own birth. An Arab drives a wagon that rolls along a stony road carrying a Frenchman, a shabbily dressed woman and a four-year-old boy:

L’Arabe qui conduisait faisait claquer alors sur son dos le plat des rênes usées\*, et bravement la bête reprenait son rythme. L’homme qui se trouvait sur la banquette avant près du conducteur, un Français d’une trentaine d’années... Sur une deuxième banquette, coincée entre la première et un amoncellement de veilles malles et de meubles, une femme, habillée pauvrement mais enveloppée dans un grand châle de grosse laine [...] Elle avait un visage doux et régulier, les cheveux de l’Espagnole bien ondulés et noirs. (14-15)

It is no coincidence that they look for a place to rest on an autumn night in 1913, as Camus was born November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1913. At the same time, however, the reader is reminded of the birth of Jesus Christ. In addition to the Christian imagery, which presents Camus’s parents as a young couple, similar to Mary and Joseph, looking for a vacant place to give birth to their son, Camus’s objective is to show that he was born into extreme poverty. He reminds us of his European roots, emphasizing his father’s French ancestry as well as his mother’s Spanish ancestry. To further address the extreme level of poverty into which he was born, Camus details certain aspects of the journey or the surroundings. He describes the benches his parents slept on as, “les dures banquettes de troisième” (17). Finding shelter at last, Camus compares the pain of childbirth to the pain inflicted by perpetual poverty. He describes the room in which he was born, “Elle ne semblait remarquer ni

l'humidité ni l'odeur d'abandon et de misère.” (19-20) Certainly Camus wishes to point out the squalor of his *pied-noir* birth, as he continues to uncover his origins in this opening scene. By mythologizing his birth Camus also attempts to reconcile the two worlds – in France and Algeria, rich and poor, Arab and Christian, respectively.

As the story progresses suddenly from Camus's self-proclaimed humble birth to his pilgrimage, some forty years later, to his father's grave in Saint-Brieuc, colonialism returns to the fore as a major influence on his origins and everything else that followed. At the cemetery Camus locates his father's name among a long list of deceased, “Cormery Henri, dit-il, blessé mortellement à la bataille de la Marne, mort à Saint-Brieuc le 11 octobre 1914.” (32) As Camus reflects on his father's role as a *pied-noir* and as a soldier, considering his sacrifices for France, Camus mythologizes *pieds-noirs*, their purpose, and colonialism simultaneously. By sharing his personal experiences he presents us with a story that he considered true. This was his reality. Concurrently, through sharing these moments, Camus offers inspiration for the *pied-noir* culture. It is clear that his mythologizing promotes healing and acceptance. Consequently, he gives meaning and purpose to his culture that has become fragmented by colonialism.

When Jacques' narrative conveys strong emotional sentiments such as his reluctant visit to his father's grave—“il s'était décidé à rendre visite à ce mort inconnu”—we are reminded of the need for Camus to combine myth and memory. (33) Unlike the memories Camus evokes in his *Chroniques Algériennes*, his literary mythopoeics produce a stronger *pied-noir* identity. It was more difficult for Camus to discuss or explore his individual *pied-noir* myth in journalism because there are so many historical facts. The literary genre, and specifically the use of autobiography and fiction, facilitates

Camus's appeal to imagination. With literature Camus can take a story (myth/narrative) that is prevalent in society and make it accepted by that culture, almost like a historical fact.

Similar to Camus's earlier writings, we read many descriptions of Algerian landscapes and journeys. We also read portrayals of Arabs as nameless characters who perform certain functions. In some ways Camus's voyage back to France to discover his roots is an effort to recolonize his Algerian homeland. Many of the spaces Camus depicts are either colonial or impoverished, or both. Writing during a tumultuous period, Camus affirms his Algerian heritage and his European roots in this story. By focusing much of the story on his father, a First World War hero who fought for France who died in battle, Camus reflects on the violence of war and the colonial roots of Algeria. Camus also recolonizes Algeria by replacing some of the indigenous names of cities with European ones and vice versa. All of these details communicate Camus's physical and emotional experiences within Algeria. By recalling these experiences Camus is able to mythologize his childhood in Algeria.

Much has been written about the Algeria Camus presents in his literature, but I argue that this particular narrative supports the claim that Camus mythologized Algeria through his own story. While he used fiction primarily to discuss and perpetuate the myth of the *pied-noir* in his previous publications, the blending of autobiographical and fictional genres produces the most accurate version of Camus's mythopoetics. As David Carroll declares in *Albert Camus, the Algerian*, "in his autobiographical novel, Camus gives his most detailed and elaborate picture of Algeria and his idealized view of the French Algerians who had inhabited it for over a century and whose imminent demise the

novel also recounts.” (159) Camus’s mythopoetics is most striking in *Le Premier Homme* because Camus not only insinuates his search for roots has been brought on by recent political events, but he stresses that he is the only person in his family who can uncover his origins. The knowledge for which he searches is connected primarily to his father, the first man:

[I]l n’avait jamais pensé à l’homme qui dormait là comme à un être vivant, mais comme à un inconnu qui était passé autrefois sur la terre où il était né, dont sa mère lui disait qu’il lui ressemblait et qui était mort au champ d’honneur. Pourtant ce qu’il avait cherché avidement à savoir à travers les livres et les êtres, il lui semblait maintenant que ce secret avait partie liée avec ce mort, ce père cadet, avec ce qu’il avait été et ce qu’il était devenu et que lui-même avait cherché bien loin ce qui était près de lui dans le temps et dans le sang. A vrai dire, il n’avait pas été aidé. Une famille où l’on parlait peu, où on ne lisait ni écrivait, une mère malheureuse et distraite. Personne ne l’avait connu que sa mère qui l’avait oublié. Il en était sûr. Et il était mort inconnu sur cette terre où il était passé furtivement, comme un inconnu. C’était à lui à se renseigner sans doute, à demander (36).

Moreover, poverty always dominates Camus’s quest for knowledge. By evoking such poverty Camus arouses pity. He also mythologizes *pied-noir* culture, particularly those *petits blancs* who fought and died for France and left behind such misery in the shape of a grieving family that struggled to overcome the hardship.

Critics rarely discuss Camus’s orphan status directly, and nor does Camus himself. However, I contend that Camus’s intense descriptions of poverty, and his allusions to poverty (by referring directly and indirectly to the absence of his father), intensify his mythopoetics. At one point in *Le Premier Homme* Camus refers to the abundance of orphaned children in Algeria, the sons and daughters of those killed in war: “chaque jour des centaines d’orphelins naissent dans tous les coins d’Algérie, arabes et français, fils et filles sans père qui devraient ensuite apprendre à vivre sans leçon et sans héritage.” (83) In doing so Camus lays claim to the land by these orphan children. Like

him, these children without fathers and without heritage would still grow up with a sense of belonging to their surroundings. By emphasizing that both French and Arab soldiers fought for France, Camus further complicates the issue. He places his *pied-noir* father alongside Arabs soldiers, highlighting that they served for France, and acknowledging that they both have rights to Algeria.

Although Camus uses memories of his childhood to illustrate his *pied-noir* experience, he questions explicitly the effect of memory on the poor:

La mémoire des pauvres déjà est moins nourrie que celle des riches, elle a moins de repères aussi dans l'espace puisqu'ils quittent rarement de lieu où ils vivent, moins de repères aussi dans le temps d'une vie uniforme et grise. Bien sûr, il y a la mémoire du cœur dont on dit qu'elle est la plus sûre, mais le cœur s'use à la peine et au travail, il oublie plus vite sous le poids des fatigues. Le temps perdu ne se retrouve que chez les riches. Pour les pauvres, il marque seulement les traces vagues au chemin de la mort. (93)

Certainly Camus makes his case for using fiction and autobiography. He convinces us of the need to embellish the memory and life of *pieds-noirs*. For him there is a great need to uncover memories and retrace the past. He wants to discover more about his father, but Camus alleges this is more difficult than normal because his mother has difficulty remembering the past. Camus attributes his mother's inability to remember to her poverty. Therefore, Camus conveys his need to recreate memories for the community of *pieds-noirs*. By recreating these memories, Camus shapes his Algerian identity. His recreated memories produce stories that were prevalent throughout the *pied-noir* culture and accepted by *pieds-noirs*.

## 6. Chapter Conclusion

Camus's past, including his past vision of Algerian nationality is not only a myth, but it is a myth that complicates his future vision of Algeria. Camus's *pied-noir* Algeria involves significant loss and poverty – the loss of his French father meant he endured a upbringing in the Belcourt quarter of Algiers with his strict Spanish grandmother, his mute, hard working mother, his brother and his disabled uncle. Camus's ambivalent past as a *pied-noir*, but specifically as a *petit blanc*, meant that he perceived and continued to support an all-inclusive Algerian nation. Despite his written support for disenfranchised Algerians, Camus constructs an Algerian nation from his “imagined political community” in the midst of the struggle for independence. Benedict Anderson's concept of political community serves to illustrate how Camus approves of an Algerian nation that is socially constructed by *pieds-noirs* like himself. Indeed, in accordance with Anderson's theory, this new nation only exists because of the decline in privilege of the previous nation. Camus mythologizes this hybrid nation that promotes the *pied-noir* community because his people are poor, similar to Arabs. However, it only exists for him and his community because only they conceived of it. His poverty and loss, as well as his fortunate colonial education and literary success, are all consolidated within his prohibitive vision of Algeria's future that vehemently distrusts Algerian independence.

As my analysis in this chapter has indicated, this distrust of independence is a result of Camus's romantic view of Algeria and French colonialism. He has difficulty remembering the past, and it became even more difficult for Camus to remember his past because of his experience with poverty. This lack of real memory leads to mythical memories and imaginary narratives. David Carroll asserts:

Camus's Algeria is thus a construct or fiction which does not so much ignore or negate historical reality as recast or redirect it. More importantly, his Algeria is the homeland of a particular imaginary community where a people with a distinct cultural identity is alleged to have been formed, a site where narratives of the birth, development, and even death of this people, its triumphs and defeats, its possibilities and limitations, are inscribed. (518)

The problem is that Camus's Algerian nation was always doomed. His mythopoetics was based on colonial mythology so his illusion of an inclusive Algerian future was always impossible, unless he addressed fully the problems of colonialism. In my opinion Camus failed to recognize adequately the troubles caused by colonialism. Certainly Camus critiqued colonialism, but his criticism was measured and did not address the gravity of the situation. As I have stated earlier, despite his articles in *Chroniques Algériennes* where Carroll, arguably one of Camus's most sympathetic critics believes "he was honorably insistent that France in Algeria should live up to her professions" I do not agree that Camus's journalism is an adequate portrayal of an anticolonial sentiment or a condemnation of injustice. (520) For this reason I believe Camus's writing represents a negotiated narrative that falls in the middle of colonialism and independence, just as the *pied-noir* falls in between the rich French colon and the Arab or Kabyle.

Camus's literature examined here allows us to observe Camus's attempt at dealing with his displacement within and his attachment to his homeland. In particular, his semi-autobiographical posthumous novel *Le Premier Homme* leads us to believe Camus tried to overcome his Algerian identity crisis, but his dislocation from his homeland during the Algerian War merely led to a mythical re-appropriation. Camus's use of a third person narrator/alias, compared with first person perspectives in his earlier writings, does not create much distance here because he also includes real names of

characters. Biography demonstrates the authenticity of his nation. However, when Camus mixes biography with invention we observe nostalgia.

I must add, however, that even though Camus was severely criticized by critics such as Apter, O'Brien, and Said for not supporting independence, critics such as Carroll, Kelly, and Klein praise Camus's Algerian foresight. Those who accepted Camus's moderate stance on Algerian Independence suggest he fell back into favor in the 1990s because his initial concerns were renewed and exposed during another bloody war that claimed the lives of over 150,000 people. In fact many now believe that Camus was correct morally to oppose independence and the violence associated with it. Perhaps he was right to support the rights of Arab citizens that also allowed his *pied-noir* community to stay in Algeria. As I have stated throughout this chapter, Camus's depiction of his Algerian community, which is based on reality and imagination, focuses on *pieds-noirs* to such an extent that Camus loses the Algerian nation to his colonial heritage. Camus's Algeria was always rooted in his version of colonialism, whose existence still relied on the colonial model. I argue that nostalgia, sentimental depictions of poverty, and nameless Arab characters do not cancel out his colonial sympathies and his blatant neglect to critique directly the colonial practices that led to injustice.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ANTICOLONIAL SENTIMENTS OF FRANTZ FANON

“Colonie de peuplement déclarée territoire métropolitain.  
L’Algérie a vécu sous une domination policière et militaire jamais égalée en pays colonial.” (61)  
Frantz Fanon “L’Algérie face aux tortionnaires français”  
*Pour la révolution africaine* (1964)

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter I will re-position Frantz Fanon by discussing his important role in Algerian liberation and the controversial legacy he left behind. My purpose is to explain why it is necessary today to revisit Fanon and his work on Algeria. In doing so, I will provide a critical examination of Fanon’s personal and professional history in addition to an analysis of his discourse in order to uncover his mythopoeitics.

The second of the three writers in this project, Frantz Fanon, was born into a bourgeois family in Fort-de-France, Martinique in 1925. Although his family belonged to a social class that encouraged assimilation to French culture, it was his high school teacher Aimé Césaire who influenced Fanon politically with his philosophy of *négritude*, a philosophy that was developed by francophone African intellectuals Aime Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon Damas in the 1930s. Although *négritude* emerged from French colonialism and anger with the need for black intellectuals to assimilate in France, it became a strategy used by Africans worldwide that enabled them to unite, find a common identity and oppose racism and colonialism. Césaire’s ideology involved an acceptance of blackness, an appreciation of black culture in order to free our minds of colonial influences, and counteract the inferiority complex created by Western imperialism.

Fanon left Martinique in 1943, during the Nazi occupation, to fight with the Free French Forces. Martinique remained a French colony until 1946 and is now an integral

part of France, constituting one of France's twenty-seven regions. Fanon remained in France after the war and studied medicine and psychiatry. After experiencing racism firsthand in both Martinique and France as a result of assimilation policies and colonial educational practices Fanon published *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952, a study on black identity and the black psyche, from the point of view of a black man from the Antilles. He returned home to Martinique briefly but left for Algeria the following year. In 1953 he began work as chief of staff in the psychiatry ward at Blida-Joinville Hospital. When the Algerian War of Independence began in 1954 Fanon treated both French torturers and Algerian victims of torture. According to Lewis Gordon in *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Reader* (1983), Fanon "supported revolutionaries by utilizing hospital resources to train them in emergency medicine and psychological techniques for resisting torture, as well as fighting techniques that he learned as a soldier in the Second European World War" (3). In 1956 Fanon left his position at the hospital because he refused to support the French and believed his allegiances lay with the Algerian people. According to Christopher Lee in *Frantz Fanon: Toward a Revolutionary Humanism* (2015) Fanon renounced his French citizenship in 1958 when he began working for the FLN. He gained a Tunisian passport and changed his name to Omar Ibrahim Fanon. He later moved to Tunisia and traveled to other African countries while working for the FLN (*Front de Libération National*). While living in Tunis Fanon served on the editorial board of *El-Moudjahid*, the newspaper published by the FLN and circulated among guerilla fighters.

In 1959 Fanon published *L'An Cinq de la Révolution algérienne*, which details the organizing and uprising of the Algerian people. This publication, which was the second in a volume called "Cahiers Libres", was banned in France three months after its

first publication. It is particularly pertinent to this project because it deals exclusively with Algeria, however, the circumstances surrounding its publication are also crucial because it was produced by the emerging editor, François Maspero. Always politically engaged, Maspero was particularly committed to publications that demonstrated resistance during the Algerian War. Today he is commemorated as belonging to the generation of political publishers from the European left. According to David Macey in *Frantz Fanon; A Biography* (2001), Maspero's publishing house became "a focus for opposition to the war" (20). Macey explains that Maspero decided to publish Fanon because he aligned with his views on colonial wars. He also adds that Maspero participated in his own version of censorship, as he did not include Fanon's original preface. Furthermore, he indicates the subscription system the Maspero employed was "advantageous to both publisher and reader" because it was cheaper for readers to access and enabled Maspero to gain a steady source of income (399). I would add that this was also advantageous to Fanon as the writer because he gained readership in this climate of censorship, during the Algerian War.

Fanon believed Algerian natives were deprived of their rights. For this reason he provides us with examples of native oppression that he believed catalyzed the violent revolution. Equally, Fanon presents examples of native organization that characterized the fight for Algerian liberation. Essentially, this publication in which Fanon discusses Algeria explicitly for the first time, contains his critique of French propaganda and his support for Algerian revolutionary tactics, which helped inspire the idea that the struggle for independence could lead to a better civilization.

As Fanon became more and more embroiled in the Algerian situation his allegiance towards Algerians grew. Additionally, his propensity for anticolonial retaliation in the form of violence increased. In fact, Fanon conceived that violence was a necessary component in the process of decolonization. His desire for decolonization is most apparent in the 1961 publication *Les damnés de la terre*, which was released just before his untimely death from leukemia. This dissertation will also discuss the 1964 posthumous publication *Pour la révolution africaine*, a collection of articles, essays, and letters, which span from the early 1950s to his death in 1961.

### **1.1. Fanon and his legacy**

Fanon's writings differ significantly from those of Albert Camus and Assia Djebar because he uses nonfiction to discuss Algeria's struggles and details the efforts Algerian citizens made towards ending their oppression by the French colonial forces. Often categorized as a sociologist and a philosopher, Fanon has influenced history with his critique of colonialism. Consequently, he received criticism for his promotion of violence and became a contradictory, or certainly complex, character. Nonetheless, Fanon's innovative and unconventional ideas on humanism and nationalism as well as his devotion to describing the native alienation and exploitation that led to the Algerian Revolution affords him hero status. By fighting for the freedom of a country that was not his originally, Fanon demonstrated his belief in the concepts of freedom, justice and dignity for everyone and earned himself this hero status. However, we should also note that Fanon's recognition lies beyond Algerian borders. Writing in the "Foreword: Postcolonial Fanonism" of *The Fanon Reader* (2002) Azzedine Haddour summarizes Fanon's heroic rise as well as his falling out of favor in the decades since his death:

In the early 1960s, after his death, Fanon became the symbol of anti-colonial struggle in the Third World. At the same time, in the United States, black political activists involved in the civil rights movement embraced his views. The initial infatuation with Fanon gave rise to a militant trend in Fanonian scholarship. This trend was, however, short-lived and had abated by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. (xiii)

Haddour goes on to explain that the publication of *Frantz Fanon, Portrait* (2000) by Alice Cherki (one of Fanon's contemporaries who worked in the Blida Joinville hospital with him in Algeria) helped renew interest in Fanon. Moreover, Christian Achour discusses the irony in Fanon's 1980s revival "at a moment when Algeria was in the grip of civil unrest and the social project envisaged by Fanon and undertaken by the FLN...was politically bankrupt." (xiii)

In order to document the attitudes and behavior of Algerians, as well as the revolutionary changes that occurred, with regard to gender, family, media and technology etc. Fanon must appeal to his professional background. To explain effectively how the continued effects of colonial oppression led to the revolution and a complete shift in mentality, Fanon provides a psychological perspective. At times Fanon focuses more on how the Algerian people organized themselves to achieve liberation, and on other occasions he explains to the reader why it is necessary. This enables Fanon to promote his political agenda, which contributes to his reverence as a revolutionary hero and key figure of postcolonial theory, buried on Algerian soil. According to Lewis Gordon in "Requiem on a Life Well Lived" Fanon would have preferred his body be hurled at the enemy. Instead he was laid to rest by the FLN with "a long procession with military rituals befitting an honored soldier and martyr" thus further contributing to his significant role within the FLN and his importance to Algeria (Gibson 26).

Fanon spent many years living in Algeria, working with Algerians, or on their behalf, identifying with the native population and sympathizing with their struggles. He has been aligned with many other French writers from the Caribbean, the Maghreb, Africa or France, most notably Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and Jean-Paul Sartre. He has also been compared to other revolutionary figures such as Mao Tse-tung, Amilcar Cabral, and Ernesto “Che” Guevara or nationalist leaders such as Mohandas Gandhi. For this reason Fanon and his writings are an important element to this project.

When positioning Fanon with respect to his Franco-Martinican origins, it is necessary to gauge the impact of his upbringing, education, and profession before critiquing his writings. Certainly Fanon’s profession and tenure in Algeria validates how he bears witness to the need for revolution and the role of Algerians in this battle. It would appear that Fanon’s Martinican origins position him as an outsider who was neither born nor raised in Algeria, however, Fanon’s decision to move within French colonies from his Caribbean homeland to France to Algeria may categorize him as a settler. Undoubtedly, it raises concerns about his ability to represent the Algerian situation accurately. For example, Nicholas Harrison, author of “Positioning (Fanon)” suggests Fanon’s biography itself contains many ironies. Harrison reminds us: “young Fanon not only fought in Free French armies in Morocco, Algeria and on the Swiss border, but was decorated by Colonel Salan, one of the future leaders of the French forces in the Algerian War and one of the founders of the OAS.” Fanon’s previous interaction with the OAS (Organisation de l’armée secrète), a far-right French dissident organization whose aim was to prevent Algerian Independence from French colonial rule, indicates

not only the impact of French colonialism on his past, but also emphasizes the complexity of his origins. Jock McCullough opens his introduction of *Black Soul White Artifact* (1983) by highlighting this same point, but he adds that Fanon was awarded the Croix de Guerre “for heroism in combat” by Colonel Raoul Salan (1). Indeed, both critics wish to highlight Fanon’s early career in the military and thus demonstrate how ambiguous and polemical a figure Fanon truly was. Harrison insinuates that Fanon’s role was exaggerated or that the identity of the former French war hero was either misunderstood, inadequately explored, or over-estimated since he identified with Algerians through the French language and French colonization.

