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Temporal Wounds: Ancient Echoes in Camus and the Caribbean

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Temporal Wounds: Ancient Echoes in Camus and the Caribbean

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Abstract

Temporal Wounds: Ancient Echoes in Camus and the Caribbean
By Judith Levy

This dissertation puts the work of Algerian-born philosopher, playwright, and novelist Albert Camus into conversation with various postcolonial and migrant Caribbean authors. By investigating Camus' simultaneous disavowal of colonial violence but support of the French colonial project, it considers Camus as an ambiguous colonial figure and asks how he can be imported to a Caribbean context with regards to the topics of time, memory, history, and myth. Each chapter poses Albert Camus alongside a Caribbean author while investigating specific allusions to ancient myth or biblical texts. The first chapter reads Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat's references to Albert Camus in her semi-autobiographical essays, focusing on their allusions to creation myths and the Greek myth of Sisyphus. By using Camus' philosophy to think through her family's migration to seek refuge from the Duvalier regime in Haiti, along with her mother's death, Danticat extracts an approach of endless creation and analysis that creates hope in the face of (post)colonial violence. The second chapter reads the biblical figures of Adam in Camus, along with Ruth in Trinbagonian-Canadian poet M. NourbSe Philip. Considering the contexts of Atlantic slave trade and Algerian colonization, it analyzes pieces of writing that claim that they cannot be read, in which time also falls apart. The final chapter investigates the means by which systemic violence takes place within Camus' novel *L'Étranger* and how it is confronted by Algerian author Kamel Daoud's re-writing of this text. Hinging on the references to Moses, Aaron, Cain, and Abel, this chapter explores the question of responding to violence with more violence. It connects this question to Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon's considerations of racial injustice in Martinique and the Algerian War of Independence. By reading Camus' subtle critiques, analyzing where his texts echo ancient texts, and by putting his work into conversation with the concerns of memory, history, and literature in the Caribbean, this dissertation examines time's working and re-working in various (post)colonial contexts.

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Introduction

Mediterranean and Caribbean Liminality: Unsettling A Contemporary Past

Reading the ambivalent position of Algerian-born philosopher, playwright, and novelist Albert Camus alongside Caribbean (post)colonial and migrant authors, this dissertation investigates each author's use of allusions to ancient Greek myth and the Bible as a means of analyzing and critiquing their contexts. For these authors, the use of allusions interrupts their contemporary moment with a supposedly foundational past in a way which reframes the concepts of time, narration, and history, in the face of imperialism, colonialism, and their aftermath. While the contexts I investigate are physically and (sometimes) temporally distant, a contemporary world still stands confronted with many of the issues this dissertation addresses. As I complete this dissertation amidst social unrest following the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and too many more Black Americans at the hands of both civilians and police, a CNN headline reads, "Statues of Christopher Columbus are being dismounted across the country" (June 10, 2020). While protesters are calling for defunding police and other contemporary social reforms to combat racial injustice in an American context, a centuries-old historical figure is torn down. As Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot points out in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), Columbus' day of landing in the Bahamas was not significant; rather, his image was evoked centuries later to remove the context surrounding his voyage and write him as myth. In America, this myth would uphold, "in spite of inflated references to a melting pot, ideologies of ethnicity [which] emphasize continuities with the *Old* World" (122; emphasis in original). Many components of these myths come from Columbus' errors and his first tendencies to label the natives he

encountered as 'Other.' The Caribbean received its name from the Carib people that Columbus first met when he arrived on Hispaniola. However, another word was derived from the same origin. Later interpreted to be from the Latin root "canis," for "dog," Columbus created a new word to apply to these people: cannibal (OED "cannibal"; *Journals and other documents on the life and voyages of Christopher Columbus* 100). Thus the name of a people became an adjective to highlight supposed savagery and difference. [1] As Native American scholar Jack Forbes puts it in *Columbus and other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* (1979), "[i]ronically, such terms have often been used by European writers to refer to non-European peoples whose customs were different and were therefore (because of that element of difference) called 'wild' or 'savage.' The irony stems from the fact that few, if any, societies on the face of the earth have ever been as avaricious, cruel, violent, and aggressive as have certain European populations" (23). Forbes emphasizes that these projections of savagery were the foundations for European-instigated genocide, ethnocide, and "large-scale enslavement" (27-34). After the near-extinction of many indigenous peoples of the Americas, through slaughter and disease, [2] these projections were merely recalibrated and turned towards Africans through Atlantic slave trade.