Certainly though, Fanon represents an alternative perspective of Algeria that is impossible for Camus and Djébar because they were born, raised, and educated there. While he develops his own Algerian agenda, we must not forget that his ancestors were African and colonized by the French too. The French colonized Fanon linguistically and culturally. He was a product of the French educational system. Therefore, he was an outsider to Algeria spatially, but an insider to the situation socially and culturally. Like Camus and Djébar, Fanon also possessed a unique hybrid identity. Dissimilarly, though, Fanon did not grow up there and experience this particular colonial situation from birth. Thus, critics of Fanon believe it was easy for him to insert himself in this struggle for Independence. Ultimately, they believe he had less at stake in Algeria than he did in Martinique, his place of birth, or in France, his linguistic and cultural home.

Fanon is a complex revolutionary figure that has gained significant notoriety. He is pertinent to this study not only because of his background, but his essays and research in psychiatry create composite texts that depict the struggle between natives and *pie-*

*noir* settlers. Indeed, Fanon's narratives differ significantly from Algerian-born *pied-noir* Albert Camus and Berber Assia Djebar in terms of style, structure and objective, but not necessarily in terms of his overall contribution to French Algerian mythopoetics. Camus mythologizes his *pied-noir* family and community as well as Algerians in the Kabyle region. Djebar mythologizes her Berber community, her family, fellow writers and friends. However, Fanon contributes to my definition of Algerian mythopoetics in that he mythologizes the indigenous peoples, who belong to a culture different from his own. He mythologizes his chosen, adopted community of Algerians. As he analyzes their culture and their story and mythologizes decolonization and independence he must also mythologize the settlers and colonization, in addition to himself as an anti-colonial figure.

## ***2. L'an V de la révolution algérienne***

### **2.1. Introduction**

Following Fanon's study on the psychology of racism in colonial situations presented in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), his objective in his second publication is to demonstrate how the Algerian people organized themselves during the fifth year of the Algerian Revolution (as the title indicates). Having lived in Algeria for several years at this point Fanon witnessed directly how Algeria needed to gain independence from France and how Algerians would accomplish their mission. This book, which contains a volume of essays (one of which was published in *Les Temps Modernes* in June, 1959), shows how Algeria became a significant landmark in terms of anticolonial battles. This Revolution was particularly important for the African continent, as it preceded a tide of African Revolutions. By focusing simultaneously on how the French tried to civilize Algerians, and subsequently how Algerians altered their lifestyles in order to achieve liberation, Fanon mythologizes the French and the Algerians. More specifically, he exposes the colonial and anticolonial actions of both groups. Through analyzing a mixture of Fanon's observations, rhetoric, and passion in these essays I can underscore the manner in which Fanon mythologizes the actions of the Algerian population, and the events leading up to the Algerian Revolution, including aspects of the Algerian Revolution itself.

At the beginning of the introduction Fanon highlights his shock at the fact that the revolution will soon be entering into its sixth year, after sixty months of fighting. In addition to the title of the book, Fanon chooses to highlight the duration of the war thus far. It is necessary for Fanon to inform us once again that the Algerians have spent many

months and years fighting the French. Also, while writing in Tunisia, after having been ejected from Algeria because of death threats, Fanon's deliberate observation underscores the extent to which the Algerian people must continue to fight against French forces. This is an emphatic introduction and Fanon's use of time suggests that significant efforts have already been made, but to many people's surprise they were not enough and more must be done:

La guerre d'Algérie entre bientôt dans sa sixième année. Personne parmi nous comme dans le monde ne soupçonnait, en novembre 1954, qu'il faudrait se battre pendant soixante mois avant d'obtenir que le colonialisme français desserre son étreinte et donne voix au peuple algérien. Après cinq ans de lutte, aucune modification politique n'est intervenue. (8)

It is also important to remember how readers at the time in France or Algeria would react to the statements Fanon makes in his publication. As we read and analyze Fanon's statements over fifty years later, in a postcolonial context, we cannot underestimate the power of his words and the effect they had. Certainly, it is true that his opinions hold less weight today after being subjected to much criticism throughout the decades that have passed. However, the fact that this particular publication was banned in France six months after publication suggests the influential capacity of Fanon's rhetoric.

Additionally, it highlights editor François Maspero's dedication to anticolonial thought. In "Un entretien avec François Maspero: « Quelques malentendus »" originally published on [revueperiode.net](http://revueperiode.net), September 18<sup>th</sup> 2014, Maspero recalls how he was introduced to Fanon and his work: "Grace à Mario Andrade, je suis entré en contact avec Fanon pour éditer *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, évidemment refusé par tous les autres éditeurs."

As Fanon's focus shifts to the future and design of the Algerian movement, he highlights how this war is unlike any other. Firstly, he points out how the duration and peculiar nature of French colonialism in Algeria contributed to mass mobilization within the whole population. Secondly, he wishes to demonstrate the difficulty inherent in revolution. More specifically, Fanon acknowledges the disparity in war when he refers to the unjust expectation that Algerians, or any undeveloped nation, must fight against the French, or the ruling force, with purity: "Le peuple sous-développé doit à la fois prouver, par la puissance de son combat, son aptitude à se constituer en Nation, et par la pureté de chacun de ses gestes, qu'il est, jusque dans les moindres détails, le peuple le plus transparent, le plus maître de soi." (9) With this introduction Fanon clearly displays the manner in which he will blend his personal opinions and memories with history in order to present his version of Algerian mythopoeics. Born Martinican but buried as an Algerian in his adopted homeland, Fanon wanted to show the best view of Algeria and Algerians. In order to do so it was necessary to construct the revolutionary Algerian myth. It was Fanon's desire to distinguish Algeria from other undeveloped nations. Therefore, he had to illuminate what Algeria did differently. Algeria became the ultimate example of how the colonized, or under-developed, should prove themselves in fighting against the colonizers. He also wishes to establish the unity of the unique uprising in that all aspects of the Algerian community helped contribute to its success – men, women and children.

## **2.2. Chapter 1 "L'Algérie se dévoile"**

When one contemplates Fanon's empathy for the Algerian people, the first chapter in this collection immediately comes to mind. It is perhaps the most famous

example of Fanon's commitment to identify with the Algerian struggle. Christopher Lee, author of *Frantz Fanon; Toward a Revolutionary Humanism* (2015) addresses the unconventionality of Fanon's dedication to Algerians "despite his own experiences of discrimination by Algerians, despite class and cultural distinctions between himself and those he sought to represent, despite lack of fluency in Arabic, despite being considered a foreigner." (32) Lee acknowledges Fanon's identification with the Algerian struggle is connected to his own experiences with French colonialism. As Fanon focuses on how the Algerian veil became an important symbol along the path to freedom, he also discusses the role of women in the Revolution. Originally a homogenous style of dress in Algeria, Fanon claims women began to abandon veils and dress like European women during the Revolution as they engaged in the fight for freedom. Of course this example of what Homi Bhabha defines as mimicry was not to last as the women had to resort to the veils in order to smuggle weapons.

In the beginning Fanon dwells on the link between style of dress and identity. He reminds us how our choice of dress relates to our region or culture or both. As a result, he explains, veils characterized women in the Maghreb. Traditionally, women wore a *haik* veil and men wore a *fez* or *djellaba* depending on whether they were in the city or the countryside. According to Fanon, French colonial society viewed veils in a homogenous way so it was comprehensible that they would use the veils, which were a symbol of Algerian cultural and religious identity to emancipate and thus conquer Algerian women. Fanon plays up not only how Western society mythologized Arab culture, but also how French colonialists perceived Algerian women specifically. In an effort to control or transform Algerian society, the French tried to influence women first, hoping that

Algerian men would soon follow their lead and agree to such amendments: “Ayons les femmes et le reste suivra” (15). We learn the French began this practice originally in the 1930s, but it gained momentum again in the 1950s during the Revolution. Fanon details how the French mythologized the role of women in Algeria as he quotes the political doctrine of the colonial administration:

Si nous voulons frapper la société algérienne dans sa contexture, dans ses facultés de résistance, il nous faut d’abord conquérir les femmes; il faut que nous allions les chercher derrière la voile où elles se dissimulent et dans les maisons où l’homme les cache. (16)

Although the French invested a great amount of money into trying to change the role of Algerian women in society, converting them to become more European and live by French values, Fanon insinuates that the French misjudged Algerian matriarchs in their mythologizing of Arab culture. Despite appearances of a patriarchal society, he suggests women were intermediaries who possessed an inner strength that was not visible because of their veils:

Sous le type patrilinéaire de la société algérienne, les spécialistes décrivent une structure d’essence matrimoniale. La société arabe a souvent été présentée par les occidentaux comme une société de l’extériorité, du formalisme et du personnage. La femme algérienne, intermédiaire entre les forces obscures et le groupe, paraît alors revêtir une importance primordiale. Derrière le patriarcat visible, manifeste, on affirme l’existence plus capitale, d’un matriarcat de base. (16)

Certainly the French achieved some degree of success and some Algerian women were considered as “saved” by the Europeans in that they were veil-free:

Les forces occupantes, en portant sur le voile de la femme algérienne le maximum de leur action psychologique, devaient évidemment récolter quelques résultats. Ça et là il arrive donc que l’on « sauve » une femme qui, symboliquement, est dévoilée. Ces femmes-épreuves, au visage nu et au corps libre, circulent désormais, comme monnaie forte dans la société européenne d’Algérie... Les Européens surexcités et tout à leur victoire, par l’espèce de transe qui s’empare d’eux, évoquent les phénomènes psychologiques de la conversion. (21)

In an elaboration of French/European mythologizing of Algerian women, Fanon suggests the dominant attitudes of European authorities and those not directly involved with this conversion are an example of “exotisme romantique, fortement teinté de sensualité” (22).

He recalls a conversation he had with a European lawyer visiting Algeria:

Une réflexion – parmi d’autres – révélatrice de cet état d’esprit, nous a été faite par un Européen de passage en Algérie et qui, dans l’exercice de sa profession – il était avocat – avait pu voir quelques Algériennes dévoilées. Ces hommes, disait-il, parlant des Algériens, sont coupables de couvrir tant de beautés étranges. Quand un peuple, concluait cet avocat, recèle de telles réussites, de telles perfections de la nature, il se doit de les montrer, de les exposer. A l’extrême, ajoutait-il on devrait pourvoir les obliger à le faire. (22-23)

Fanon displays what he believes to be a typical European reaction. In fact, his memory of this conversation is tinged with violence at how forceful and persistent the European is about seeing the women de-veiled:

Mais également il y a chez le Européen cristallisation d’une agressivité, mise en tension d’une violence en face de la femme algérienne. Dévoiler cette femme, c’est mettre en évidence la beauté, c’est mettre à nu son secret, briser sa résistance, la faire disponible pour l’aventure. (23)

Fanon stages the situation effectively; he compares the white creation of the Negro to the French preoccupation with the veiled Algerian woman. In retaliation, though, just as the Negro created negritude in response, Algerians began a huge counter-assimilation project as part of their revolutionary agenda. Women were given a more powerful role in the Algerian Revolution at this time:

C’est le blanc qui crée le Nègre. Mais c’est le Nègre qui crée la négritude...Le colonisé, devant l’accent mis par le colonialiste sur tel ou tel secteur de ses traditions réagit de façon très violente...A l’occasion de la lutte de Libération, l’attitude de la femme algérienne, de la société autochtone à l’égard du voile va subir des modifications importantes. (27)

In her 2011 review of *A Dying Colonialism* Barbara Celarent reminds us that Fanon dictated much of his writing to his wife. However, she criticizes harshly Fanon’s style of

writing: “Although obviously influenced by Aimé Césaire’s by then widely known *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, it has none of that work’s extraordinary poetry, self-conscious design, and disciplined thematics.” She also says Fanon’s books lack “a clearly conceived audience”. (2064) However, in her discussion of this first chapter Celarent accuses Fanon of “anachronism”. (2066) Celarent believes the decision to allow Algerian women to abandon the veil was made by men in the FLN, solely for recruitment purposes. She is more concerned with Fanon’s claim that “even the women’s “alleged confinement” in the pre-revolutionary period was in fact a chosen withdrawal into a secret realm untouchable by the colonizers.” (2066) In Celarent’s opinion Fanon fails to criticize the gender inequality of FLN recruitment adequately. Furthermore, she faults Fanon for participating in exoticism too. Celarent points out how Fanon accuses white colonials of similar behavior. She also reminds us of the exoticism “of cross-race desire in *Black Skin*” where, according to her, his language was “more neutral” than in this publication. (2066)

Celarent ignores the fact that Fanon praises Algerian women for their bravery, detailing how they took great risks leaving home unaccompanied, travelling alone carrying money or sending messages in an effort to aid the guerilla movement. She refuses to recognize how Fanon acknowledges both the significance and the precariousness of the situation, mythologizing women as martyrs, by continually empathizing their revolutionary character. Instead Celarent insists on discussing Fanon’s representation of women in general. In this review she points out anachronisms in “L’Algérie se dévoile” and highlights briefly how Fanon is also guilty of misrepresenting aspects of the truth in this particular essay. More importantly, Celarent considers Fanon’s

views, thus his mythologizing of Algerians, as an example of romanticism, which is an example of Fanon's "pure will". In fact, she feels that his observations in *L'an V de la Révolution algérienne* "bespeaks Fanon's determination to be Algerian, to become one with this nation with which he had – in objective terms – little connection." (2066) She does not provide sufficient evidence in this review to support all of her claims, but she acknowledges why Fanon would desire Algerian freedom and addresses why this publication is important:

Algeria was a largely Arab and Muslim country; Fanon was a West Indian black and a secularist. Algeria was a colony; Fanon came as a senior officer in the colonial civil service. The Algerian Revolutionaries were riven with factional quarrels that often ended in cold-blooded murder; Fanon idealized them as a vanguard of a unified new nation [...] Why then is this book, and Fanon's work more broadly, so important? It is important first for its sheer emotion, its passion, its rage at the horrors of colonialism and racism. (2066)

Celarent suggests Fanon's arrival in Algeria illuminated his own position as a black French doctor, occupying the role of oppressed and oppressor. Suffering from racism, yet in a position of power, Fanon's experiences in Algeria precipitated his need to write about the horrors of French colonialism.

Certainly the analysis of Fanon's first chapter proves that Fanon should be viewed as a mythmaker within Algerian and African communities because he goes beyond history and reality to tell his version of events, or create his anti-French, pro-Algerian version of events that he believed would reinforce the destructive nature of colonialism and in turn ignite a positive image of those who endured colonialism and were forced to fight against it. Evidently Fanon's book, which is his second overall but his first focusing on Algeria, conveys a mythology that has a double function. For example, this chapter "L'Algérie se dévoile" highlights the beginning of Fanon's anticolonial rhetoric

concerning Algeria, but he presents his views in such a manner that is possible for his ideas to apply to those suffering in similar circumstances in other colonial, francophone regimes. The function of his mythology is to reach Algerians and colonized Africans because he acted in response to racism he experienced as a black man and in response to racism he witnessed against Algerians. At this time Fanon began to assert the unity of all colonized people.

Fanon likely received criticism for this chapter on account of his comments in *Peau noir, masques blancs*, where he explicitly addressed race and gender. According to Celarent “Generations of scholars have debated Fanon’s attitudes towards women” (2066). Nonetheless, it is important once again to point out that Fanon did not belong to this Algerian community racially or religiously. He was neither Arab nor Muslim. He was a Martinican man who married a French woman. He chose deliberately to construct a mythology that displayed the best aspects of the Algerian people and the Algerian Revolution. *L’An V de la révolution algérienne* was banned in France because it portrayed the colonizers in a negative way. Fanon establishes the French as the enemy early in this publication because their negative actions are necessary for Fanon to progress with his positive portrayal of Algerians and their revolutionary fight.

Although Fanon appears to use history to show why and how the Algerian community employed women, critic R. W. Johnson states, “What at best were pious hopes and half-truths pass continually for received factual conclusions” (308). In other words Johnson believes Fanon makes assertions that were either false or unverified and as a result we must be weary of his ambivalent role and his contradictory attitude with respect to Algerian politics. Fanon suggests that by enabling women to take on such a

large role, Algerians acknowledged not only their need for a change in philosophy or their desire for help, but they had faith in their wives and daughters as they believed in their ability to accomplish the necessary tasks.

### **2.3. Chapter 2 “Ici la voix de l’Algérie”**

As the title indicates, the second essay in Fanon’s volume concentrates on the voice(s) of Algeria. Fanon’s objective is to show how Algeria’s voice evolved throughout the Revolution from representing only the voice of the French colonizer to eventually representing the voices of the Kaybles and Arab Algerians. As Fanon explains, the French broadcasting station, *Radio-Alger*, dominated the airwaves and offered comfort to the European settlers living in Algeria. Typically Algerians could not afford a radio:

Les Algériens qui en possèdent se recrutent principalement au sein de la « bourgeoisie évoluée », et chez quelques kabyles anciennement émigrés, et rentrés depuis au village. La brutale stratification économique, entre les sociétés dominante et dominée, explique pour une large part cet état de choses. (52)

Even if they had the means to purchase a radio, Algerians refused to listen. They maintained this Western form of communication threatened their traditional way of life:

Dans l’ensemble elle refuse cette technique qui met en cause sa stabilité et les types traditionnels de sociabilité; la raison invoquée étant que les programmes en Algérie, indifférenciés parce que calqués sur le modèle occidental, ne s’adaptent pas à la hiérarchisation patri-linéaire de type strict, voire féodal, et à interdits moraux multiples, de la famille algérienne. (53)

Fanon implies that Algerians are not only concerned about what the radio represents or promotes in terms of Western culture and Western thought. He suggests Algerian society refuses to accept this specific technique of manipulation because it does not try to adapt or take into account Algerian traditions. He explains how Algerians could not listen to the radio together as a family:

pressés de questions sur les raisons de cette réticence, les Algériens font assez souvent la réponse suivante : « Les traditions de respectabilité revêtent chez nous une telle importance et telle hiérarchisation, qu'il nous est pratiquement impossible d'écouter en famille les programmes radiophoniques. Les allusions érotiques, ou même les situations burlesques, qui veulent faire rire, évoquées à la radio, provoquent au sein de la famille à l'écoute des tensions insupportables. » (52)

Fanon's commitment to history was clear in these essays as he shows how Algerians viewed the radio initially as a deterrent. Although it has long been established that Fanon was biased towards the Algerians, on this occasion he also tries to show the weaknesses, or disadvantages, that exist within the Algerian community, with respect to technological advancement. He recognizes their concerns with the radio yet his historical overview suggests that Algerian's initial refusal to purchase or listen to the radio strengthened the colonizer's agenda. Simultaneously, he argues that there was no need for Algerians to resist the radio before the war because it was solely for Europeans to use and communicate among themselves "Des Français parlent aux Français" (57).

It was not until after the Sétif Massacre in 1945 that Algerians began to notice the benefits of radios and purchase them. It was also at this time that Algerians became aware of the anticolonial movements in neighboring North African countries and felt it was necessary to be informed. It is here that Fanon adds important insights about the shift in attitude of Algerians towards the French language. He explains that during this time period Algerians realized French power could be challenged and that they did not need to fear the French language. In the beginning of the Revolution Algerians felt it was imperative to send out their message in an effort to counteract the messages of propaganda that were issued by the colonialist power. In fact, Fanon points out that Algerians focused on all forms of media, including journalism: "Les Algériens, avides

d'informations objectives, achètent les journaux démocratiques qui arrivent de France.”

(64). Fanon then describes the economic and political factors that eventually led to Algerians losing access to newspapers “Pour l'Algérien, réclamer *L'Express*, *L'Humanité*, ou *Le Monde*, c'est avouer publiquement et le plus souvent à un indicateur de police, son allégeance à la Révolution”. (65) It was not long until the political directorate advised Algerians to boycott the Algerian press too.

Once again Fanon's portrayal of this situation, and thus his mythologizing, shows that he sympathizes mostly with the colonized Algerians. He provides his version of the facts and never fails to remind us of the how certain situations, for example a lack of access to media resources or an inability to comprehend the resources, negatively affected the Algerians. Even when the situation has become dire for the Algerians, Fanon's tone remains optimistic for the Algerian cause. For example, he does not demonstrate compassion for the French when they lose revenue during the newspaper boycott or when they lose sovereignty over the decline of *Radio-Alger*. He does not hide his contentment with the subsequent success of *la Voix de l'Algerie combattante*, a new, secret radio station created in 1956 whose primary objective was to unify the Algerian people. When Fanon acknowledges that significant numbers of Algerians are illiterate, he reminds readers that Algeria was the site of an unjust colonial educational system. It is ironic, though, that Fanon, who is a product of French colonial education, does not consider this significant loss as detrimental to the Algerians. It certainly contributes to his overall mythology of how downtrodden the Algerian population was at this time. Nevertheless, Fanon shows how they were able to overcome such obstacles and organize themselves against the powerful French.

Fanon presents a version of history that he perceives as the truth. In the beginning of this chapter Fanon projects significant pity for the Algerian masses who struggle to know what is happening in their country, who are lost without vital communication and who must always resort to other means of survival in their pursuit of liberation. In the end, however, Fanon uses the radio to promote his Algerian War agenda as well as a certain *united* version of Algeria. He reiterates that Algerians opposed the radio until 1954. He repeats how negatively Algerians viewed the radio until the creation of their own station:

On a vu qu'avec la création de *la Voix de l'Algérie combattante*, les postes de T.S.F. se multiplient dans des proportions extraordinaires. Avant 1954, l'instrument de réception, la technique radiophonique de communication de la pensée à distance, n'est pas seulement un objet neutre en Algérie. Perçue comme courroie de transmission du pouvoir colonialiste, comme moyen dont dispose l'occupant pour imprégner physiquement la Nation, le poste est investi par le peuple de significations péjoratives. (79)

Fanon claims the creation of their own radio station "*La Voix de la l'Algérie combattante*" enabled Algerians not only to override French authority, but empowered them to enter the Revolution:

Puisque la nouvelle Algérie en marche décide de se raconter et de dire, le poste de T.S.F. devient indispensable. C'est lui qui permet à *la Voix* de s'enraciner dans les villages et sur les collines. Avoir un poste de T.S.F., c'est solennellement *entrer en guerre*. (80)

Fanon completes his mythologizing of the Algerian combatant radio station by comparing this situation to that of World War II. "Le souvenir des radios libres, nées au cours de la deuxième guerre mondiale, fait ressortir la spécificité de l'exemple algérien." (80). While he does not predominantly shape his story of Algerian Revolution around other wars, he uses the past to convey how this is a tried and tested technique that was successful and well warranted. In addition to history, Fanon's discourse uses repetition

and emphatic language to endorse Algerians' use of the radio in the war and embellish the myth of the Algerian War of Independence. To labor his points Fanon often punctuates his writing by italicizing, including active verbs, and using quotation marks “*ouïr*”, “*entrer en guerre*”, “« progrès »”, “« ceux des montagnes »”, “ « Parole »”, “« digéré »”, “« indigène »” etc. (68-82) Moreover, it is his ability to create a specific image of the Algerian in their pursuit of freedom that secures Fanon's position as an effective French-Algerian myth-maker. For example, Fanon communicates a story, or a single event, that blends the reality of the French Algerian setting with the motivation of the native Algerian population to produce a dramatic scene that we can visualize:

Avec la création d'une *Voix de l'Algérie combattante*, l'Algérien se trouve dans l'obligation vitale d'écouter le message, de l'assimuler et bientôt de l'assumer. Acheter un poste, se mettre à genoux, la tête contre l'écran, ça n'est déjà plus vouloir des informations, au niveau de la formidable expérience qui se déroule dans le pays, c'est *ouïr* les premières paroles de la Nation. (80)

Fanon's expression conveys the urgency, passion, and drive of the Algerian people to listen and inquire about their future and new existence.

In this chapter “Ici la voix de l'Algérie” Fanon mythologizes and romanticizes war and nation building by using propaganda from past wars. He accomplishes this specifically by exploiting the use of media and detailing the methods used by the French and Algerians to either achieve success or failure in this aspect of the Revolution. His rhetoric is a collage taken from his memories and several historical examples that include colonial and anticolonial mythology. Just as we see with Camus and will see with Djébar, the real and embellished elements of Fanon's narratives past and present work together to contribute to this unique French Algerian mythopoetics.

## 2.4. Chapter 3 “La famille algérienne”

This chapter focuses on what Fanon considers to be “great modifications” that occurred within the Algerian family unit after 1954: “Nous voudrions ici suivre l’évolution de la famille algérienne, sa mutation, ses grands changements à l’occasion et au cours de la guerre de Libération.” (86) In order to demonstrate how the Algerian family evolved in their quest for liberation, Fanon reconstructs the past. Each time he begins a paragraph with “Avant 1954” Fanon describes the Algerian family unit pre-Revolution. (86)

In order to detail accurately the extent to which each Algerian citizen became involved in the Revolution, Fanon describes what he believes are the most important relationships and thus transformations; “Le Fils et le Père”, “La Fille et le Père”, “Les Frères”, “Le Couple”, “Le mariage et le divorce”, “La société féminine”, et “L’Algérie dispersée”.

In “Le Fils et le Père” Fanon claims the Revolution split the world in two, meaning that Algerian men’s priorities had changed and as a result the former patriarchal society was obliged to switch power to the son: “Devant la Révolution qui, brutalement, coupe le monde en deux, le père se découvre désarmé et un peu inquiet.” (89). In many ways this disruption to the family was a clash between generations. Fanon’s examples of various family scenarios indicate the younger generation was ready to become involved and tried to convince the rest of the family that this was the right thing to do. The older generation was reluctant, or certainly hesitant to move too quickly. In other words familial roles were reversed and the Revolution created new tensions within Algerian families.

In “La Fille et le Père”, however, Fanon’s description of the relationship transformation is much more dramatic. Relying on the past once again Fanon describes at length the restrictive, domestic status of women prior to 1954. He plays on the mythical, orientalist images the West has created of Algerian women “La jeune fille, dans l’ensemble, n’a pas l’occasion de développer sa personnalité ni prendre des initiatives. Elle prend place dans le grand réseau domestique de la société algérienne.” (93) For Fanon’s anticolonial mythopoetics to succeed, it is vital that he reminds us of the past. Indeed his examples of life before 1954 build up to this climactic shift:

Ce sont toutes ces restrictions qui vont être bousculées et remises en question par la lutte de Libération nationale. La femme algérienne dévoilée, qui occupe une place de plus en plus importante dans l’action révolutionnaire, développe sa personnalité, découvre le domaine exaltant de la responsabilité. La liberté du peuple algérien s’identifie alors à la libération de la femme, à son entrée dans l’histoire. (95)

As Fanon recalls the changes that occurred during the war he wishes to emphasize how feminism increased in Algeria, or rather, he points out the wave of feminism that came ashore in Algeria as a result of the war. Certainly, he wishes to address the feminist roles women assumed in Algerian society at this time as he once again repeats how women took part in the direct action, which he already discussed in his first chapter “L’Algérie se dévoile”. In many ways, though, Fanon’s analysis of Algerian women appears contradictory or incomplete. Initially he suggests the French failed to liberate Algerian women as they had hoped. Fanon then chooses instead to focus on how the Algerian community reached the decision to allow women a more active role in the war by themselves. The problem is that Fanon fails to acknowledge the inequality that existed in Algeria before this revolutionary change. He talks about how women were characterized by the French for wearing the veil but he does not address fully the matrilineal essence

found within the patriarchal society that the colonial administration exploits. He also fails to recognize how feminism was a byproduct of the war. Incongruously, he ends “L’Algérie se dévoile” by stating in the annex, “La femme algérienne en s’imposant pareille restriction, en choisissant une forme d’existence limitée dans l’espace, approfondissait sa conscience de lutte et se préparait pour le combat.” (48) Fanon’s unsubstantiated claim here threatens to undo his elaborate romanticizing of Algerian emancipation when he suggests Algerian women chose to withdraw from society during the pre-revolutionary period.

When describing the remaining sections “Les Frères”, “Le Couple”, “Le mariage et le divorce”, and “La société féminine”, Fanon forgoes providing us with a lengthy reminder of the traditional, long-established myths created by the French colonials, which coincidentally he felt necessary to include when discussing women. He gives only a brief analysis of the other family relationships. As mentioned in chapter one’s discussion on Albert Camus, Albert Memmi provides an extensive analysis of these myths in *Portrait du Colonisé, Précédé de Portrait du Colonisateur* (1957). His chapter entitled “Portrait Mythique du Colonisé” is most pertinent because he discusses the images the colonizers created of the colonized because it favors their agenda. Memmi explains how, according to the colonizers, the colonized possess traits of laziness or weakness. With reference to this chapter, however, Memmi briefly outlines the difficulties that can arise for the colonized on account of their inexperience in having to organize themselves for political gain, as well as their differences in terms of religious customs or traditions. Memmi’s theory appears in direct antithesis to Fanon’s. He says:

Tôt ou tard, il [le colonisé] se rabat donc sur des positions de repli, c’est-à-dire sur les valeurs traditionnelles. Ainsi s’explique l’étonnante survivance de la famille

colonisée: elle s'offre en véritable valeur-refuge. Elle sauve le colonisé du désespoir d'une totale défaite [...] Le jeune se mariera, se transformera en père de famille dévoué, en frère solidaire, en oncle responsable, et jusqu'à ce qu'il prenne la place de père, en fils respectueux. Tout est rentré dans l'ordre: la révolte et le conflit ont abouti la victoire des parents et de la tradition. Mais c'est une triste victoire. La société colonisée n'aura pas bougé d'un demi-pas; pour le jeune homme c'est une catastrophe intérieure. (119)

Where Fanon praises Algerians for their sacrifices and promotes new revolutionary myths in French Algerian society, Memmi reminds us that defeat is possible for the colonized. On this particular subject it would appear Fanon asserts an optimistic vision for Algeria, whereas Memmi reveals a cautionary outlook on the realities of colonialism.

The significance of Memmi's inquiry into the dynamics of colonialism is that he calls attention to the fact that the ideas one has of the Other are completely subjective: "En fait, il ne s'agit nullement d'une notation objective, donc différencié, donc soumise à de probables transformations, mais d'une institution: par son accusation, le colonisateur institue le colonisé en être paresseux." (103) Memmi recognizes the process involved in myth creation. In fact, in the preface of this publication, he addresses how his consideration of both viewpoints could be useful for both the colonizer and the colonized: "Car enfin, ne suis-je pas en droit de penser maintenant...que ce livre aurait pu être utile au Colonisateur aussi bien qu'au Colonisé?" (22)

When discussing ongoing-war scenarios, Fanon prefers to focus on the progress that has been made, declining to reveal pre-war customs fully: "Les raisons sociales et économiques de cette tradition sont suffisamment connues pour que nous n'y revenions pas." (104) Fanon denies extensive research on previous customs but acknowledges instead the considerable shifts that occurred from 1954 onwards. He favors his personal experiences and tells us what he remembers, which may strengthen his mythopoetics

overall. His refusal to go into explicit detail about what Algeria was like before the Revolution has been perceived as negligent and earned Fanon criticism. He never acknowledges the negative possibilities. His deliberate focus must remain on the present to facilitate his claims of memory through myth. He cannot rely heavily on historical documents that are created by the French. He always gives a brief overview of the situation but his primary objective is to focus on his personal experiences, enabling him to favor the revolutionary changes. This issue of authenticity brings us back to Fanon's role in the Algerian Revolution as an outsider. Writing recently in *What Fanon Said* (2015) Lewis Gordon returns to the accusation that "Fanon was able to get away with more than the average professional in Algeria because of his status as a Frenchman through his Martinican background" (85). Gordon questions the speculations that have persisted and detracted from Fanon's writings and asks: "Couldn't his blackness ironically have been the reason he was able to get away with more by virtue of, in being rejected by both [Arabs and French], being presumed an ally of neither and thus, paradoxically, credible for both as a friend who is the other's enemy?" (85) This reasoning is very problematic because Gordon does not recognize that Fanon could be an ally of both. He shifts the focus of the discussion on Fanon's relationship with Algerians as an outsider to a more pointed discussion on his blackness, failing to address how both his blackness and his Frenchness authenticate his writings.

Although Fanon recognizes that French citizens died, he points out that they died as a result of French colonialism, conquest and repression: "Aujourd'hui, pas un mort en Algérie qui ne soit la victime du colonialisme français." (108) He emphasizes that they died on account of their own people, not because of Algerians, or because of the Algerian

revolution that arose as a result of French practices. Fanon deliberately singles out the torture and terror that unfolded in order to mythologize the Algerian war and Algerians at the same time, and thus creates the myth of the Algerian community

Egalement victimes d'une même tyrannie, identifiant simultanément un ennemi unique, le peuple objectivement dispersé, réalise son unité et fonde dans la souffrance une communauté spirituelle qui constitue le bastion le plus solide de la Révolution algérienne. (110)

Fanon presents the new nation that was emerging at the time. Simultaneously his mythopoetics broadens as he begins to mythologize himself and his role as a revolutionary and as an Algerian citizen.

#### **2.5. Chapter 4 “Médecine et Colonialisme”**

This fourth chapter devoted to medical care and colonialism differs from the others primarily because it relates to Fanon's occupation and for this reason we may be able to view his opinions more credibly. Fanon's use of footnotes in this chapter also authenticates his discourse. In fact we see that in the footnotes he provides examples that verify his aforementioned statements, noting figures, prices or statistics when necessary. While Fanon does not explicitly define what he means by medicine in this chapter, it contrasts with the other chapters precisely because it is a science, as opposed to a social or cultural group as previously discussed. Fanon presents medicine as a powerful substance, tool, or method that has the potential to save or prolong lives. As the title indicates, Fanon discusses medicine in Algeria but he also refers to the complex relationship medicine has with colonialism overall. Fanon opens the chapter by pointing out how medicine was introduced to Algerians: “La science médicale occidentale introduite en Algérie en même temps que le racisme et l'humiliation, a toujours, en tant

que partie du système oppressif, provoqué chez l'autochtone une attitude ambivalente.”

(111)

Despite the lack of a clear definition, we are to assume that Fanon refers to Western medicine, or medicine that is synonymous with French or European culture and society. It is assumed that the French have the means to provide medical services in the form of operations, surgeries or medications. Fanon demonstrates how medicine in general was a tool used by the conquerors to control the native population. Although he recognizes, albeit briefly, the traditional medical techniques favored by Algerians, he does so only to make an even bigger point. Fanon calls attention to the feelings of confusion and mistrust within the Algerian population: “On a, pendant quelque temps, prétendu que la réticence de l'autochtone à se confier au médecin européen trouvait sa raison dans l'attachement de l'indigène à ses techniques médicales traditionnelles ou dans sa fixation aux sorciers ou guérisseurs de son groupe.” (116). Consequently, he shows how Algerian doctors became more discredited than European doctors because through time Algerians abandoned their native beliefs: “Le médecin autochtone est un médecin européenisé, occidentalisé et dans certaines circonstances, il est considéré comme ne faisant plus partie de la société dominée.” (124) This leads to the unlikely success of European doctors: “on estime préférable de s'adresser aux colonisateurs qui sont en réalité « les vrais possesseurs de la technique »” (125).

Perhaps, in an effort to appear less biased against the French, from whom he received his medical degree, Fanon takes considerable measures to detail the corrupt interests of both Algerian and French doctors. Irrespective of their professional oaths, he explains, typically they are both motivated by money and their status in society.

Recalling Gordon's aforementioned comment on Fanon's status as a black man, Fanon does not provide sufficient evidence that he experienced more difficulties as a French educated black doctor.

Fanon conveys the complexity of medicine in Algeria. He reveals why Algerians either accepted or denied European medicine. Specifically, he underscores how access to medicine, or rejection of medicine, has the potential to save or end lives. More often than not, we learn that Algerians became distrustful of native doctors: "Le médecin autochtone est un médecin européenisé, occidentalisé et dans certaines circonstances, il est considéré comme ne faisant plus partie de la société dominée." (124) As a result Algerians chose to deny themselves medical care because French colonials provided it, or they chose European doctors instead of their native counterparts on account of their experience: "C'est d'abord le colonisé malade qui va donner le ton. Dès lors en effet qu'est reconnue la supériorité de la technique occidentale sur les méthodes traditionnelles de traitement, on estime préférable de s'adresser aux colonisateurs qui sont en réalité « les vrais possesseurs de la technique »." (125). Either of these situations contributes to a severe disruption within the Algerian community. Through careful analysis of this fundamental resource, Fanon makes every effort to expose the corruption inherent in the colonial system that threatens to tear apart Algerian society. He proves how medicine is an essential tool during colonialism and the Revolution.

When Fanon affirms the acceptance and integration of modern medicine in Algeria, one should consider the link between his mythopoetics and his profession in medicine and psychiatry. Fanon received his medical training in France, and moved from France to Algeria to work in the Blida-Joinville hospital where he eventually joined the

FLN. Therefore, despite his ambiguous position with respect to medicine in Algeria, he speaks from experience. These experiences and observations working in Algeria as a medical professional, which he documents explicitly in this chapter, strengthen Fanon's mythopoetics.

## 2.6. Chapter 5 “La Minorité Européenne d’Algérie”

In this fifth and final chapter, which as aforementioned was a previously published in *Les Temps Modernes* in June 1959, Fanon addresses, in a more thorough manner, an important minority within a minority - French anticolonialists. By charting a brief history of French Algerian democrats (M.T.L.D. *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* and U.D.M.A. *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien*), and their role in previous wars of the early twentieth century, Fanon questions their power outside of Europe.<sup>7</sup> He asks how they will succeed as Europeans in Algeria. On the one hand he explains how they have the ability to lend support to the native population, but on the other hand he claims they are often passive and ineffective, failing to make a difference.

Fanon's study of anticolonialist Europeans is both unique and contradictory. In many ways he views them in the same way he views colonized Algerians. At times they share the same beliefs, but on other occasions Fanon recognizes the risks these Europeans pose for Algerians because they live in European quarters and could be double agents. Nonetheless, Fanon alleges that, similar to Algerians, the democratic Europeans are unable to speak their mind. They are also oppressed and must live in a clandestine manner and observe a way of life that is completely different from the traditional French

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<sup>7</sup> M.T.L.D. and U.D.M.A. are both Nationalist Algerian Parties, however, M.T.L.D. formed before the Revolution.

way of life: “La démocratie en France, traditionnellement, vit au grand jour. En Algérie, démocratie au départ est trahison.” (144) Essentially, Fanon implies that if they were to lead similar lives in France and Algeria, the democrats would be heroes in France, but traitors in Algeria. Therefore, although their power as democratic Europeans is significantly limited in Algeria, Fanon strives to represent them as comrades who endure torture and willingly abdicate their French rights.

It is Fanon’s objective to demonstrate one last time that the settler communities in Algeria, including Algerian Jews, unite to engage in the fight for liberation. Indeed, Fanon’s rhetoric throughout this writing expresses what he believes to be the originality of the Revolution, but in attempting to address the psychological wellbeing of Algerians he also manipulates the emotions of the reader. Simultaneously, he mythologizes himself as a European educated psychiatrist living in Algeria who is also concerned with nation building. John Mowitt reminds us in “Algerian Nation: Fanon’s Fetish,” how Benedict Anderson and Michel Foucault (among others) have argued, “the nation is a quintessentially European and ultimately capitalistic innovation” (170). Essentially, Mowitt wishes to remind us that Fanon’s new nation (that results from Revolution) derives from a European concept. In this analysis Fanon focuses primarily on the forces that he believes crystalize the process of Revolution. In doing so he mythologizes Algerians in his desire to convince us that this happened just as he claims and that the actions of Algerians were the best solution to the problem. He wishes to convince us that once Algerians had put these new practices and modes of living in motion, there was no turning back. As powerful as his sentiments are regarding the mental strength of Algerians and advanced stages of war at this time of writing, Fanon fails to explain

adequately the elements of resistance, his support for violence or equate it with his desire of humanism.

It is easy today to criticize Fanon for his lack of foresight or for not addressing or not answering certain questions relating to the future of the Algerian nation. It is true that he did not anticipate that Algeria would become the one-party Islamic state that would revert to its traditional roles and continue to rely on their former colonizers. He would have been saddened to see how Algeria became dependent on France economically, but he discussed the possibility of this post-colonial future and warned against it. In fact Fanon's influence or power in contributing to the myth and creation of the postcolonial nation can be seen in this book through his analysis of how Algerians collectively adapted aspects of their culture and lifestyle relating to media, healthcare, and clothing.

### ***3. Pour la Révolution Africaine***

This collection of letters and political texts taken from articles Fanon published while working for the FLN as a journalist for *El-Moudjahid*, was published posthumously in 1964. It was written in the years following *Peau noire, masques blancs* and *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, and before *Les damnés de la terre*. Therefore, the essays, articles, letters and notes were written between 1952 and 1961. However, despite having penned these particular texts while living in France, Algeria, and Tunisia, these writings are important to this project because they contain Fanon's reflections on the ongoing Algerian Revolution as well as his experiences living on two different continents and a Caribbean island. In many respects this publication provides a unique summary of Fanon's worldview as he traces his geographical and intellectual journeys that lead to the merging of his revolutionary commitment and personal alienation.

While Fanon discusses the modifications to Algerian society in *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* through the evolution of culture, healthcare and media, *Pour la Révolution Africaine* specifically deals with Fanon's views on colonialism and decolonization. It is here that he poses important questions and offers solutions to the problems associated with colonialism. François Maspero, the editor of Fanon's earlier publication, presents the collection chronologically. Maspero informs us that, although many of these articles were published elsewhere, the articles Fanon wrote while working at *El Moudjahid* were not easily accessible. In his editorial comment, he also points out how this collection of political essays, notes, and articles covers the most active period of Fanon's life as they range from 1952 to 1961. Maspero brings them together in one collection because they prove that Fanon's objective had remained the same from the

beginning of his writings: “Regroupés ainsi dans l’ordre chronologique, ces textes font jaillir une unité singulièrement vivante. Ils marquent les étapes successives d’un même combat, qui évolue et s’élargit, mais dont l’objectif et les moyens ont été vus et fixés depuis le début.” (5)

Section 1 “Le colonisé en question” begins with Fanon’s early writings on the colonized in North Africa. Fanon gives the title “Le syndrome nord africain” to this essay to underscore how in this writing he provides his perspective as a psychiatrist who had firsthand experience living in Algeria and treating Algerian patients. Fanon’s rhetoric is designed in such a way that we sympathize with the colonized victims of French oppression. However, according to Fanon, the North Africans he refers to in this essay are those who have emigrated from Algeria to France in search of treatment and more humane care. In order to address the colonial problem Fanon targets the fear of the French as well as the hypochondriac nature of the Algerian. Essentially, Fanon expresses the extremes of both sides of the conflict and heightens the situation by including an example of a conversation a medical professional would have in France with an Algerian patient whose unusual behavior and symptoms make it difficult for the doctor to diagnose (in this case an ulcer) and prescribe a remedy.