Around the same time, the word "barbarian" appeared: derived from the word "Barbary," it first appeared circa 1300 to describe the region of North Africa inhabited by the Barbar or Berber people. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that it has not been settled whether this word stems from the Arabic "barbara," meaning to talk "noisily and confusedly," or whether it is

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[1] See *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature* (2013) by Valérie Loichot for an account of how savagery and difference were projected onto both the indigenous people of the Caribbean and eventually also onto African slaves. See also my discussion of *The Tropics Bite Back* in Chapter 3.

[2] In *The Conquest of America* (1984), Tzvetan Todorov (also cited by Forbes) explains that of the 80 million inhabitants of the Americas in 1500, there were only about 10 million remaining by the middle of the same century (133).

related to its Greek equivalent (OED "barbarian", "Barbary"). The definition of talking noisily and confusedly comes from the onomatopoeic *brbrbr*, representing a gibberish language. As historian Benjamin Stora points out, "[t]he Berbers called themselves *Amazinghen* (sing. *Amazigh*), that is, 'free men'" (*Algeria, 1830-2000* 2). Using this sound to degrade natives of this region to a less civilized status, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, "Barbary" became synonymous with both foreigners and a lack of cultivation, especially regarding language use (OED "Barbary"). Furthermore, in the case of barbarity, another distinction must be noted: "Barbary" was also used to describe non-Christians. Religion, along with race, thus became a marker of difference between European and non-European peoples who were "discovered", [3] conquered, and forced into slavery. Throughout his journals, Columbus refers to himself and his fellow explorers as Christians, rather than Spaniards, and asserts that "Christendom will help traffic" the native peoples (*Journals and other documents* 106). Eventually, these projections of racial and religious difference were converted into law: in the French colonies, the Code Noir and Code de l'Indigénat were written to outline the limitations of slaves and indigenous peoples in the Caribbean and North Africa, respectively. As English translator and intellectual historian David Macey explains, "[t]he laws of 1865 defined [Algerians] as French subjects but not citizens. Their daily lives were governed by Muslim law and, in order to become French citizens, they had to renounce their Islamic civil status" (*Frantz Fanon* 243). These ages-old distinctions that label othered bodies as dangerous seep through the past into the contemporary world,

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[3] The language of discovery is both fallacious and violent in that suggests that a people did not exist until they were known by the finding culture. As Forbes states, "[a]ll white people have known from the beginning of contact that the Native Americans were already present and had obviously discovered the land" (29). He also points out on the same page that rumors of people in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas had been spreading since the first century A.D. Remarking on the inscription of Columbus' "discovery" in 1492 into dominant Western history, Trouillot explains, "To call 'discovery' the first invasions of inhabited lands by Europeans is an exercise in Eurocentric power that already frames future narratives of the event so described. Contact with the West is seen as the foundation of historicity of different cultures. Once discovered by Europeans, the Other finally enters the human world" (114).

manifesting in the violence of police brutality, Islamophobia, and much more. This dissertation takes as its task a comparison of the Caribbean and Algerian (post)colonial[4] contexts and investigates how some uses of religion and Greek myth compound these forms of projected savagery. Subsequently, it assesses how authors within (post)colonial contexts use the same ancient allusions to religion and myth to write against these projections.

To make these assessments, the pages ahead will investigate Camus and Caribbean contemporary authors from (but not necessarily living in) Algeria, Haiti, Martinique, and Trinidad with allusions to Greek and Hebrew ancient texts to illuminate how supposed origins must be reconsidered to step beyond the injustices of imperialism, slavery, colonialism, and their afterlives. As asserted by postcolonial scholar Robert Young in "Postcolonial Remains" (2012) and by English and Black Studies scholar Christina Sharpe in *In the Wake* (2016), abolition and decolonization have not ended the forms of oppression that their violent context first instigated. As C. Sharpe puts it, in the wake[5] of these events, "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (9). These echoes of ancient texts in contemporary contexts conduct the "wake work" that Sharpe encourages: "a mode of inhabiting *and* rupturing this episteme with our known lived and un/imaginable lives" (18; emphasis in original). What has often been violently termed "the West"[6] —Europe and the European settlers of America—predominantly takes two