In this particular essay Fanon alludes to myth through his depiction of the innocence of his patient. He reverts to memory as he recalls previous doctor-patient scenarios. This then enables Fanon to create a double fiction because he conjures up a story from his own memories and those from his patients that could be real or imaginary or a mixture of both. It is entirely possible that Fanon embellishes the truth and uses his medical experience to portray the psychology of the colonized.

Fanon's three theses in this essay serve as European clichés or stereotypes. Each scenario is an example of a misconception that a European has of an Algerian, which then prevents them from prescribing an effective remedy. For example, the medical staff do not care and the Algerian enters into a situation that is designed to be ineffective in treating him, "Que l'attitude du personnel médicale est très souvent à prioriste ... Autrement dit, le Nord-Africain, spontanément, du fait de son apparition, entre dans un cadre préexistant." (13) As a result, Fanon blends our knowledge of social memory with both his and his patient's personal memory to create a narrative that can be classified as political, fictional, or non-fictional. The rhetoric Fanon uses here differs significantly from that in *L'An V de la Révolution algérienne* (1959) because he can use his past experiences as a medical professional. He includes medical terminology, medical personas and diagnoses to convince readers of his ideas and his version of events. Essentially, his use of medical terminology in this collection contributes significantly to his mythology that Algerians suffered considerably at the hands of European doctors. Even Maspero acknowledges the effect of his personal and professional experiences:

À ce moment, Frantz Fanon a terminé ses études de psychiatrie: il peut ainsi, d'une part rendre compte scientifiquement, de par son expérience médicale quotidienne de la situation du colonisé: et d'autre part cette situation, il l'a historiquement vécue, il la vit encore, elle est pour lui une expérience personnelle dont il peut juger également l'intérieur. (5-6)

In this collection Fanon also directly addresses a myth not mentioned in his earlier writing - that of the difference in race rather than class, and the relationship between the two, which is how he distinguished himself from other European political theorists.

This collection of Fanon's writings serves as a reminder of how distinguishable he is from Camus or Djebbar because although he may use rhetoric in a way that produces a

problematic or conflicting narrative with regard to identity or violence, he certainly makes his points clear in terms of whether or not he supports Algerians (which Camus does not) and his overall motivations and desires for Algeria's future (which Djebbar does not). Even if we have not yet met Fanon's specific proposal of liberation through violence at this time, his writings still critique racial, economic, and political injustice.

In the section of this book that is dedicated to Algeria, entitled "Pour l'Algérie", we observe how Fanon uses rhetoric in the form of letters to convince us of the need for revolution. Although we do not know the year in which "Lettre à un Français" was published, it was likely in the mid to late 1950s when the Algerian situation was worsening. It is a direct critique of the French who left Algeria in a state of turmoil. Fanon's race, place of birth, and style allow him to make bold claims, "J'ai vu ton essentielle ignorance des choses de ce pays" (46) and ask difficult questions:

dis-moi, quand on te demandera: « Que se passe-t-il en Algérie? » Que répondras-tu? Quand tes frères te demanderont: qu'est-il arrivé en Algérie? Que leur répondras-tu? Plus précisément quand on voudra comprendre pourquoi tu as quitté ce pays, comment feras-tu pour éteindre cette honte que déjà tu traines? (46-47)

As Richard Onwuanibe says in Chapter III, "The Crisis Situation: Alienation of the Colonized," of his study *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism* (1983): "it reflects the misery of the Arab and the cloak of silence and neglect of his fellow man, the Frenchman" (53). Fanon's "Lettre au Ministère Resident" was written in 1956. Both this letter and his "Lettre à un Français" are relevant to Fanon's mythopoetics because they demonstrate the poetic evocation of his criticism and the genesis of his reasoning for decolonization. The first letter, addressed to a Frenchman, is intended to make the French feel guilty about their actions. The second letter, addressed to the Government Minister,

is a letter written three years after Fanon's arrival in Algeria to practice psychiatry. In it Fanon largely condemns the structure of society that continues to dehumanize the Arab population: "Si la psychiatrie est la technique médicale qui se propose de permettre à l'homme de ne plus être étranger à son environnement, je me dois d'affirmer que l'Arabe, aliéné permanent dans son pays, vit dans un état de dépersonnalisation absolue" (51).

This letter also serves as Fanon's letter of resignation. In many ways it is the beginning of Fanon's ideology in that he specifies what is important to him with regard to Algeria's future. Camus and Djébar cannot achieve this same level of directness in their literature. Therefore, it is conceivable that Fanon's blend of medical vocabulary and political discourse facilitates propagating myths and memories in a way that literature and writing exclusively on familiar subjects does not. Blending facts and emotions to write about strangers, with whom he shares an affinity as an oppressed or marginalized individual, renders Fanon's writings less ambiguous and thus his mythopoetics clearer.

Understandably, Fanon's tone and stylistic choices differ in his earlier and later publications. Not only were they written during different circumstances, but also, since they were written at different periods of the Revolution, they convey the evolution of his thoughts. As one progresses through this collection of essays and articles we notice that Fanon is more direct when discussing the suffering that resulted from colonialism. *L'Année de la révolution algérienne* focused on the evolution of Algeria's Revolution, whereas the posthumous publication *Pour la Révolution Africaine* covers publications throughout Fanon's life. This publication portrays Fanon as someone who experienced French colonialism, studied psychiatry and understood the alienation colonial society imposed and then became an advocate for Revolution throughout the African continent. Certainly

Francois Maspero's decision, as editor, to release all these articles and notes, contributes to Fanon's mythologizing as an anticolonial, revolutionary figure. Indeed, his preface outlines the focus on Fanon's work as a psychiatrist and his dedication to clinical work after the outbreak of insurrection.

Fanon's writings in *Pour la Révolution Africaine* are much more concise than in his other publications because, as Maspero explains in his preface, the majority of these texts were previously edited for periodicals and reviews. For this reason Fanon's examples are even more specific and the vocabulary is much less nuanced than *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*. In many ways it seems this is where Fanon's two worlds collide as he merges psychiatry with philosophy and politics. Although we know Fanon's profession influenced his writings in *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (particularly the chapter on medicine) he made no definitive use of medical experiences, theses, or studies.

Camus and Djebbar use their familial history, their education, their status within society, or their relationships to mythologize Algeria's history. Fanon's publication capitalizes on his colonial education in France and the opportunities it afforded him. His publication also proves how he makes full use of his position as a psychiatrist in the Algerian community, while simultaneously presenting psychiatry as one of his mythologizing tools. As we will see later, like Djebbar, he provides the names of real people who were involved in the situation.

#### **4. *Les Damnés de la terre***

##### **4.1 Historical Background**

There are conflicting reports concerning the events leading up to Fanon's "official" resignation or leave of absence from the Blida-Joinville hospital between 1956-1957. What is certain, is that during these years Fanon left Algeria amid concerns for his and his family's safety. At this time he became an active militant in the Algerian War and the African freedom movement. He sought exile in Tunisia, which was the headquarters of the FLN. In 1960 he was appointed ambassador to Ghana. Travelling in Mali as an ambassador later that year Fanon was diagnosed with leukemia. Fanon initially returned to Tunisia and with the help of his wife Josie Fanon as typist and editor he completed *Les Damnés de la terre* in just ten weeks. He then sought treatment in the Soviet Union (because they supported the FLN), but Soviet Union physicians advised Fanon to seek treatment in the United States. Hesitant to travel there because of racism and segregation (Fanon's French wife Josie was white), he entered the U.S. with the help of the CIA. According to Lewis Gordon it is unclear what role the CIA played in helping Fanon seek medical treatment or whether they used him for information since America was a French ally during the Indochina War.

##### **4.2. Fanon's myth of the native and the nation via revolutionary violence**

Published just before his death in 1961, *Les Damnés de la terre* is Fanon's final and most important work. In a dedication to Algerians seeking Independence from France, Fanon outlines Fanon's manifesto for decolonization. It is believed Marxist or Communist doctrines inspired Fanon's title, however, critics cannot agree on this either.

Scholar Christopher J. Lee claims Fanon takes the title from a sentence in *L'Internationale*, a 1871 poem by Eugène Edine Pottier, but in *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* David Macey suggests the last lines of Haitian poet Jacques Roumain's "Sales nègres" supplies Fanon with the title (415-416). Nonetheless, Fanon's examination of colonization and description of decolonization received a positive reception, which can be attributed to both his popularity at the time as well as his blatant support for armed Revolution that was spreading across Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of Latin America. It also resonated deeply with the Black Panthers in the United States and provided an alternative approach to Revolution, compared with nonviolent resistance offered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The text focuses on Fanon's belief that illiterate, impoverished masses "la classe paysane" must take control of nation building in former colonized, under-developed countries. In Fanon's final project, his readers become aware of the marked shift in his mythology from retelling and interpreting colonial ideologies of the past and present to an emphasis on the future of nation state, which is only possible with revolutionary humanism. The first chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre* "De la violence" was published in *Les Temps Modernes*, whose editors included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Raymond Aron. The platform of the journal aligned with Fanon's Third World interests. According to Lewis Gordon, Fanon did not need help with book sales, but he gave his manuscript to Claude Lanzmann to ask Sartre if he would write the foreword, and he met with editors Sartre and de Beauvoir in Italy in spring 1961. Sartre had adopted Fanon's stance that the French left must side with the FLN.

Unsurprisingly, the preface is Sartre's endorsement of Fanon's ideology. At the time Sartre was already a prominent intellectual figure. Drafted into the French Army in 1939, he was captured by the Germans in 1940. He was held as a Prisoner of War for nine months, released in 1941. Sartre wrote about the Occupation. Thus, Fanon and Sartre's collaboration was of utmost importance at the time of writing because they both recognized the violence that was inflicted upon the colonized people by the economically and politically powerful colonizers.

At the beginning of the preface Sartre outlines the ways in which colonizers conquered or manipulated the colonized. He evokes the golden years of colonialism when natives obeyed the force of the colonizers. He also makes a clear distinction between them and we, categorizing himself often within the group "nous" or "on" because he is white, French, and thus representative of the colonizers. He uses traditional designations when referring to French people or France. He says "métropolitains" and refers to France as "la Métropole". Soon, however, Sartre arrives to the present day and starts explaining Fanon's scandalous "diagnostic" that Europe is dying but Fanon does not care whether she [Europe] lives or dies: "elle court à sa perte [...] Quant à la soigner, non: il a d'autres soucis en tête; qu'elle crève ou qu'elle survive, il s'en moque" (39-40). Sartre makes Fanon's objective clear. He tells us whom Fanon is addressing in this publication and why: "Indigènes de tous les pays sous-développés, unissez-vous!" (40) In an effort to support Fanon and his objective of uniting people in colonized nations, Sartre must echo Fanon's mythologies and simultaneously demonstrate to the colonizers why it is time to bring the colonized together. He must remind the colonizers of what they did and describe the methods they used to colonize. For example: "Fanon mentionne au passage

nos crimes fameux, Sétif, Hanoi, Madagascar” (40). More importantly, he must remind settlers of how they were treated at the expense of the *grands colons*. He tries to show the French settlers that it was in the colonizers’ best interests to utilize their own people during the process of colonization:

Ici la Métropole s’est contentée de payer quelques féodaux: là, divisant pour régner, elle a fabriqué de toutes pièces une bourgeoisie de colonisés; ailleurs elle a fait coup double: la colonie est à la fois d’exploitation et de peuplement. Ainsi l’Europe a-t-elle multipliée les divisions, les oppositions, forgé des classes et parfois des racismes, tenté par tous les expédients de provoquer et d’accroître la stratification des sociétés colonisées. (40-41)

However, Sartre also explains the extent of France’s (and Europe’s) dividing and conquering. He says France wanted to keep Algerians close by paying some to create a native bourgeoisie, but that French settlers were also exploited through the colonizers desire to rupture every aspect of society.

Certainly Sartre emphasizes pertinent aspects of Fanon’s text. He makes it clear that Fanon writes to the colonized, not colonizers: “Qu’est-ce que ça peut lui faire, à Fanon, si vous lisiez ou non son ouvrage? C’est à ses frères qu’il dénonce nos vieilles malices, sur que nous n’avons pas de rechange.” (42). He outlines, with great detail, the choices that both sides must make. At times it seems that he addresses the French left because he distinguishes them from the colonizing force, although he still attacks them for their complicity and lack of action. He encourages them to read the book because he wants Europeans to understand how they arrived to this point. Just as Fanon is the interpreter for the colonized, Sartre assumes the same position within his community of French intellectuals. He demonstrates how one can learn about oneself by seeing how one is mythologized by the Other: “Pourquoi le lire puisqu’il n’est pas écrit pour nous? Pour deux motifs dont le premier est que Fanon nous explique à ses frères et démontre pour

eux le mécanisme de nos aliénations.” (43) Sartre then reminds readers of colonial atrocities. For example he acknowledges the eradication of culture, traditions, and language, although his acknowledgement of colonial atrocities derives specifically from colonial violence: “La violence coloniale ne se donne pas seulement le but de tenir en respect ces hommes asservis, elle cherche à les déshumaniser. Rien ne sera ménagé pour liquider leurs traditions, pour substituer nos langues aux leurs, pour détruire leur culture sans leur donner la notre; on les abrutira de fatigue.” (45) Sartre lays the foundation for Fanon’s examination of violence.

By way of introducing Fanon’s predominant theme of violence, Sartre must also outline the violence of colonialism. He reinforces to his fellow Europeans how colonialism created this current problem. They are ultimately responsible for creating this violence that has eventually turned back on them:

Il ne connaissent, disiez-vous, que la force? Bien sur; d’abord ce ne sera que celle du colon et, bientôt, que la leur, cela veut dire: la même rejaillissant sur nous comme notre reflet vient du fond d’un miroir a notre rencontre [...] ils sont hommes: *par* le colon, qui les veut hommes de peine, et contre lui. (47)

Despite Sartre’s understanding and support of Fanon’s mission, though, each time he explains colonialism to Europeans he begins by advancing the myths of the colonizer, the settler, and colonialism. For Sartre it seems impossible for him to evoke the myth of the colonized without first referring to the colonizer. He presents anticolonialism as a by-product of colonialism.

Fanon rarely uses factual examples, instead relying on the conventional myths we have come to associate with colonialism including the violence inflicted by the colonizers on the native population, denying their rights and the subsequent suffering endured by the colonized for decades. His presentation of the French left is the most accurate and most

positive, because this is when Sartre describes his own community: “La Gauche Métropolitaine est gênée: elle connaît le véritable sort des indigènes, l’oppression sans merci dont ils font l’objet, elle ne condamne pas leur révolte, sachant que nous avons tout fait pour la provoquer.” (50) His lack of facts does not weaken the effect of his statements because the effective images he creates enable us to imagine how humanity will flourish once again by banishing old myths and creating new ones: “Quand les paysans touchent les fusils, les vieux mythes pâlisent, les interdits sont un à un renversés: l’arme d’un combattant, c’est son humanité.” (52) We accept his passionate plea on Fanon’s behalf because of the powerful future he perceives.

David Macey believes Fanon took a considerable risk asking Sartre to preface *Les Damnés de la terre* because there was a possibility that Sartre’s opinion “would overshadow the text itself, and many reviews made it do just that.” (465) Indeed Sartre’s preface did take on a life of its own during the late 1960s when Sartre assumed a pro-Zionist position. Fanon’s widow actually wrote to Maspero requesting the preface be removed from future editions of *Les Damnés de la terre*. The preface was not restored to the French edition until 1985.

Much longer and more political than Fanon’s previous publications, *Les Damnés de la terre* does not describe or comment as much as it provides political theories and case studies. The first chapter entitled “De la violence” does not focus solely on Algeria, but it builds on some of the ideas he first mentioned in *L’An V de la révolution algérienne*. For example, both publications were written on the eve of Independence and they both address the overcoming of a colonial backwardness. Considered by Christopher Lee as “one of his most influential and controversial essays” Fanon makes his intentions clear in

his opening paragraph (Lee156). Looking beyond the nation of Algeria, Fanon reflects on all Third World nations and their need for decolonization as well as their need for a new nation and new form of humanism, which he characterizes by a *tabula rasa*. No doubt the controversy surrounding this essay stems from Fanon's proposal for decolonization through violence: "la décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent" (65). Reiterating the point introduced earlier by Sartre in the preface, Fanon declares decolonization must always be violent, because colonization was violent:

La violence qui a présidé à l'arrangement du monde colonial, qui a rythmé inlassablement la destruction des formes sociales indigènes...sera revendiquée et assumée par le colonisé au moment où, décidant d'être histoire en actes, la masse colonisée s'engouffrera dans les villes interdites. (71)

Similar to Sartre in his preface, Fanon alludes often to the colonizer. He must explain thoroughly how the colonizer has led the colonized to this situation. His continual references to the violent actions inflicted upon the colonized by the colonizer evoke sympathy and understanding from the reader. He rationalizes violence in this colonizer-colonized dynamic because violence originated via the colonizer. He blames them for this predicament and explains that the world is split in two because it is a Manichean world: "Le monde colonial est un monde manichéiste." (71). On a more profound level, however, Fanon demonstrates that the colonized realizes he must treat the colonizer as less than human, because that is how they were colonized. He must beget violence with violence, there is no other way to retaliate:

Le paysan, le déclassé, l'affamé est exploité qui découvre le plus vite que la violence, seule, paye. Pour lui, il n'y a pas de compromise, pas de possibilité d'arrangement. La colonisation ou la décolonisation, c'est simplement un rapport de forces. L'exploité s'aperçoit que sa libération suppose tous aux moyens et d'abord la force [...] Le tract (du FLN) ne faisait qu'exprimer ce que tous les Algériens ressentaient au plus profond d'eux-mêmes: le colonialisme n'est pas

une machine à penser, n'est pas un corps doué de raison. Il est la violence à l'état de nature et ne peut s'incliner que devant une plus grande violence. (92)

As Fanon declares on the first page of “De la violence,” he believes in the replacement of one species by another new species; the new language, and new humanity are necessary for the complete transformation. Fanon rejects the native intellectual who tries to appease his people: “L’intellectuel se comporte objectivement dans cette période, comme un vulgaire opportuniste.” (80) He also rejects non-violence as a tactic used by the native intellectuals and colonial elites to suppress the uprising and encourage compromise: “La non-violence est une tentative de régler le problème colonial.” (92) He suggests instead that a new man and a new nation must be created through violence because non-violence, independence, and compromise will not bring change, only what Magbo Percy More refers to as “pseudo-independence.” (Gibson 176) David Macey summarizes Fanon’s Third World project:

The counter-violence of the colonized is a form of praxis, or purposeful human action determined by a project, that responds to and negates the primal and endemic violence of colonization. At the same time, it negates the colonized created by colonization and allows a ‘new man’ to emerge. It is in that sense that Fanon can describe violence as ‘absolute praxis’. It negates the Manichaeian action which, in the colonial situation, makes the Algerian something ‘other than man’ (478).

Many misunderstood Fanon’s point and instead labeled him “an apologist for violence, an advocate for death and destruction” but as Fanon’s former colleague Alice Cherki asserts in *Fanon, A Portrait* (2006) “The irony was that Fanon was not and had never been a violent man.” (172)<sup>8</sup> Fanon does not argue for gratuitous violence, nor does he imply that it is revolutionary. He argues instead that, in the absence of a solid infrastructure in the Third World, violence is necessary to combat neocolonialism

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<sup>8</sup> Alice Cherki worked with Fanon at the Blida Joinville psychiatric hospital in Algeria.

completely. Fanon implores the Third World to prevent their former ruler from maintaining any form of economic, cultural, or political control. He views violence as a cleansing force, a necessity to reverse the power relationships.

Scholars Hannah Arendt *On Violence* (1969) and Conor Cruise O'Brien "The Neurosis of Colonialism" (1965) criticize Fanon's use of the word violence. Arendt believes Fanon uses violence interchangeably with force or power, while O'Brien suggests Fanon is incorrect to say that violence is a creation of colonialism. Emmanuel Hansen defends Fanon's understanding of violence and colonialism. Writing in *Frantz Fanon; Social and Political Thought* (1977) Hansen claims Fanon is not specific about how violence of the colonial regime causes alienation in the colonized. Hansen clarifies that Fanon "is saying that it is the settler or, specifically, his intermediaries who introduced violence into *the relationship of the native and the settler.*" (87) Hansen also points out: "Although Fanon employs the word *violence* quite often in his works, especially in *The Wretched of the Earth*, he nowhere defines it." (116) Perhaps this is similar to Fanon's use of 'medicine' in *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*. Are we to assume a whole range of possible meanings and definitions? If we consider then that Fanon means both physical and psychological violence, the ambiguity of the terms strengthens his mythopoetics. Despite the opposing critical viewpoints and apparent lack of clarification in this first chapter, Fanon urges us to recognize the fact that colonial violence contributed to the cultural, political, and economic dehumanization of the colonized. Moreover, the issue with how Fanon uses the term "violence" calls attention to Fanon's rhetoric. Indeed, despite initial praise, this publication now allows for a variety of interpretations because Fanon's language influences our overall analysis. Fanon's

mythopoetics either succeeds or fails depending on whether you respond to its forcefulness.

In the second chapter “Grandeur et Faiblesses de la Spontanéité” Fanon appeals once again for unity among those in the emerging nations. Having already established the need for violence in the first chapter, he now promotes unity in a more specific way than before. In order to suggest something new or promote a new mythology, Fanon begins first by explaining the status quo. On this occasion he underscores the separation between urban and rural dwellers. In doing so he evokes colonialism and blames colonial practices for making the groups of natives suspicious of one another. In fact, Fanon points out how colonialism separated the natives even further. He emphasizes the split that occurred when the lumpen-prolétariat (which he uses synonymously with *les paysans sans terre*) flocked to the city in an effort to adapt to aspects of colonial life, leaving the true peasants to fend for themselves in the country. He explains:

Les paysans sans terre, qui constituent le lumpenprolétariat se ruent vers les villes, s’entassent dans les bidonvilles et tâchent de s’infiltrer dans les ports et les cités nés de la domination coloniale. Les masses paysannes, elles, continuent de vivre dans un cadre immobile [...] Le paysan qui reste sur place défend avec ténacité ses traditions et, dans la société colonisée, représente l’élément discipliné dont la structure sociale demeure communautaire. (149-150)

Fanon not only blames the colonizers for contributing to this separation, but also he argues that colonialists take advantage of the distinctions between the groups of rural peasants and townspeople: “Les paysans ont une méfiance à l’égard de l’homme de la ville...Les colonialistes utilisent d’ailleurs cette opposition dans leur lutte contre les partis nationalistes. Ils mobilisent les montagnards, les bledards contre les gens de la ville.”

(150) Jean-Marie Vivaldi, author of *Fanon: Collective Ethics and Humanism* condenses Fanon’s argument:

For Fanon, the alienation and resistance to national assimilation of the peasants are the outcome of their continuous exclusion by the nationalist parties...Hence, for Fanon, the difference in ethical attitudes of the peasants and the urban communities – that are privileged by the liberal model of the European powers – needs to be overcome in order for political and social unity to happen. (91)

Fundamentally, Fanon reveals how these tensions that exist between the social groups are a result of colonialism. Colonial systems try to control the mentality of the colonized.

Simultaneously, however, Fanon believes these conflicts and tensions are what motivate the colonized people to become involved in the political establishment and fight for their future. He also cautions against using revenge as motivation, for it is unsustainable.

Where Fanon emphasizes the role of violence in the first chapter, he promotes the revolutionary role of the lumpen-proletariat in chapter two. He outlines how they can be both destructive and useful to the overall rebellion. In the end, though, their disenfranchisement will incite a revolutionary spirit. For this reason he urges unity and control of the overall movement, before their enemies (the colonizers) see their potential.

The third chapter “Mesaventures de la conscience nationale” Fanon articulates once more the class conflict. Halford Fairchild, author of “Frantz Fanon’s Wretched of the Earth in Contemporary Perspective” effectively summarizes Fanon’s problem with the middle class: “Fanon suggests that this middle class, which assumes power at the end of the colonial regime, is inadequately prepared to replace the colonial system because of a lack of training and resources...” (196) This means the colonized would remain financially dependent on the colonizer. Fanon claims the fight for democracy and independence simply leads to neo-liberalism: “Ce combat pour la démocratie contre l’oppression de l’homme va progressivement sortir de la confusion néolibérale

universaliste pour déboucher parfois laborieusement sur la revendication nationale.”

(189) This specifically occurs because of the bourgeoisie:

Elle est aussi le résultat de la paresse de la bourgeoisie nationale, de son indigence, de la formation profondément cosmopolite de son esprit. La bourgeoisie nationale, qui prend le pouvoir à la fin du régime colonial est une bourgeoisie sous-développée. (190)

It is important to note the political accuracy of Fanon’s mythopoetics. His analysis of colonial exploitation is so incisive:

Le colonialisme n’exploite presque jamais la totalité du pays. Il se contente de mettre à jour des ressources naturelles qu’il extrait et exporte vers les industries métropolitaines permettant ainsi une relative richesse sectoriel tandis que le reste de la colonie poursuit, ou du moins approfondit, son sous-développement et sa misère. (200)

Fanon also discusses racist myths that exist about Africans. This cultural violence leads the bourgeoisie to mimic the colonizers and ignore the peasants who helped them gain independence in the first place.

The fourth essay “Sur la culture nationale” deals with how the colonized must reclaim their national culture and history after decolonization, a natural process after more than a century of obliteration. To emphasize his point he continues to evoke the myths colonialism created of the native. In doing so, Fanon also stipulates how colonialism destroyed all African cultures:

Cette plongée n’est pas spécifiquement nationale. L’intellectuel colonisé qui décide de livrer combat aux mensonges colonialistes, le livrera à l’échelle du continent. Le passé est valorisé. La culture, qui est arrachée du passé pour être déployée dans toute sa splendeur, n’est pas celle de son pays. Le colonialisme, qui n’a pas nuancé ses efforts, n’a cessé d’affirmer que le nègre est un sauvage et le nègre pour lui n’était ni l’Angolais, ni le Nigérien. Il parlait du nègre. Pour le colonialisme, ce vaste continent était un repaire de sauvages, un pays infesté de superstitions et fanatisme, voué au mépris, lourd de la malédiction de Dieu, pays anthropophages, pays de nègres. La condamnation du colonialisme est continentale. (257)

We should consider this a considerable effort made by Fanon to gain momentum and support for his idea of national liberation intertwined with a focus on national culture. Blatantly aware of the fragility of politics in Africa, Edmund Burke argues in “Frantz Fanon’s “The Wretched of the Earth”” that Fanon opts for culture over materialism. On this note, Burke explains, “Fanon takes great pains to distinguish between the kind of revolutionary culture he is speaking of and the pseudo-national cultures most African states have contented themselves with: folklore, *négritude*, a truncated and self-interested version of the national past.” (134) For Fanon the revolution must be won with a focus on culture that will eventually transcend nationalism.

The fifth chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre* entitled “Guerre coloniale et troubles mentaux” differs from the preceding chapters in that it contains psychiatric case studies. More specifically, the case studies demonstrate how mental problems can arise as a consequence of revolutionary struggle for both the perpetrator and the victim of colonialism. As Fanon addresses the timing and placement of these published studies, we understand how his notes on psychiatry are imperative to his mythopoeics. They provide a realism we do not find in the other publications presented in this project. As Halford Fairchild explains in “Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth in Contemporary Perspective”: “Colonial war is a time for coming to grips with reality, and Fanon implies that the myth of the colonial power crumbles under the onslaught of liberation struggles and that concomitant to this crumbling is a smashing of the reality bases on which it rests.” (199) Thus, Fanon is well aware of how important it is to publish these findings. If Algerians read Fanon’s publication and become involved in armed struggle, then it is

entirely possible that his work could entice those in the underdeveloped nations to revolt, knowing the strength of the colonizer is also weakening.

In the “Conclusion” we read Fanon’s most direct call to arms and rejection of Europe. While he acknowledges what Europe has accomplished, in a negative way, he asks the people of the Third World to create a new man, a new humanism: “Décidons de ne pas imiter l’Europe et bandons nos muscles et nos cerveaux dans une direction nouvelle. Tâchons d’inventer l’homme total que l’Europe a été incapable de faire triompher.” (373) It is important not to imitate the European model in any shape or form. Africa must change their future by its own means. Fanon calls on his readers to create a new course that avoids the pitfalls of colonialism. Therefore, it can be said that this publication served as a spiritual guide for those directly involved in the struggle for freedom in the Third World. Fanon’s in-depth analysis of colonialism, society, politics, and culture proved vitally important for the myths he was able to create. As Nigel Gibson says in *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (2003), it is the lived experience that “provides the creative principle.” (10) It is his ability to convert his lived experiences into mythopoetics in a non-literary fashion that makes him an ideal figure of comparison with Camus and Djébar. It ensures he maintains his position within the Algerian dialogue on myth and memory.

## 5. Chapter Conclusion

People remember the past as easily as they try to forget the past. They embellish the past, exaggerate details or idealize specific people and events. The writers in this project are no different. Fanon occupied a unique position in Algeria, as both an observer and a participant in the Algerian War of Independence. Indeed, his outsider perspective allowed him to diagnose the characteristics of both colonizers and colonized, which in turn facilitated his unique approach. In order to fabricate an identity for his chosen community of natives, Fanon created myths. For this reason his writings on Algeria are just as relevant, if not more relevant than those of Camus and Djébar. As they left Algeria for France during the Revolution or watched through the colonial or native lens, he arrived in Algeria from France and quickly assumed an anticolonial position. Fanon's more specific objective was to detail how aspects of Algerian culture changed throughout the Revolution (most evident in *L'an V de la Révolution algérienne*). It was also imperative for him to present colonialism in a way that outlined the problems it created. This then enabled him to mythologize decolonization (in *Les Damnés de la terre*) and to support Algeria and the native population, leading to his most famous myths – the liberating quality of violence, and the important role of the peasants in the struggle for freedom.

A study of Fanon and his educational and professional background also presents ironies and contradictions. While most of his criticism stems from his idea of nationalism, his position in and out of Algeria, Fanon's writings present him as a complex figure with a uniquely anticolonial mythopoetics. His passion for decolonization prohibits and permits a clear critique, depending on the publication and rhetoric used.

His professional choices prove that he was extremely dedicated to Algerians and their freedom, as well as Africans in general. Fanon's experiences and noted findings, which are at times fragmented and obscure in *Pour la révolution africaine* (because although they are presented chronologically they are from different years), and subjective (in his very obvious support for Algeria and Algerians), still allow us to comprehend his zealous support for liberation and humanism. His examination of Algerian society indicates clearly his reasons for fostering a solution in the first place and furthermore, for pursuing the radical notion of decolonization. Unfortunately, more than fifty years later, we now see how Fanon's myths lacked the force he desired as they have been undone by Independence.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE POSTCOLONIAL MOURNING OF ASSIA DJEBAR

### 1. Introduction

On February 7, 2015, the Académie Française announced Assia Djébar's death in Paris. Born in Cherchell, Algeria in 1936, Djébar spent her seventy-eight years living in Algeria, France, Tunisia and the United States, working as a writer, historian, filmmaker, and professor. While Djébar's literary publications focus on women in the male-centered Islamic world, she is equally renowned for her writings that explore her plural identities that include Arabo-Berber, Muslim, and French sensibilities. In paying homage to Djébar in *Le Figaro* on the day when her death was announced, President François Hollande appropriately described her as: "cette femme de conviction, aux identités multiples et fertiles qui nourrissaient son œuvre, entre l'Algérie et la France, entre le berbère, l'arabe et le français."

Admitted to the Académie Française in June 2005, Djébar was the first North African writer to have received such recognition by the French. She was also the first Algerian student and first Muslim woman to be accepted to the École Normale Supérieure de Sèvres in 1955. After completing her studies, Djébar taught history at the University of Algiers. She then returned to France in 1965 and later moved to the United States, where she taught French literature and cinema. Moreover, having published a variety of novels, essays, poems, and plays throughout five decades, Djébar has now become what Madeleine Dobie terms in her 2016 *PMLA* article, "Assia Djébar: Writing between Land and Language", "The last survivor of the generation of Algerian writers who took up the pen in the middle of the 1950s as their country embarked on its historic struggle for independence from France" (128). She wrote about violence during the decades of violence. She challenged national identity and questioned the use of French in

Algerian literature. Most of all, she wrote about the imaginary worlds within her own unique culture.

While Djébar is honored for her commitment to discuss patriarchal and colonial societies in Algeria, she is revered equally by many Algerian academics living in the diaspora who recognize both the duty she felt and the power she achieved through her writings on emancipation of Algerian Muslim women. Although Djébar has acknowledged her heritage rooted in Arab and Berber cultures, her “foi musulmane” and her “langue de souche...la langue berbère”, she also discussed at length her decision to write in French, attributing her success, which spanned sixty years, to her education under French colonial rule. In an article entitled “Idiome de l’exil et langue de l’irréductibilité” Djébar acknowledges that although French is the language of the colonizer, it has irreversibly become her language of thought “j’écris donc, et en français, langue de l’ancien colonisateur, qui est devenue néanmoins et irréversiblement celle de ma pensée” (9).<sup>9</sup> In fact, many of Djébar’s writings deal with her relationship to language, as she discusses how her three Algerian languages, namely French, Arabic, and Berber, intersect for her personally. For this reason it is imperative that we trace Djébar’s development of language more thoroughly in her later writing, *Ces voix qui m’assiègent*. A major point of ambivalence for Djébar, her French colonial education in Algeria not only enabled her to write, but it also afforded her the opportunity to travel to France and study the history of her homeland. Just like Camus and Fanon, Djébar seeks to both recover and uncover Algerian history as she pursues her search for identity and genealogy, reconstructing specific aspects of her Algerian identity through the genres of

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<sup>9</sup> For more see Ruhe, Erntspeter. *Assia Djébar*. (2001). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neuman, 2001. Print.

literature and film. Djébar also differs significantly from Camus and Fanon in that she is the only writer in this project who lived to experience Algerian Independence in 1962 and the Civil War (1990-1999), which was a result of postcolonial Arabization, which refers to the continued efforts used by the administration in Algeria to promote an Arab identity and adopt Arab culture, particularly since Independence from France in 1962, and Islamization, which refers to society's shift towards Islam. Ironically, Djébar was forced out of teaching in Algeria and her works are not taught on the current school curriculum in Algeria. Therefore, it is possible that Djébar's range of publications, her work on film and a ten-year silence after decolonization, may provide a unique perspective or at least an evolution of colonial and postcolonial experiences. Indeed her plural identities and larger historical time frame accommodate an outlook that Camus and Fanon were not afforded, having passed away before independence.

Through an analysis of two of her works *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1995), and *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* (1999), I intend to demonstrate that Djébar's blend of autobiographical memory, fiction, and national history contributes to French-Algerian mythopoeics as she cultivates her Algerian myth, which includes mythologizing the nation and the Algerian people. By using fiction and non-fiction in the form of autobiography and history, I argue that Djébar, like Camus and Fanon, rewrites Algeria, or rather reshapes Algeria through her writing to position herself as an inheritor of multiple legacies. However, as aforementioned, Djébar's longevity privileges her to incorporate both colonial and postcolonial events into her writings, unlike Camus and Fanon.

Although the publications I have chosen span one decade and begin during the Algerian Civil War, representative of only the postcolonial francophone Algerian period, these writings trace experiences of both colonialism and postcolonialism as Djébar goes back in time and examines the past. It is important to explore the writings of an exiled Algerian during the period of independence, which has become yet another period of political turmoil in Algeria.

## ***2. Le Blanc de l'Algérie***

### **2.1. Introduction**

According to Anne Donadey in *Recasting Postcolonialism; Women Writing Between Worlds* (2001), Djébar received criticism “for not dealing with the war” in her first novel, *La Soif*, which was written during the Algerian War and published in 1957 (1). We cannot determine whether the criticism of *La Soif* led to her choosing war as a historical setting for her subsequent novels, but many of them feature war as the narrative setting. In fact, her 1995 publication *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* deals with both the ramifications of the War of Independence as well as the Civil War. Considered an autobiographical discourse, or memoir, this work details the deaths of Djébar's fellow Algerian writers and intellectuals, including Albert Camus and Josie Fanon, Frantz Fanon's wife. Officially entitled a “récit”, which the Larousse dictionary defines as “action de relater, de rapporter quelque chose, développement oral ou écrit rapportant des faits vrais ou imaginaires”, the work is characterized by its hybrid style of story telling because Djébar blends the narrative devices of fiction with non-fictional memoir to establish her mythopoetics. More precisely, it is the manner in which she conveys the

mixture of factual elements and imaginary details to her readers, advancing her Algerian narrative. As Djébar remembers and imagines the horrors of Algeria's civil wars through a lyrical style that also blends the French and Arabic languages, her writing emerges as both political and personal because it is her loss that prompts her to provide her personal testimonies that describe how independence from France led to internal Islamic conflict in Algeria for which she now mourns. Anjuli Gunartne and Jill Jarvis remind us in "Introduction: Inheriting Assia Djébar" that she participates in the notion of 'engaged literature.' The difference with Djébar is that "she transforms the idea of committed literature." (117) She alters the message, focusing instead on the mythical journey that leads to this point.

## **2.2. Narrating Postcolonial Myth and Memory**

Through analyzing Djébar's deliberate use of Algerian myth and personal memory in the narration of *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, we are able to view Djébar's identity creation. We observe her mythopoetics through her presentation of her own voice and her dedication to narrating the voices of many others. For example, Djébar represents Algeria, Algerian events, and her fellow Algerians through the creation of colonial or postcolonial places, and events, or by the inclusion of real people and historical sites. By specifically choosing what should be silenced, forgotten, erased or equally remembered, known, or recognized with respect to Algeria, Djébar tells us what she prioritizes as far as her loss is concerned. Equally, it is imperative to include what she deliberately neglects to mention in her memoir. Nonetheless, she uses her loss as a starting point in this novel to manipulate her personal Algerian history and geography, which in turn influences history

and geography on a national level, or at least within that of her own Berber or Muslim culture. Using the loss of her fellow writer friends, she begins a literary procession: “S’est installé alors en moi le désir de dérouler une procession: celle des écrivains d’Algérie, depuis au moins une génération, saisis à l’approche de leur mort” (11). Her procession will discuss the deaths of her friends, but it will also include flashbacks:

*Le Blanc de l’Algérie* n’est pourtant pas un récit sur la mort en marche, en Algérie. Peu à peu, au cours de cette procession, entrecoupée de retours en arrière dans la guerre d’hier, s’établit, sur un peu plus de trente ans et à l’occasion d’une vingtaine de morts d’homme – et de femmes – de plume, une recherché irrésistible de liturgie. (11-12)

Specifically, these flashbacks enable Djébar to manipulate Algerian history and geography as she chooses which deaths to recall. By recalling the deaths of people she knew in her community and by deciding which details and locations to mention, she further manipulates Algerian history and geography through her loss. As we will see, this manipulation of personal history and memory is inherent in francophone postcolonial literature, but my objective is to determine how this specifically enables Djébar to mythologize her friends and her nation.

At the beginning of what Djébar claims to be “une recherche irrésistible de liturgie,” she defines what this oeuvre is and what it is not (12). In an effort not to polemicize, Djébar asserts that she does not wish to give an account of death in Algeria, but rather longs to commemorate her fellow countrymen and women who have recently departed. She opens her publication with the following explanation:

J’ai voulu dans ce récit, répondre à une exigence de mémoire immédiate: la mort d’amis proches (un sociologue, un psychiatre et un auteur dramatique); raconter quelques éclats d’une amitié ancienne, mais décrire aussi, pour chacun, le jour de l’assassinat et des funérailles. (11)

This is both problematic and contradictory because as we will see Djébar polemicalizes the Algerian situation by expressly tracing the deaths of her friends, many of whom were assassinated. In fact Djébar's intention to honor her friends' lives after their deaths immediately asserts a certain Algerian reality that is defined by her continual reference to it, her devotion if you will, but also to her esteem for her friends' writings. In effect she customizes her worship as she narrates her knowledge of their lives and deaths, which hold significance for her. As a result the wording of critical analysis on this oeuvre is mixed. There are those critics who believe she polemicalizes, or insinuate that the subject matter means she must polemicalize, and then there are those who believe she narrates death and her subsequent grief, while they focus on other themes that emerge from the narration. For example in "Violence, Mourning and Singular Testimony" Jane Hiddleston refers to how Djébar's work has become "politically engaged". She goes on to explain how *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* directly engages with "current confrontations and losses [...] bearing witness to a swathe of murders and attacks" but admits that Djébar rejects a prescriptive political discourse (120). Although Mireille Calle-Gruber's article "Le deuil de la biographie" explicitly underlines that Djébar's loss in *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* is expressed through the genre of biography, it is also possible to distinguish her focus from Hiddleston's because she summarizes Djébar's writing as tracing the lives of the assassinated: "Djébar tresse les récits de vie des assassinés" (108).

Instead of polemicalizing via the tragic deaths of her loved ones, Djébar wishes to re-establish the days leading up to the deaths of her friends. This inevitably leads to her declaration that the deaths of the authors and their legacies that we inherit from their writings "s'entrecroisent et s'esquissent plusieurs Algéries..." (12) In this preface,

therefore, Djébar provides a rough, preliminary view of Algeria. Djébar suggests she will sketch an Algeria that intersects with other interpretations, or mythologies. From the beginning Djébar implies that her version of Algeria originates from the site of buried Algerian bodies. These verbs Djébar uses “se regroupent, se rassemblent puis se dispersent” imply a strong spatial-temporal relationship allowing the possibility of a transient Algerian space that changes as the narration moves back and forth from past to present (12). Additionally, Djébar proposes that death offers other possibilities for Algeria’s future because it is around the buried bodies of writers that the different Algerian nations cross paths. She claims that the nation may find what it is longing for through the various writers that have been buried in Algerian soil and offered as victims: “Une nation cherchant son cérémonial, sous diverses formes, mais cimetière en cimetière, parce que en premier, l’écrivain a été obscurément offert en victime propitiatoire: étrange et désespérante découverte!” (12) Djébar calls attention to the sacrifice writers have made for Algeria.

### **2.3. La langue des morts**

In the first chapter entitled “La langue des morts” Djébar addresses language, which has been a point of contention for her throughout her career. Although the chapter aims to discuss the linguistic plurality of the deceased, Djébar uses this opportunity to explore the traditional rhetoric surrounding the subject, as well as her ambivalence towards language use in Algeria. Although I have already mentioned Djébar’s professional decision to write in French, which I will discuss further in my analysis of *Ces voix qui m’assiègent* (1999), Djébar designates French as the *lingua franca* among French-Algerians as she explains it is her language of choice in conversing with her Arab

Algerian friends: “Mes amis me parlaient en langue française, auparavant; chacun des trois, en effet, s’entretenait avec moi en langue étrangère: par pudeur ou austérité.” (15).

Djebar justifies their use of French by stating that it is both neutral and impersonal: Or je répondais, à lui comme aux deux autres, en français; faute de mieux, par neutralité.” (15)

She implies that since Arabic has more regional variations than French, the language of the colonizer is easier to use than the Arabic or Berber mother tongues. She also suggests that the simplicity of the French language prevents social discrimination that may be perceived in Algerian dialects or accents:

Je compris: conversant en arabe ensemble, nous devenions, par excès, moi une bourgeoise des temps anciens, et lui, un villageois rude et fruste![...] Non, nous ne paraissions ainsi différents que par des atavismes soudain entrevus dans les variations de la langue maternelle! (16)

Although it appears that the subject of language does not relate explicitly to space or time, Djebar uses language within Algerian space and time to incorporate a mostly French, or colonial, linguistic identity. Occasionally, she alludes to a crossbreed language that includes the language of the West and the rustic Algerian dialects permitting the mixture of accents and rhythms. Nonetheless, by explaining that she spoke to her Algerian friends mostly in French, I believe Djebar demonstrates how French has permeated the Algerian nation and the lives of Algerian people, particularly of her generation, as many of these deceased writers are her peers. Moreover, Djebar explains that her dead friends speak to her in French, insinuating that although Algeria is a postcolonial space, and even though some of her friends died as a result of their writing in support of Algerian Independence, Algeria still embodies vestiges of a colonial space. Through questioning the advantages of French use in contemporary Algeria, Djebar can be seen to advocate, to some degree, for linguistic freedom:

A présent, chacun de ces chers disparus et moi, à intervalles irréguliers, nous parlons pleinement en français. Cette langue coule, ou se tisse, ou s’emmêle, mais ni masquée, ni figurante voilée prenant la place d’une autre, la sœur de nuit; non, elle se déploie entre nous, vraiment elle-même, comment dire, à part entière. Tardivement, notre parler devient si simple! (16)

Djebar explains how her and her now deceased friends spoke French with one another. While she points out that the French language does not replace another language, she shows how it unfolds naturally.

Indeed, there are multiple layers to Djebar’s language analysis, which become more obvious when she later turns to the symbolism and power of language. At times she stops short of giving her personal opinion and uses her friends and their linguistic battles to describe the complexity and irony of postcolonial Algeria, where French, the language of the colonizers, has lingered naturally within Djebar and her friends to become their language of communication, transforming it into a language of the dead:

Ainsi est survenu, dans une lumière d’un gris de scintillement, le bruit de la langue, de leur langue à eux trois, chacun tout à tour, et ensemble aussi, avec moi: un français sans nerfs, ni nervures, ni souvenirs, un français à la fois abstrait et charnel, chaud par ses consonances. “Leur” français à eux, mes amis – ainsi ils ont disparu, finirai-je vraiment par le croire, par le savoir – tandis que, délivré du linceul du passé, le français d’autrefois désormais se régénère en nous, entre nous, transmué en langue des morts. (18)

Although she is evasive when it comes to her own beliefs, Djebar explicitly ties language to identity and self-expression. For example in *Le Blanc de l’Algérie* Djebar’s nostalgic laments associate languages with genders, but then she declares the emotive power of language is at the heart of change: “Savoir ce que reflète actuellement la langue, dans son pouvoir d’émotion, chez nous, n’est-ce pas être d’emblée au centre des mutations?” (30) Djebar urges her friend to stop polemicizing: “soyez simplement algérien!” (31)

Anjuli I. Gunaratne and Jill M. Jarvis's in their article "Introduction: Inheriting Assia Djebar," recognize this linguistic remapping of Algeria when they discuss Djebar's relationship to French and Arabic. Additionally, Madeleine Dobie also addresses Djebar's decision to write in French and the subsequent criticism she received in the article referred to above, "Assia Djebar: Writing between Land and Language."

Gunaratne and Jarvis point out that for Djebar there was no dichotomy between French and Arabic. They add: "to cast Arabic against French reinforces the theoretical monolingualism imposed on Algeria by the postcolonial state, itself an act of violence" (120). In *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* Djebar shows us that French is still prevalent among writers in Algeria. In fact, it has become a marker of Algerian literature. Although she identifies with her Arabo-Berber origins, Djebar uses the French language as a tool for her mythopoeics, like her compatriots. I believe Djebar also explores language use to confront history, violence, and women, in order to form her "imagined community". As mentioned in Chapter One, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Community* (1983) refers to the nation as an imagined political community, but Anderson believed this imagined community was also possible through a common language, which Djebar and her writer friends have achieved. Anderson's concept of language attaches a nation or community to a past, yet forges a connection with the present. For Anderson language links old and new communities, and sacred and religious languages become integrated, fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized. (19) In many ways Djebar's language use also adheres to Anderson's idea of print capitalism. Print capitalism is a theory underlying Anderson's concept of the nation. It refers to the discourse that emerges from the language of the imagined community. More specifically, the discourse uses the printing press in the

capitalist marketplace. As speakers of French, their ability to write in French means they can comprehend one another in another way “via paper and print.” (44) By using what Anderson terms a “language-of-power” the status of their ideas changes from that of a minority language. They communicate their imagined nation by writing in French.

While deliberating upon the conscious or unconscious linguistic choices made by her three friends who appear to her from the dead, Djébar shifts to the last days of fellow Algerian author Albert Camus. Giving a lecture at Berkeley on Camus’s unfinished posthumous novel *Le Premier Homme* (published one year before *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*), Djébar confronts what she terms “la non-langue maternelle de Camus” (29). She insinuates that she shares this maternal non-language with Camus. At this time she does not justify her examination of Camus’ life and work, but it is obvious that despite their gender, religious, and ethnic differences Djébar and Camus share plural French-Algerian identities. There are several works that exclusively examine Camus and Djébar, comparing their works and their backgrounds. For example, Debra Kelly’s 2007 article “An Unfinished Death: the legacy of Albert Camus and the work of textual memory in contemporary European and Algerian literatures” discusses Djébar’s meditations on Camus’s unfinished text *Le Premier Homme*, while Laura Klein’s article “Assia Djébar en face à face avec Albert Camus” discusses Djébar’s readings of Camus’s literary writings and politics, offering a new approach to Algerian identity formation. Certainly, the posthumous publication of Camus’s *Le Premier Homme* in 1994 pushed Camus again into the forefront of discussion on Algerian politics and literature. In addition to writing in French, Djébar explains how they both have muted female family members that reside in a similar Algerian space. Djébar elaborates on this shared space and shared language

when she compares Camus's mute mother, of Spanish origin, to her maternal aunt, who is of Berber origin and who also lived in the Belcourt area of Algiers: "Sa mère, presque muette, reste éternellement assise près de la fenêtre (ainsi ma tante maternelle si douce, installée à Belcourt, et qui psalmodie en cas instants mêmes, dans le chagrin ou la patience, des bribes de versets coraniques)." (29) This passage shows us how Djébar relates to Camus's heritage as they both have family origins in this area of Algeria. It signals, however, that Djébar and Camus may share more than writing in the French language. Djébar's admission to attempting to stretch out Camus's enthusiasm at the end of his life, in addition to her deliberate comparison of origins, indicates an appreciation for Camus. Indeed, it demonstrates her understanding for his point of view. Djébar acknowledges their shared space because Camus's publication *Le Premier Homme*, although written during the Algerian War before Camus's death in 1961, coincided with her political engagement during the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s. Both the authors and their writings are linked by Algerian events of the past and present. As Debarati Sanyal states in *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (2015):

Although Camus was attacked by his contemporaries for the exclusions of his representational practice, his figures have been reanimated by authors such as Djébar who seek to imagine Algeria otherwise. In *Algeria White*, the narrator places Camus at the head of her procession of the dead, recalling his failed attempt to prevent Algeria's exsanguination during the War of Independence. Observing the repetition of fratricidal fractures and the "mechanics of violence and carnage" in the 1990s, she mourns the absence of the  *pied-noir*  perspective: "Today there is no one to stand up, as did the Camus of '56 in such a stirring way [during his call for a civil truce]; there is no one today able to pronounce once more, in the midst of the struggle, those words of an impotence not quite powerless." (238-239)

Camus's  *pied-noir*  approach and perspective to Algerian history has much in common with Djébar's, and his ghost lingers more than most.

In this *récit* Djébar recreates colonial spaces and perhaps the most prominent of those is the high security Barberousse Prison, now called Serkadji Prison “fortresse silencieuse, fermée au regard par un mur d’enceinte qui la sépare de la ville” (37). Although this prison detained many prisoners accused of terrorism during the Civil War of the 1990s, Djébar points out that the prison was a prominent location during the War of Independence. By continually referring to it in her writing she automatically evokes images of a colonial environment. At one point she recalls her conversation with her friend Naima. They discuss the extent of loss at the prison:

La répression à Barberousse annonce presque cent morts: mais c’est au moins deux cents, le chiffre plus exact! [...] Je lui explique la force symbolique du lieu: une prison, sur les hauteurs d’Alger, où la guillotine française, en 1956, a eu ses premières victimes. (34)

In another conversation with her friend M’Hamed, Djébar makes her disgust clear once more:

Vous le savez bien, M’Hamed, Barberousse, la prison Barberousse, c’est un lieu symbolique pour nous tous, depuis plus de trente ans! Le lieu des premiers martyrs, juste au-dessus de la Casbah, cœur de la capitale, cœur de la résistance d’hier, à la fois audacieuse et joyeuse! (35)

Constructed during French Colonialism in 1857 the prison housed many *FLN* members and executed them by guillotine as Djébar explains through the story of her friends Ali and Zabana, both activists who were imprisoned.

When describing the prison Djébar evokes the colonial time period and actively begins to use real life stories to create new myths or add to the traditional myths surrounding the War of Independence. In an effort to present her version of political upheaval Djébar resurrects her dead friends and their trauma at the hands of French colons. For example, she tells us that her friend Ferradj, a farmhand, was falsely

imprisoned because members of the resistance started a fire that took place on the land of a neighboring colonial settler: “il n’était même pas « coupable »” (39), yet he was imprisoned because he was deemed guilty by association. Djébar includes conversations she remembered having with her friends, and uses letters, which are often provided in italics, to enhance the credibility of these stories further. However, despite her brief homage to Camus, the personal touches in her narration, which also include dates, serve her main purpose of mythologizing Arab, Muslim Algerians. Most of the victims she portrays share her religion and ethnicity, and occasionally they are presented as heroes who she says denied clemency and accepted their fate. For example she includes Ferradj’s final utterance “Je meurs, et l’Algérie vivra, mes frères” (40).

It is important to demonstrate the unique manner in which Djébar traces ancient and contemporary Algerian history and geography. For example she uses her friend’s unfortunate experiences during two different wartimes as a way of coming to terms with the collective Algerian past. As aforementioned, she tries to avoid polemicizing and she does not wish to document directly her personal propaganda, by providing entirely biased arguments. This memoir enables Djébar to manipulate her knowledge twofold. Djébar, the historian, recalls specific political and historical moments of the national past, while Djébar, the writer, imagines Algeria in the eleventh century. She describes cities, the Casbah, and prison cells that are all landmarks representing specific periods in Algerian history. She also mentions practices that do not necessarily represent the past, but simply refer to the religious culture within the Algerian space, for example Ramadan.

In order not to polemicize, Djébar also promotes education and questions Algerian identity, asking what it means to be a true Algerian. There are also several

occasions where Djébar talks about her and her friends living or working in Paris, an opportunity only available to them through their French education.

#### **2.4. Trois journées**

In the second section of *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* entitled "Trois journées," we witness a more profound sense of what it was like to live with war on a daily basis. Djébar effectively portrays the sense of foreboding, apparent by "l'angoisse" (60), along with the need to persevere, resist, or heal before being forced to contemplate the future or death with the aftermath of destruction. The three days of death that Djébar describes in this section, took place in 1993 and 1994, in both Algeria and France. These three days in particular inspire Djébar to recount the past. As she chronicles the deaths of M'Hamed, Mahfoud, and Abdelkader Alloula, we ask whether these three deaths hold more significance for Djébar than others in this publication. Does she begin with the loss of these friends because they were closer to her? Even if this is true, we are affected by both the manner in which her friends died going about their daily routine, and by her descriptions of the how the community reacted to the assassinations. She depicts the demonstrations and spectacles of grief shared among those close to the deceased and those within the community. She then provides readers an elaboration on the general traditions and processes of mourning in the Muslim community.

It is important to add that in this second section of the memoir Djébar's analyses of Algerian deaths take place in postcolonial Algeria and in France, symbolizing the continued ties between the two nations, yet also contributing to Djébar's overall mythopoetics that now blends memory, myth, and mourning. It is not possible for Djébar

to mythologize Algeria or her Algerian friends, without talking about loss. Positioning the Algerian nation as a site of plural identities and Algerians as inheritors of this plurality, Djébar recounts the deaths of her friends M'Hamed, Mahfoud, and Abdelkader Alloula who were murdered in Algeria and in France. Djébar includes the dates and times when these deaths occurred, but by including a death, which took place in France, Djébar demonstrates the cross-cultural existence that other Muslim Algerians possess, including herself. Djébar evokes the innocence of her friends' deaths. She reinforces this by illustrating the mundane quality of the daily routine that contrasts with the honorable work they were doing for Algeria on the day they died. However, she remembers the past in order to meditate on the social issues surrounding their deaths. Djébar chooses to inform us of their occupations as writer, doctor, and politician. Her refusal to omit the minute details is essential to readers because the more information we learn about them the more we will mourn for them too.

## 2.5. La mort inachevée

Before the third section of the memoir Djébar includes a quote from Jean Genet's political play *Les Paravents*, which premiered in 1961:

Rien ne pourra faire que la gloire, solitaire, que les vertus d'un homme ou d'un peuple ne soient réduites, d'abord par l'analyse, ramenées à n'être qu'un dépôt ou qu'une vase [...] mais la honte qui demeure, après une vie de trahison, ou même après une seule trahison, est plus sûre. Elle risque moins d'être entamée que la gloire [...] Un peuple qui n'aurait, pour le marquer, que des périodes de gloires ou des hommes de vertu, serait toujours soumis à l'analyse et réduit à rien, sauf une vase. Les crimes dont il a honte font son histoire réelle, et un homme c'est pareil. (89)

Set within the context of the Algerian War, Genet's play condemns both the French and the Arabs. It seems then that Djébar's insertion of Genet's quote serves to question the

aftermath of war and glory on humankind as well as the general imprint of war on history. Assuming that this quote is a metaphor for how Djébar views the Algerian Wars, she begins to lament on the untimeliness of death. She discusses the shock one feels as a result of the unexpectedness of the deaths, even though Algeria was in the midst of an unprecedented battle for independence. Djébar divides this section on unfinished death into three processions that are divided further into short stories or excerpts. By choosing to divide the subsections of the chapter with the word “procession” Djébar invites readers to visualize her friends’ funeral processions.

The first story within the first procession describes how Albert Camus’s mother came to learn about his death, when she realized that he would not return to visit her in Belcourt. Djébar explains that she died six months later and is buried in Algeria beside her mother, Albert’s grandmother, both of whom Camus mythologized in *Le Premier Homme*. Camus is buried in Loumarin, France.

The second death mentioned is that of Frantz Fanon who passed away from leukemia in 1961 in the United States. Djébar was a friend of Fanon’s wife Josie and she recounts conversations they had on how she was upset that Fanon died alone in America. Djébar recalls the violence that flared up again in 1988 and how she and Josie would discuss the problems over the telephone, before she committed suicide in 1989.

Mouloud Feraoun, an Algerian novelist, was the third death mentioned. Djébar alludes to his writings, including a passage from his publication entitled *Journal*, where he denotes his version of daily life in Algeria during the war. Simultaneously, living in a state of terror and wonder, Feraoun questions the future. He feels that fear and the lack of foreseeability for the future, leaves him and his fellow citizens in a state of obscurity.

Feraoun describes this haze of terror that obscures cowardice and courage, prohibiting Algerians from altering their existence:

A Alger, c'est la terreur. Les gens circulent tout de même et ceux qui doivent gagner leur vie ou simplement faire leurs commissions sont obligés de sortir et sortent sans trop savoir s'ils vont revenir ou tomber dans la rue. Nous en sommes tous là, les courageux et les lâches, au point que l'on se demande si tous ces qualificatifs existent vraiment ou si ce ne sont pas des illusions sans véritable réalité. Non, on ne distingue plus les courageux, des lâches. A moins que nous ne soyons tous, à force de vivre dans la peur, devenus insensibles et inconscients. Bien sûr, je ne veux pas mourir et je ne veux absolument pas que mes enfants meurent mais je ne prends aucune précaution particulière... (99)

Feraoun received death threats from the O.A.S., Organisation de l'armée secrète, a far-right French paramilitary group that existed in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence that used armed struggle to try and prevent independence. Djébar goes on to then explain how despite these threats Feraoun received, he refused to seclude himself or live in hiding. He carried on his life as normal until he was assassinated by the O.A.S. in 1962.

The fourth intellectual whose death Djébar highlights is that of Jean Amrouche, the Berber poet who died in Paris in 1962. A former Catholic who converted to Protestantism, Amrouche was from the Kabyle region. Amrouche was a supporter of Algerian Independence, but he was not a member of the FLN. He became a messenger between his friend Charles De Gaulle and his former village. Amrouche follows the pattern of this section in that he did not live long enough to witness Algeria gain independence.

Evidently Djébar uses the true stories of Amrouche's, Camus's, Fanon's, and Feraoun's deaths to show us a variety of writers, whom she refers to as "hommes de plume" (110), who overtly discussed Algeria in their work and who died within a few

years of one another, before independence was won. Feraoun did not die unexpectedly in a car accident or of an illness like Camus and Fanon. Thus Djebbar wants to highlight that Feraoun was deliberately killed because of his writings and politics. She uses her personal knowledge of their families to recreate family scenes and conversations and also uses letters (for example in the case of correspondence between Feraoun's son and the writer and historian Emmanuel Roblès). Firmly establishing authentic material or names of family members can heighten the impact of their deaths, intensify grief or perhaps evoke a certain response from readers. The effect of including such details undoubtedly constructs the final years of colonial Algeria as a contested space for writers of multiple faiths and ethnicities. More importantly, Djebbar uses the lives and literature of "ces quatre morts de la première espérance" (111) and later "ces quatre annonciateurs" (112) to prove that Algeria's story is unfinished, as the section heading indicates.

Djebbar's historical questioning and the fluidity of events and traditions past and present leads her to contrast the exaltation of Algerians who celebrated the newly independent Algeria for thirty days with the traditional period of mourning in Algeria that lasts forty days. Perhaps in some ways Djebbar relates this short celebration, after seven years of bloodshed, to the divisions that are still to come, thirty years later. For this reason she directs us back to the past in order to comprehend the present.

In the subsection entitled "Le spectre d'après l'indépendance" Djebbar confronts the ghosts that linger within the Algerian space, but in order to do so she must go back to 1957. In an aside in italics Djebbar justifies her study of the past by clarifying that there are no Algerian figures, certainly no writers of the 1990s who will stand up and discuss the issue at large, but yet it is the same violent problem (of 1957) that repeats itself. It is

at this point that Djébar shifts from authors to profiling those who fought for independence. The tone of her narration inevitably changes from that of a literary reimagining to tales of combat and carnage. She mentions demonstrations, attacks, desertions of the native military, the use of the guillotine, and the lack of Prisoner of War status for Nationalists. (113-115) Djébar breathes life into the Algerian War by providing the names of soldiers, political prisoners, politicians, and revolutionaries who sought refuge, committed suicide, or were tortured, or assassinated. Rarely do her stories uphold the fighters as heroes because she provides her sources (whether it be from a published memoir of a fighter, or a Tunisian newspaper such as *El Moudjahid*), but at times her intentions seem unclear because she invokes the dead in a manner that is similar to how politicians behave, or journalists report. For example Djébar's story of Fanon's burial seems brief and distant, considering their friendship, or certainly her friendship with his wife, Josie. Before paying respect to Fanon, Djébar refers to her conversation with Édouard Glissant who recalled his last meeting with Fanon, where they met at a brothel. Djébar claims Fanon "tenait par-dessus tout à son anonymat" (113). Her overall homage to Fanon also seems threefold in that Josie told her about it, then she reported it to Glissant, and now she describes it on paper. Comparing this homage to others in this writing, we are compelled to question the presentation of loss and commemoration, comparing Djébar's presentations of bereavement, but ultimately we must recognize that Djébar constructs mourning as fluid and linear. It is conceivable, therefore, that her devotion to including this sequence of individual events and their unfortunate consequences could result in empathy. It is difficult to interpret Djébar's words as specifically condoning the actions of fighters, but her repeated mention of obituaries and

silence, her description of funerals and sacrificial victims, and her acknowledgement of their repentance and respectability suggests she wishes to speak on their behalf and give them a voice. I use her exploration of Abane Ramdane as an example:

Dans les mémoires récents d'un combattant d'hier, de la première heure, resté le même (il en subsiste quelques-uns, mais le plus souvent ils se murent dans un silence amer), est rapportée une scène de village, à la signification âpre. Cérémonie des morts, il y a en eut tant, Durant ces trente-trois années. Abane Ramdane fut, quelques années après l'indépendance, reinhumée dans son village de Kabylie, Azouza [...] Au fur et à mesure des discours, le public se taisait, se tassait: comme si toute l'éloquence déversée avait pour effet réel d'enfoncer davantage dans la terre, avec le cadavre, la seule question qui se lisait dans les yeux l'assistance: « Comment est mort vraiment Abane Ramdane et surtout pourquoi l'avez-vous tué? » (132-133)

As the above citation demonstrates, Djebbar was sympathetic to fighters who remained true to their revolutionary roots after Independence, now cloistered in silence. This example also shows that Djebbar is inspired by the recent obituary, and questions the silence of his compatriots, as well as the killers. By asking direct questions, Djebbar speaks on his behalf.

Procession 2 begins describing the death of *pied-noir* poet, Jean Sénac, in 1973 in the Algerian Casbah. Sénac's death bears significance for Djebbar for two reasons: firstly, Sénac was killed "dans l'Algérie d'entre deux guerres, celle donc de la paix" (137). Djebbar underscores how the freedom that was supposed to accompany independence was already in decline. The period of openness had vanished along with the dreams of a new plurality "à peine plus de dix ans après l'indépendance, le pays reniait sa tradition d'ouverture et de pluralité, hier encore si hautement proclamée" (137). Secondly, by mentioning Sénac's homosexuality and emphasizing his *pied-noir* status, she suggests there may be a connection between his lifestyle, occupation, and untimely passing. Initially, she surmises a love interest, a thief, or a police informant may have killed him,

“il fut assassiné probablement par un amant de rencontre, un voyou croisé par hasard ou peut-être par un indic de la police.” (137) Certainly all three of these possibilities for his murder equate with Djébar’s comment on the shift that is taking place in Algerian society at this time, as it moves from stability to a more dangerous environment. However, Djébar continues by highlighting Algeria’s treatment of homosexuality. She points out the inability to speak about homosexuality in Algeria:

son émission hebdomadaire de poésie, à la radio algérienne francophone, avait été supprimée un an auparavant, pour des raisons obscures [...] Sénac [...] vivait des amours – de la terre natale, de la vie, des garçons – dans un éblouissement qui fit ombre soudain violente à une société où l’homosexualité, si prégnante pourtant, évite de se dire haut. (137)

Djébar also feels it is important to mention how his broadcast was cancelled the previous year for unexplained reasons. Although Sénac’s murder remains unsolved, and there are many questions unanswered, Djébar suggests Sénac’s death may not be as unclear as once imagined. Her description of his death and the events surrounding his death indicate Sénac may have been profiled or targeted by someone. Considering the other accounts of death Djébar includes in this writing, this seems highly possible.

The second writer’s death Djébar mentions in this Procession is that of Malek Haddad. Before she begins her homage she inserts one line to remind us of her personal connection to these stories “jour de printemps en 1978: je réside, cette fois à nouveau, à Alger” (138). At times her association with Algeria, or her version of events and her friendship with the writer seem to trump the death of the writer. Indeed the memoir genre enables Djébar to insert personal details. For example, Djébar tells us that she was sitting by Malek’s hospital bed before he passed away. She feels that it is important to position herself spatially and temporally before narrating the scene. Her physical

presence and her experiences strengthen her mythopoetics. Her witness to the atrocities, or to the deaths, or her attendance at the funerals enables her to blend the personal with the political. It is important for Djébar to begin her presentation of death by how she knows the person. She remembers or identifies with the friend or writer before attending to the cultural or political aspects of her story. However, as I have demonstrated earlier, it is impossible for Djébar to separate fully the personal from the cultural or political aspects of her relationships. As Djébar describes how the writers met years previously in Paris in a publishing house she must discuss the gender politics of the era because they remain imperative to Algeria's story today or the historical memory she recounts from thirty years ago. This particular example finds Djébar signing copies of her second book in the vicinity of other writers from North Africa. She chastises Malek for not introducing himself to her: "Dis-moi, Malek, durant ces heures-la, pourquoi n'es-tu pas venu, toi, vers moi? C'était à toi de te présenter: tu étais le plus âgé et, après tout, tu es un homme! (143) Djébar questions the silence of the past and the silence now. It seems the theme of silence from their first encounter in 1958 returns once again through suffering and death in 1978.

Djébar is linked to these writers because in addition to their country of birth they share a profession and political engagement that equally displaced them and encouraged a quest for roots through writing. In the middle of describing her friends' deaths she confesses the temptation to join her friends in death, in darkness, in Algeria. The alternative she chose was to leave and have a rebirth elsewhere.

When discussing the third writer in this procession, Mouloud Mammeri, Djébar highlights the pressure writers feel to say something about a conflict but Djébar uses Mammeri's speeches on his Berber roots in order to recognize Berber culture in Algeria

and the Maghreb in general, which she shares in Algeria and in North Africa in general. Quoting Mammeri “la reconnaissance de la berbèrité est le test décisif de la démocratie au Maghreb” (152) Djébar forces us to consider democracy in independent Algeria, especially within the Berber culture. Furthermore, Djébar points out once again how this writer was prohibited from “speaking” in Algeria because the media had never filmed him before and thus they had no images to show the public. She includes an excerpt from Tahar Djaout’s published letter *Lettre à Da L’Mouloud*: “La télévision de ton pays n’avait aucun document à nous montrer sur toi: elle ne t’avait jamais filmé, elle ne t’avait jamais donné la parole.” (153) Again we are to assume that even in the brief period of peace that Algeria enjoyed in the 1980s, the campaign against Mammeri was state-sanctioned on account of his “plume aiguë vibre, acérée” (155). Djébar succeeds once more in presenting her Algerian memories that are filled with elements of truth and portray Algeria as a space that censors and does not support literature. In fact, as Djébar continues to list the deaths of Algerian writers in the 1970s and 1980s we are led to believe that Algeria’s postcolonial literary space diminishes from that of pre-independent Algeria. For example, Djébar’s fellow writers and compatriots are dying. She shows the precariousness of 1990s Algeria by the writers’ inability to have a statue dedication, and certain speakers or songs at their funerals.

Djébar concludes this section with the death of Kateb Yacine in 1989. She wants to justify Yacine’s absence, or exile, from Algeria, as well as her own, on account of the returning violence. She sympathizes with Yacine as they both abandon Algeria out of disillusionment, although Yacine more so than Djébar. Destined to be a poet wanderer and refusing to speak to Algerian journalists, she tells us: “ce fut le désenchantement,

lorsqu'il se résigna à s'enfoncer dans le quotidien algérien, qui l'amena à épuisement.”

(160) Djébar pays her respects to Yacine, as she did with her other writer friends by including the details of when they first met and last saw each other. As Djébar describes family, friends, actors, and students who attended the burial, she also points out the mixture of languages that were spoken. When Yacine dies Djébar emphasizes Muslim funeral traditions. She includes details about the Koranic liturgy and the speech by the imam. Moreover, she shows the blend of languages spoken at the cemetery and the range of people that participate in the ceremony, without regard to Yacine's religion. Djébar proves that writers have the power to unite Algeria. Simultaneously, though, Djébar demonstrates how events like this can also resuscitate violence, since Yacine died on the eve of the Civil War and became a target even after his death, receiving insults from those in power.

The next subsection “Quatre femmes et un adieu” begins by recording the death of Anna Gréki who was accused of being a communist militant and thus tortured during her one year imprisonment at Barberousse. Djébar points out how she was born Colette, and moved to Tunis when she was released. After moving back to Algeria she published poetry and died in 1966 while giving birth. Djébar uses “accident” as a euphemism for Gréki's death. She implies that we must question this “accident” because of the torture Anna endured previously. Additionally, Djébar highlights the loss Gréki experienced with the death of her first lover, who was fighting in the resistance, and she calls attention to her poetic themes, which demonstrate her political beliefs. Although Djébar has described the deaths of other friends who were murdered on Algerian soil, it is also possible to view Djébar's implication that Anna's death was more than an accident.

Certainly, the manner in which Djébar describes her life, she implies Algeria and specifically the war of independence, for which she fought, is to blame for her troubles – especially her depression.

Taos Amrouche, whose first name Djébar explains is the word for the female peafowl, was born in 1913 of Kabyle parents who converted to Christianity. Like Anna, Taos also lived in Tunis (she was born there to emigrant parents) and also bears a French name Marie-Louise. A polyglot novelist, radio producer, ethnologist, and singer, Taos suffered from cancer and died in 1976. Taos's life is important to include in this memoir because she blends a variety of heritages - Italian, Berber, Muslim, Christian, and French. Djébar wishes to highlight this very common occurrence of the time period, which no longer exists. During the Algerian war many inhabitants from the Maghreb spoke many languages and experienced many different cultures. Djébar's words indicate her pride at how Taos accomplished her tasks in life. She calls her "royale," talks about her beautiful voice, and lists all her accomplishments. Djébar also conveys her sadness at Taos's death (180). Djébar's pride and sadness merge with her elaborate description of how Taos epitomized the plurality of Algeria's linguistic and cultural identities as a child of emigrants who sang of her heritage "Elle fut consacrée sur scène, en interprète magistrale de la parole des Ancêtres." (182) Indeed the extent of Djébar's celebration of Taos's life suggests Djébar is equally sad that this ancestral celebration and cultural plurality is no longer possible in Algeria today. It is the end of a life, but also the end of a way of life. Her whole section devoted to Taos begins so optimistically that she builds pathos for several pages, until we become aware that we are reaching a disappointing end. Djébar's Algerian myth of plurality dies along with her friends. For this reason she

insists on documenting the advantageous mixing of cultures and languages that colonialism brought to Algerian society.

According to Djébar, Josie Fanon, the wife of Frantz Fanon, made a final pilgrimage to Tunisia to visit her husband's grave before committing suicide in Algeria in 1989. However this is when Djébar's motivation for including these specific stories and these specific descriptions becomes clear – Djébar and these women (Anna Gréki, Taos Amrouche, and Josie Fanon) share both colonial Algeria and independent Algeria. They have lived between different borders (all of them have lived in Algeria, France, and Tunisia) and experienced different freedoms which have influenced their professions as artists, whether it be as a singer, or a writer. Coming or going between the two worlds of colonialism or independence, all that matters for Djébar is that they continue until the end:

Ces trois femmes aussi vont et viennent, entre l'Algérie et la France, hantées par quoi, par la guerre d'hier, par la tenace présence des Ancêtres, du parler de la tribu chez Taos, par les amours d'enfance chaouia chez Anna [...] Elles vont et viennent à leur manière, ces trois femmes qui écrivent, jusqu'à l'adieu final! (188)

In procession three Djébar asks important questions about the transfer of power in Algeria from colonialism to independence. For example almost forty years later she admits “Oui, je me demande...est-ce à ce moment-là que...l'un des torturés se mit avidement, au terme de ses supplices, à désirer un jour être lui-même tortionnaire?” (194). Indeed this is also an opportunity for Djébar to provide examples of violent torture or at least allude to the torture that took place as well as calling attention to the intricate organization of the torture system, insisting on the power structures that were necessary in order to carry out the torture. More importantly, Djébar exposes the continuation of torture and colonial practices that occurred even after independence: “Interrogatoires

musclés déjà dénoncés dès le lendemain de l'indépendance, mais en catimini: et toujours, murmurait-on ici ou là, par des professionnels trop zélés, bien formés à l'extérieur!" (194). Within this passage Djébar directly links postcolonial/independent Algerian identity to colonial torture. She suggests communists and socialists were left with no other option than to reciprocate torture, to collaborate with one another and continue what the others had started. Her tone is ambivalent because when she refers to the torturers, who wear masks to hide their physical markers of identification, she seems to defend their actions, demonstrating an understanding for their predicament. However, through quoting Bachir Hadj Ali, poet and secretary of the Algerian Communist Party, Djébar acknowledges the danger torture poses for the Algerian cause, besides the violence it unleashes, but she also pays tribute to his lyricism. Hadj Ali says: "je sors de l'épreuve avec mon honneur de militant sauf, avec cette conviction qu'une cause est perdue dès lors qu'elle se défend par la torture!" (195). Although Hadj Ali died of Alzheimer's disease in 1991, Djébar implies that the torture Hadj Ali experienced amplified his suffering. Doctors stated: "Ces tortures-là n'ont rien arrangé à peut-être une vulnérabilité de départ!" (199). Merely explaining a friend's death is not enough. Djébar must give the background to the story. In this case it was important for her to draw attention to the fact that medical professionals stated torture may have aggravated Hadj Ali's condition and initiated an earlier death.

As Djébar moves on to include details about Tahar Djaout's assassination in 1993, she attacks the media who lie and distort his identity, framing the situation to their liking. Ultimately, Djébar sets this scene in the present day claiming that reporting on his death continues, because we imagine it was still unfolding as she was writing:

Ces deux tueurs, ces assassins, ces meurtriers, qui sont-ils? Dix jours après, dans le noir d'une chambre, ils fixent la scène de l'enterrement, filmée par une télévision française et reçue en direct. Les jeunes gens regardent l'écran: c'est donc bien un poète celui qu'ils ont visé, qui est resté huit jours dans le coma et qu'on enterre aujourd'hui [...] Un poète? Non, un journaliste, un communiste, c'est l'émir qui l'a dit. Cette télé ment, c'est normal. (203)

This further emphasizes the genres of memoir and autobiography, which she employs here to illustrate yet another Algerian writer who in this instance was killed for supporting secularism, while highlighting her personal association with this writing.

When informing us of Algerian poet Youssef Sebti's murder, Djébar pointedly asks "à quoi ça sert de tuer un poète?" (217). Repeating this question and repeating the words of her friend Saïd Mekbel, who was a journalist for *Matin*, she plays with his words "Les Présidentielles sont une fausse solution! [...] N'aurait-il pas mieux valu affirmer: Les Présidentielles sont une solution fausse?" (222) This enables Djébar to avoid politicizing her memoir directly. She uses the words of others so she does not have to provide her personal opinion, but at the same time her selection of their words and phrases speaks volumes because she deliberately contrasts their opinions or their work with their resulting deaths, whether it was of natural causes or not. She carefully selects quotes of their work and we assume that her use of these quotes is to emphasize or glorify their writing, but also to comply with their viewpoint and show that she agrees with them or also shares their sentiments:

Je pleure l'été  
qui se retire  
Je songe à la vieillesse  
à la mort  
qui me dévoreront  
bien avant  
le retour du printemps" (216)

Of course we must not forget that Djébar herself is writing in a state of mourning. She grieves for her friends and we must not overlook the extent of her emotional investment in this task. These lines of poetry reinforce her loss and we envisage her shedding tears and looking back on the past, thinking about growing old as she contemplates the deaths of others. Although it is imperative that Djébar contextualizes the quotes she uses, her use of her friend's writing increases the opportunity for both her and her friends to have the final word on Algerian history. Her appeal to memory and her witness to history forms her own version of events and a new form of commemoration that makes the past accessible in the present - that is her mythopoetic representation of Algeria and Algerians.

While approaching the end of the death processions Djébar bemoans the deaths of several Algerian writers discussed here, who were her dear friends and compatriots, but she does so in order to illustrate the sacrifices many have made on behalf of the Algerian people over a forty year period, ranging from the beginning of the War of Independence in the 1950s to the Civil War of the 1990s. It is also at this point in her memoir that Djébar recognizes the singularity and formation of her testimony. She discusses how her friend, Mekbel, the journalist, preempts his death. Djébar explains how Mekbel envisages how his death will be described:

*J'aimerais bien savoir, commençait-il alors qu'il ne se croyait pas à la veille de sa mort qui va me tuer? [...] il y a d'autres questions, peut-être plus importantes. Par exemple, comment je vais être tué et pourquoi on va me tuer? Quand on va me tuer? Je remarque que je n'emploie pas le mot assassin. Pourquoi? Sans doute parce que je pense qu'assassiner ou tuer, le résultat est le même: dans un cas comme dans un autre, je finirai au fond du même trou. (225)*

As Djébar explains Mekbel's thought process, she provides her with an example of her thought process too. In fact, she discusses the death of the last writer in the procession

with irony. After informing us of Mekbel's last questions aforementioned, she acknowledges what she has done throughout her processions in this writing:

Ce que j'aime chez cet homme de plume – lui que je n'ai rencontré qu'une fois, tout un après-midi, chez lui, en famille: rieur, silencieux, avec une tendresse qu'il ne pouvait cacher sous son apparente timidité – ce qui le caractérise, dans cette procession dont il est le dernier passage, c'est son goût des mots, du mot de toute langue – mot français, arabe, berbère, son penchant pour le jeu verbal, subtil ou parfois facile, mais jeu pur [...] Et je reviens à sa curiosité patiente qui progresse pas à pas, qui alimente une interrogation après l'autre – comme s'il savourait chaque station de sa quête, même à coloration funèbre: Tuer ou assassiner? Va pour tuer. C'est bref, rapide, un mouvement à deux temps comme pan-pan. Tandis qu'assassiner ça fait compliqué, ça va chercher la difficulté [...] A la fin du compte je préfère tuer, ça doit moins faire souffrir. Assassiner, c'est fait pour le lecteur, pour son imagination. Tuer, c'est fait pour la victime." (225-226)

Djebar shows us how she picks out what she likes about each author and chooses her words to describe her friend very carefully. For this reason I believe Djebar presents a double mythopoetics as she presents the myths from her friend's writings, but she also creates additional myths from her own analysis or description of the other myths. This is an example of double mythologizing because Mekbel attempts to write his own obituary, which Djebar then addresses in her mythopoetics. They both demonstrate how the word choice can influence the reader.

## **2.6. Ecrire le Blanc de l'Algérie**

The fourth section of Djebar's memoir is the most poignant and personal because she evokes the fear of the present day in which she finds herself and her country. She sets a scene of a woman, who we assume is herself, in exile, listening, with baited breath, to the news about her homeland "certains compatriotes, comme moi, chaque matin soucieux, tremblants parfois, vont aux nouvelles, eux que l'exil taraude" (231). She justifies her memoir in that it has allowed her to become closer to her friends and we

assume also to her motherland. However this is where Djébar's mythologizing becomes most clear – she believes that writers live on through their words, therefore the writing she discusses here takes on new life. She wants to bring them back to life through their writing, but ultimately, she explains that their writing is an important aspect because it represents their individual legacy and that of the nation. For this reason she revives their work, and subsequently resurrects their bodies and their lives and restores the violent history of Algeria. She uses the literature of her friends to create myths about Algeria, but she also uses their literature to meditate and contemplate how she feels currently about her place of birth. Algeria is also doubly mythologized by her friends who have passed away and by Djébar herself. For example Djébar selects the passages from her friends' work (Anna Gréki, Jean Sénac, Kateb Yacine etc.). We only receive a glimpse of their publication, and sometimes we receive none at all because Djébar chooses not to provide a literary passage. When she does, though, Djébar manipulates her choice of text to her version of Algerian history. She uses it to render us more sympathetic to their killing, or she uses it to heighten the political situation in Algeria and evoke plural identities. Camus and Fanon do not achieve this double mythologizing because of their genre and their time of writing. The fiction and non-fiction styles they use do not incorporate memoir. Camus's fiction and autofiction only deal with the *pied-noir* experience and Fanon's anti-colonial rhetoric is based solely on his personal experiences as a psychiatrist living in Algeria or Africa. He does not include extensive studies or accounts of other non-African, or non-Francophone regions.

Djébar justifies her exploration of Algerian writings and writers of the past and present because it enables her to stress the very obvious transformation of Algerian

society in recent years. She refers to “des écroulements” (234) to characterize the series of collapses and failures that have taken place. She conveys the problems with religious and linguistic fundamentalism that currently plague Algeria. In her review of *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, Clarisse Zimra clarifies Djébar's declaration on war “toward the Arabization (one national language) and Islamization (one national religion)” of Algeria (152). Djébar addresses the euphemisms, such as “événements” (241), that are still used to avoid talking about the truth or the seriousness of the situation. However, she also refers to the events of the past, confessing they are necessary in order to understand the present status or condition of Algeria, or as Zimra aptly calls “the current regime” (152). Therefore, Djébar can rationalize her mythologizing of her friends and her home because she provides evidence of each collapse, or death, of a writer or leader as it happened, providing an evolution, or overview, of death in Algeria. She supplies readers with an array of examples. Additionally, she does not always hide behind the writing to make her point. I agree with Jane Hiddleston in *Assia Djébar; Out of Algeria* (2006) that Djébar conveys her “own anxiety towards the written word and her sense of unease towards the capacity of language to testify to recent atrocities” (122). As Mireille Calle-Gruber notes in *Assia Djébar ou la résistance de l'écriture* (2001) the biographical genre promotes bias and excess (108) which I believe then facilitates a literary appropriation. It allows Djébar to supplement her display of loss and grief with her intermittent criticism of the suppression of Algerian literature to encourage written documentation. By doing so, Djébar conceives Algeria as not only a white space of mourning, which she alludes to in the title and in her final pages, but primarily she considers Algeria as a space of writing, a land of its own, an artistic territory, “L'écriture et l'Algérie comme territoires” (244). She

encourages Algerians to take up their pen and continue to tell Algeria's stories, no matter with which language, or religion, or ethnicity they associate. Thus, she reminds us that she has displayed the plurality of Algeria's writers by including Muslims, Berbers and *pied-noirs* and advanced Algerian myths through her particular blend of memoir and autobiography.

### ***3. Ces voix qui m'assiègent...en marge de ma francophonie***

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In 1999 Assia Djébar published a collection of essays on the voices that assail her. Written over a period of ten years, some of the critical essays originally were presented at conferences, or published in newspapers and reviews. According to Clarisse Zimra, writing in "Hearing Voices, or Who You Calling Postcolonial The Evolution of Djébar's Poetics?," Canadian scholars lamented about their difficulty in accessing Djébar's critical works. First presented as a doctoral dissertation *sur travaux* in May 1999 under the direction of Jeanne-Marie Clerc at l'Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier, France, the essays were published later that year in two editions. The first edition, which was published by Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, contained the full title, however the second edition, which was published in Paris by Albin Michel, does not include the subtitle. The Canadian journal *Études Françaises* awarded Djébar a prize for this publication. Appearing together for the first time, the collection invites us to read the essays in order to be more aware of their intertextuality.

Djébar opens her volume with a foreword defiantly explaining that she was prompted to write in response to the questions of why she writes and, more specifically,

why she writes in French: “L’écritain est parfois interrogé en justice: “Pourquoi écrivez-vous?” A cette première question banale, une seconde souvent succède: “Pourquoi écrivez-vous en français?” (7). As the title and opening statement indicate, Djébar intends to formulate a response to these repeated questions by extensively detailing her personal relationship with language and identity, especially within the confines of the francophone context. Unlike *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*, she does not focus or rely on the identity or work of her compatriots to corroborate her opinion. Here, as she explains in the *Avant-propos*, Djébar engages independently in this dialogue that focuses on her creative decisions. Writing in her own words, she explains the subtitle *en marge de ma francophonie*, which does not appear on French editions, only Canadian editions:

Je serai tentée de le compléter: en marge mais aussi en marche. Oui, mon écriture française est vraiment une marche, même imperceptible ; la langue, dans ses jeux et ses enjeux, n’est-elle pas le seul bien que peut revendiquer l’écritain? [...] L’attente d’un public, restreint ou important [...] me poussait à rendre compte de mon écriture, de mon trajet, de mon pays. (7)

Thus, Djébar, her writing, and her languages lie on or within the margins. Djébar felt compelled to write in response to questions from critics and provides us with her various streams of consciousness throughout this ten year span where she is obliged to confront her anxieties over French Algerian alienation and simultaneously summarize her writing, her journey, and her country. Nonetheless, Djébar admits from the outset that her writing blurs boundaries on account of her language use. There is no clear, or concise answer. Discussing her writing and her language choice are complicated issues. She acknowledges her writing is a work in progress, often impossible to perceive or decipher. However, she retaliates against the question imposed on her by asking the questioner if language is the means to vindicate one’s honor.

Djebar's objective with these essays is to pledge her support for Algerian multiplicity, while exposing her personal position within this plurality of language and culture:

ma propre voix, ici transcrite, a tenté, surtout au cours de ces années tumultueuses, et souvent tragiques, de mon pays, simplement de défendre la culture algérienne, qui me paraissait en danger. Mais vivant celle-ci demeure, même si certains lui dénie sa multiplicité. (8)

The essays enable Djebar to take command and be her own spokesperson "*prise de parole*." In many respects this collection of essays is Djebar's response to the tragic events that unfolded in her homeland. It is understandable that Djebar had no desire to politicize her position, or that of others. In her opinion, defending both the Algerian culture to which she belongs, and supporting Algerian multiplicity, seems entirely possible to accomplish at the same time. Indeed, these two tasks seem even more possible given Djebar's time of writing (post Algerian Civil War) and other works that were published during the Algerian War of Independence and the Algerian Civil War.

Examples of her writings published during the Algerian War include *La Soif*, (1957) *Les Impatients* (1958), and *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde*, which was published at the end of the war in 1962. These earlier writings discuss the role of women in the revolution, and they portray characters that fought against the bourgeoisie. In addition to the writings discussed here in this project, Djebar's publications from the 1990s include *Loin de Medine* (1991), *Vaste est la prison* (1995), *Oran, langue morte* (1997), and *Les Nuits de Strasbourg* (1997). While these later writings reflect contemporary Algerian events at the time of writing, they also explore the role of Arab women in Algeria.

In the introduction, and specifically in the section entitled "Entre corps et voix", Djebar addresses the polyphony of Algerian women and tells us what these voices are

that besiege her: “Chez nous, toute femme a quatre langues” (13). Berber represents the oldest language, Arabic, the language of prayer and of the Prophet, and French, the language of former masters that left their shadow. According to Djébar the fourth and perhaps most important language is the unique Algerian combination of all three languages that together empower and confine the female body at the same time: “Trois langues auxquelles s’accouple un quatrième langage: celui du corps avec ses danses, ses trances, ses suffocations, parfois son asphyxie, et son délire, ses tâtonnements de mendiant ivre, son élan fou d’infirmes, soudain.” (14) For Djébar this fourth language is so powerful that it takes over the body, possesses the speaker, throwing them into a trance and suffocating them. This fourth language can lead to a period of uncontrolled excitement where one fumbles, even suddenly becoming paralyzed.

### **3.2. “Etre une voix Francophone”**

In her article entitled “Still Besieged by Voices: Djébar’s Poetics of the Threshold” Zimra describes Djébar’s poetics as combative, authoritative, and articulate. Not only does Zimra accurately address the difficulty involved in analyzing this particular writing by Djébar, but she also calls attention to the peculiarity of Djébar’s poetics, which is integral to her style:

It is indeed the most conceptually challenging record we have to date as to the elaboration of her poetics [...] For it constitutes the indispensable dialogical document as to the nature of her craft. It deftly spells out her right to occupy the place she has chosen to occupy and the resulting textual strategies that have shaped her life’s work. (110)

My analysis begins with this essay because it is where Djébar provides us with her famous answer for why she writes: “J’écris à force de me taire!” (25) This essay also introduces Djébar’s mythopoetics. Initially expressing her difficulty with answering how

one should categorize her or her texts, it seems Djébar realizes that the only way for her to express herself is by writing. The longer she stays silent, the more she has to say and the even greater need she has to express her thoughts. As her thoughts emerge and she begins to write, Djébar starts to defend her use of French. She explains how writing in French is cathartic for her as it allows her to express feelings she would not be able to express otherwise:

Ce qui voudrait dire ici que je ne sais vraiment pas si je suis, disons, une *francophone* *voix*. Car je ressens de plus en plus que je ne peux pas être, et surtout pas, « une voix », puisque, entre deux livres publiés, je me tais, je m'entête à me taire, et presque à m'enterrer vocalement. Alors justement, mon écriture sort, surgit, coule soudain ou par moments explose. Explose en moi d'abord, et je dois le préciser, tel un rythme, une scansion, un mouvement intérieur, un martèlement sans mots – ou en deçà de la langue, une avant-langue, ou plutôt un amont obscur de la langue [...] Serait-ce une poussée d'écriture, plus exactement une nécessité d'inscription qui abruptement, ou en tâtonnant, s'affirme? (25)

By writing in French Djébar risks legitimizing or at least compromising French culture, and her French colonial education. The act of writing itself not only legitimizes Djébar's story, but it also legitimizes cultures that possess a written language, or those individuals who have access to this culture and form of communication. It is then possible to perceive Djébar's writing, and precisely her writing in French, as a double legitimization of French as the written and spoken word; however, it is unlikely that this means she rejects her other linguistic communities. French facilitates her mythopoetics because it is both natural for her as a means of expression, yet she is still able to maintain traces of her other Algerian languages, or other voices:

Disons plutôt que l'écriture qui surgit, qui s'inscrit, qui court le sable, la soie, le parchemin ou les tablettes, sur le papier ou sur l'écran allumé, s'anime en effet, prend vie, gagne vitesse et même galope, mais toujours comme une mise en écho, dans un besoin compulsive de garder trace des voix, tout autour, qui s'envolent, et s'assèchent. (26)

The other voices have the power to disrupt or reshape her written French.

When Djébar highlights how she received a French education during colonization, she acknowledges that this was not possible for all Algerian women and that her writing in French is a consequence of this education. She accepts that she is a product of colonization: “Je suis, sans nul doute, une femme d’éducation française, de par ma formation, en langue française, du temps de l’Algérie colonisée.” (26) While Djébar avoids addressing how a French education, similar to her own, is no longer possible for women in contemporary Algeria on account of Arabization, she uses this occasion to advance her mythopoetics of Algerian plurality by highlighting her other Algerian sensibilities. She deliberately emphasizes her Arab-Berber origins and her Muslim faith: “et si j’ajoute aussitôt « d’éducation française » et de sensibilité algérienne, ou arabo-berbère, ou même musulmane lorsque l’islam est vécu comme une culture, plus encore que comme une foi et une pratique, alors je suis bien une « femme francophone » dans mon activité intellectuelle et critique.” (26)

As Djébar informs us here in this essay that she refuses to be categorized as a writer, or a French writer, preferring to place herself along the borders “je me place, moi, sur les frontières...” (27) of both language and art, it becomes apparent that she is resistant to particular identifications. She does not want to assign herself labels or accept labels. Instead, she wishes to redefine every designation critics apply to her. She questions what it means to write; she reformulates or elaborates her reasons for writing. Everything is a fluid process, in a state of transition. She is also skeptical about associating herself with one literary school over another. Djébar’s refusal to produce a clear response to these questions and her inability to identify with one specific language

or one form of writing epitomizes her mythopoetics. Djébar illustrates that she shares and values a polyglot heritage with all Algerians.

### 3.3. “Ecrire dans la langue de l’autre”

In the essay entitled “Ecrire dans la langue de l’autre” we observe other aspects of Djébar’s mythopoetics. While contemplating her many designations “femme de parole,” “femme d’écriture,” and “femme algérienne,” Djébar claims she only has one mode of writing, “*Je n’ai qu’une écriture: celle de la langue française*” (42). Once again Djébar conveys her ties to the French language but then swiftly follows this declaration by reinforcing her plural origins: “je devrais faire référence plutôt qu’à la terre natale, du moins à la langue des aïeux et des aïeules: je suis femme arabo-berbère” et en sus « d’écriture française ».” (42) Djébar’s discussion on her relationship to language shifts back and forth throughout these essays. Her consideration for languages changes as the voices speak to her. However, despite the constant linguistic movement, patterns begin to emerge with respect to her voices. To clarify, French plays a significant role in her life but it does not define her entirely. It accounts for the professional and creative aspect of her life. Despite her thirty-year career, though, she asserts her identity has not changed: “l’identité n’est pas que de papier, que de sang, mais aussi de *langue*. Et s’il semble que la langue est, comme on dit si souvent, « moyen de communication », elle est surtout pour moi, écrivain, « moyen de transformation », dans la mesure où je pratique l’écriture comme *aventure*. (42) As we have observed in this chapter with the analysis of Djébar’s earlier publication, *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*, French was the language she preferred to use when communicating with her friends. Moreover, as we concluded in the earlier analysis,

Djebar uses language as a means of transformation and adventure. She transforms her friends' stories of death into celebrations of Algerian plurality. Her use of the memoir genre enabled her to embark on that creative, non-traditional narrative that demonstrated adventure in the sense that it was an unusual undertaking.

In this same essay "Ecrire dans la langue de l'autre" Djebar develops her mythopoetics further by comparing the French language to a veil: "J'ai utilisé jusque-là la langue française comme voile. Voile sur ma personne individuelle, voile sur mon corps de femme; je pourrais presque dire voile sur ma propre voix." (43) Djebar depicts the French language as a veil that allows her to talk about her real self and her culture.

Without using French as a veil she might not have that same opening:

Voile non de la dissimulation ni du masque, mais de la suggestion et de l'ambiguïté, voile-barrière au désir certes, mais aussi voile subsumant le désir des hommes [...] Ainsi pour moi, en une première étape de mon trajet d'écrivain: l'écriture, je la voulais loin de moi, comme si dans ses creux, ses pleins et des déliés, je me cachais plutôt en elle, consciente de la curiosité extralittéraire en quelque sorte que mes écrits pouvaient susciter au préalable – un peu, après tout, comme la silhouette citadine maternelle défilant au centre du village, devant les paysans (43).

French does not conceal or mask, it acts as a passageway between what she is hiding and what she shows. She continues to explain how this veil provided her with the necessary space to be herself: J'ai trouvé dans cette écritures mon espace. (44)

#### **3.4. "Camus, « Le Premier Homme », le dernier livre"**

According to Françoise Lionnet, writing in "Ces voix au fil de soi(e)," the themes Djebar discusses in these essays can be summarized in two words - the aesthetic or the political: "Les thèmes abordés pourraient se résumer en deux mots, qui font référence à des concepts chargés de significations, surtout quand on les associe dans une même phrase – politique et esthétique, et alors plus lorsqu'on les oppose – politique *ou*

esthétique.” (104) Taking Djébar’s use of the veil as aesthetic, I propose an example of the political, which also contributes to her overall mythopoetics of Algerian plurality in the postcolonial era. One of the final essays in the collection, entitled “Camus, « Le Premier Homme », le dernier livre” is the speech Djébar gave a speech at the University of California, Berkeley in 1995. As aforementioned in this chapter, Djébar refers to this speech in *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*, where she explains that she and Camus share space and language, including a maternal non-language.

Djébar opens her speech with the words: “*Moi, étrangère à l’Etranger*” (224). Calling herself a stranger while referring to Camus’s novel *L’Etranger*, Djébar highlights their otherness that she calls “cette double étrangeté” (224). Djébar calls attention to a line in Camus’s final novel *Le Premier Homme* “Ce qu’ils n’aiment pas en lui, c’était l’Algérien.” (224) We recognize immediately the fondness Djébar has for Camus. She portrays a bond that they share in that they are both Algerian writers, and she marvels at the situation in which she finds herself:

Justement, je souris à cet Algérien-là, moi qu’on accueille de si loin et dans une université prestigieuse parce qu’écrivaine, parce que femme et parce qu’algérienne: je note à mon tour, en contrepoint à Camus, « ce qu’ils reconnaissent en moi, c’est Algérienne ». Ce qu’ils reconnaissent? Rectifions: « Ce qu’ils espèrent de moi, c’est l’Algérie-femme. » (224)

She compares herself here to Camus in terms of writer expectations and criticism; essentially, how others view them. Then Djébar elaborates further on her curiosity with Camus, which she admits arrives at a late stage:

ma surprise donc de ma curiosité camusienne tard éveillée, élan soudain d’aller voir par-derrrière, là-bas, d’approcher par-derrrière l’entité, ou l’identité Algérie, au terme d’un éloignement, au bout d’une ligne de fuite comme si la possibilité de ma rencontre avec Camus ne pouvait faire que le plus loin possible de l’Algérie, au-delà même de l’horizon!... C’est le moment de constater que j’ai passé plus de trente années de va vie d’écrivain hors territoire camusien. (225)

Djebar politicizes the situation by forming an alliance with Camus at last. Also, by discussing their Algerian identity and emphasizing the notion of territory directly Djebar demonstrates how territorialized Algeria still is for writers in the 1990s. Zimra states: “This was a delicate recasting of roles in response to the representational constrictions of her increased international visibility: Writer, Woman, Muslim...The careful allegiance was also deliberately politicized.” (151-152) Zimra goes on to mention that Djebar once denied a kinship with Camus in an interview they had in the 1990. Then, Zimra remarks how Djebar’s decision in 1995 to forge a kinship with Camus “sealed her entry into permanent exile” (152). Indeed, Djebar took a principled stand to embrace Camus and includes a tribute to him in this collection as well as in *Le Blanc de l’Algérie*.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In *Ces voix qui m’assiègent* Djebar’s Arab, Berber, and French voices collide to evoke specific Algerian memories and contribute to a mythopoetics that offers a new way of thinking about language and about writing. The voices highlight her polyglot society and multilingual identity and her difficulty in addressing the complexity of these voices reinforces the plurality and her inability to give any of them up. Her languages are reminiscent of Algeria’s land, each representing a region or space. As the title of this collection suggests, the languages colonized Djebar. They besieged her and took control of her; hence, she reciprocates by colonizing them, holding onto them, and never letting go.

While Djebar offers a celebration of plurality, she does not always suggest there is cultural harmony. Although, both publications discussed in this chapter demonstrate how language and death create cultural divisions, I also believe Djebar tries to demonstrate

unity, as she explores her plurality extensively and intimately. She mythologizes all languages in order to move beyond the boundary of postcolonial mourning to a site of transnational mourning, which is epitomized by her homage to Camus in California.

## CONCLUSION

As we have observed Camus, Djebbar, and Fanon use myth because they seek answers to who they are, what is their purpose, and why they are in Algeria. As the violence of the last century indicates, all Algerians have struggled, to some degree, for legitimacy and authority. Mythmaking then allows them to reframe their memories and develop a discourse that operates as a mask, of which they avail to either conceal or expose their culture, and socio-political concerns. Using myth and memory as narrative devices enables them to rehabilitate their experiences as a *pied-noir*, an outsider, or a native Algerian. They must adopt myth to reconcile the good and the bad aspects of the worlds, but mostly they apply mythology to their memories because it offers inspiration. They can either adapt the myths that already exist or they create new ones. Camus highlights various aspects of colonial life, including the absurdity of privilege and poverty. Djebbar mourns her compatriots, which allows her to heal from their violent past, while Fanon manipulates myths and creates new ones to promote change that will result in a more just Algeria.

In Chapter One I looked at Albert Camus's representation of Colonial Algeria. By expressly focusing on Camus's first novel, *L'Étranger*, published in 1942, his later short story collection, *L'Exil et le Royaume*, published in 1958, his political text *Chroniques Algériennes* in 1957, as well as his posthumous publication *Le Premier Homme* in 1994, I establish how Camus mythologizes his *pied-noir* community. This selection of writings allows us to compare how Camus's mythopetics evolved throughout his life.

We observe how Camus's narratives communicate a colonial mythopoeitics through the myth and memory of impoverished and alienated *pied-noir* protagonists in

his fiction and equally through his own experience in Kabylia in his non-fiction. He uses mythology and memory to legitimize the *pied-noir* perspective but he also demonstrates the complicated position they hold in society. Camus's narratives outline the foundation of French Colonialism in Algerian society, yet Camus or his characters do not fully support a colonial ideology. Camus's representation of Algeria suppresses and exposes aspects of colonialism reflecting his ambivalence about the future of Algeria.

In Chapter Two I analyzed how Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon became Algeria's revolutionary hero. Discussing *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* (1959), *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961) and *Pour la Révolution Africaine* (1964), a posthumous collection from the years following Fanon's departure from Algeria we see how he concentrates exclusively on the myth of decolonization and contributes to an anticolonial mythopoetics. He supports independence through violent means and focuses on portraying Algerians and their efforts in the Algerian War of Independence in the best light possible. Fanon achieves this by mythologizing the struggle and the many difficulties involved in counteracting French Colonialism. Fanon combines myth and memory by reflecting upon his experience as a psychiatrist who worked with victims of torture. In doing so, Fanon reinforces the destructive nature of colonialism and empathizes with those who are forced to fight against it.

In Chapter Three I explored how Djébar portrays loss, language, and plurality in Postcolonial Algeria, presenting them as by-products of colonialism and independence. Concentrating on her memoir *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1995), and her collection of essays *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* (1999), I discussed how she mythologizes her hybrid community through language and the deaths of others as she writes in French about her

plural identities as a Berber, Muslim Algerian woman. By reimagining the deaths of her friends since Independence, and by detailing her relationship to language, Dejabr shows how Algeria blurs linguistic and cultural boundaries and blends colonial and anticolonial sentiments to create an inclusive, yet unstable postcolonial mythopoetics.

Throughout the narratives of Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, and Assia Djébar we have seen the evolution of a French Algerian mythopoetics. We have also seen that despite their colonial, anticolonial, or postcolonial designation, there are more elements that unite these Algerian authors as they describe their individual communities. By interweaving mythology and memory they are able to reposition themselves and their communities and create a hybrid collection of elements that I consider to be a form of mythopoetics.

Indeed there are several texts by Camus, Djébar, and Fanon that I have not chosen to analyze in this project. An examination of them could provide additional insights. For example, Camus's earlier publications such as the essay collections *L'Envers et l'endroit* (1937) and *Les Noces* (1938) could further demonstrate his myth of the *pied-noir* as certain essays explore North Africa and celebrate the Mediterranean landscape. Fanon's articles for the FLN propaganda newspaper *El Moudjahid* could provide other insights into his strategy for decolonization. These articles could be particularly pertinent to this research since they were written near the end of his life, while Fanon was writing *Les Damnés de la Terre*. Djébar's *Vaste est la Prison* (1995) and her final novel, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007), could contribute significantly since Djébar revisits key moments in her life in these publications.

I believe that my research offers an important connection between the three periods of French-Algeria in the latter half of the twentieth century. As we read about Algeria's colonial past including authors' experiences and memories living there as either *pieds-noirs*, Caribbean natives, or native Algerians, it is useful to discover that they still discuss similar ideas. As Algeria changed and they questioned their identities, we find that their mythopoetics often remained the same. However, while they share many commonalities in terms of history and repeat mythologies or undo them, they also provide inconsistent representations. Therefore, this study of mythopoetics highlights the complications involved in discussing the nation, identity, or war. Camus, Djébar, and Fanon confirm that Algeria is the site of a distinct mythological system that is produced by the plural identities of the region. As a result, each Algerian community uses literary texts in an attempt to legitimize its origins and take control of this disputed territory that still cannot escape the vestiges of French Colonialism. The multiplicity of identities that they manipulate to challenge colonial, anticolonial, or postcolonial perceptions reveals the greater picture of instability in Algeria. They acknowledge the conflict and demonstrate it through their use of myth and memory. Throughout these fifty-five years they embrace and discuss their uncomfortable positions in Algeria to form a unique mythopoetics.

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## VITA

Gina Marie Breen grew up in the historical town of Downpatrick, County Down, Northern Ireland. Her quest for international travel and her passion for foreign languages began on annual family holidays spent on the sunny beaches of the Mediterranean. After finishing her A Levels at Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch in 2003, Gina accepted an academic scholarship to study in the United States at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. The daughter of an alumnus, Gina pursued two undergraduate degrees in French and Spanish. Following her undergraduate experience, Gina spent a year in Caen, France teaching English at the Université de Basse Normandie. Upon her return to Carbondale, Gina completed a double Masters degree in French & TESOL.

In 2010 Gina had the exciting opportunity to move to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 2011 she began her doctoral degree in French at Louisiana State University, minoring in Comparative Literature and Political Science. In the summer of 2013 Gina attended the Dartmouth Institute of French Cultural Studies. She has had the opportunity to teach a variety of courses at LSU, including language and literature and has presented her research at several conferences including the International Colloquium in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century French and Francophone Studies, and most recently at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual French and Francophone Graduate Studies Conference at UCLA. In spring 2016 Gina was awarded a dissertation fellowship and in the fall of 2016 she will begin teaching in the World Languages, Literatures and Cultures Department at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Her article entitled “Mythopoetic Autobiographic Algerian Travels” will appear in *Paroles Gelées* in 2017.