[4] Throughout this dissertation, I write "(post)colonial" because, on the one hand, I write about both the time of colonization and after liberation. On the other hand, I also put "post" in parenthesis to refer to the ongoing oppressive regimes, racism, and injustice that all-too-often continues after liberation.
[5] Sharpe refers to Atlantic slave trade, slavery, and ongoing racial injustices in an American context. In doing so, she uses the word "wake" in three ways: to be behind a ship in water—in this case, a slave ship; to conduct a wake as a process of mourning; and to be awake, signifying consciousness.
[6] In "The Politics of Postcolonial Critique," Young explains that this term creates a fallacious dichotomy that divides the "West"—which is much less than what is literally half of the globe in the direction of West—with the remainder of the world. Young also takes issue with the alternative nomenclature of global North and South, along with First, Second, and Third World. He ultimately proposes the term "tricontinentalism" to signify Latin America, Africa, and Asia (4-5). Thus this dissertation will often refer to the supposed "West" by using quotation marks or adding qualifiers like "supposed" or "presumptive" before the term.

great Mediterranean sets of stories as its origins: Greek mythology and the Bible. As St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott's poem "The Sea is History" (1979) suggests, these supposed foundations of the "West" must also take into account the violence of slavery as a large component of the "Genesis" of this "West" ("the lantern of a caravel/ and that was Genesis") (*The Star Apple Kingdom* Kindle Location 442-94). Walcott also uses Greek myth to conduct the same critique, as his seminal poem *Omeros* (the Greek word for Homer) writes the Iliad and the Odyssey into a St. Lucian and American context. In this poem, origins are thrown into question, Homeric characters are re-written (Helen, for instance, remains pregnant throughout most of the poem), and history is ongoingly being re-written. The critique implied by Walcott's poetry is greatly continued by the authors studied here: that the way these founding stories are mobilized in the cases of imperialism and (post)colonialism eliminates the complexities within them. These unnuanced versions of myth are often used to justify their mission of imperialism, colonialism, and ongoing ethnic and racial oppression. This approach, I argue, relies upon linear conceptions of time and narrative in order to uphold an uncontestable, homogenous (and homogenizing) origin. When these origins stories are flattened like so, they are frequently used to assert a teleological projection of history in which progress and civilization run in tandem with this unidirectional version of time.

While time is the larger conceptual scope that I investigate, other streams of discourse, and subsequently, epistemologies, are often informed by a limitedly linear temporal model. Language becomes streamlined as its tool. History is written under the guise of teleology, silencing narratives which do not fit into the image of progression. Patriarchal models of filiation are amplified. While discussing the case of Columbus, Trouillot points out that the emphasis on the conqueror and decontextualizing "the Discovery" to write it as myth has made it "a clear-cut

event much more fixed in time" than other important events of its era such as "the fall of Muslim Granada, the seemingly interminable expulsion of European Jews, or the tortuous consolidation of royal power in the early Renaissance." In this "narrativization of history," "chronology replaces process," and "as intermingled processes fade into a linear continuity, context also fades out" (113). This continuity purports that civilization is the operative marker of progress, and as postcolonial critic Edward Said underscores, the "Orient" (those deemed non-Western) is excluded from this narrative through a "cultural, temporal, and geographical distance" (*Orientalism* 222). He asserts that the use of an origin and subsequent progression narrative "set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins" (233). I posit that the origins which are deemed "immutable" are fraudulent in their immutable form, because they eliminate the complexities within the stories themselves and are used to forge violent models of colonization as filiation.

A linear continuity replaces native histories with the colonizer as a filial figure and elides forms of multiculturalism such as creolization. As Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant states in "L'Étendue et la filiation" ["Expanse and Filiation"] from *Poétique de la relation [Poetics of Relation]* (1990), "en Occident, la cause cachée (la conséquence) est la filiation, dont l'œuvre enclenche sur un donné linéaire du temps et toujours sur une projection, un projet" (59) ["[i]n the Western world the hidden cause (the consequence) of both Myth and Epic is filiation, its work setting out upon the fixed linearity of time, always toward a projection, a project" (47)].[7] This imposed filiation works to deceptively assert that the supposed West has discovered and

[7] Throughout this dissertation, when a translation is listed in the Works Cited page, that is the translation being used in-text. Otherwise, I have noted my own translations in the text by adding "(my translation)" afterwards.

helped create and civilize non-Western civilizations. As postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha underscores in "Signs Taken for Wonders," the presentation of the English Bible and religion from the colonizer to the colonized "in the name of the father and the author" comes pre-packaged with a civilizing mission, "instal[ling] the sign of appropriate representation: the word of G[-]d, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history, and narrative" (149).

The history and narrative imported by a colonial religion often perpetuates a myth of the colonizer's benevolence and development, omitting the frequent instances in which those colonized or enduring similar forms of oppression have been sources for the colonizer's growth. Describing Antigua's celebration of independence in her creative essay *A Small Place* (1988), Jamaica Kincaid underscores how "Antiguans are so proud of this that each year, to mark the day, they go to church and thank G[-]d, a British G[-]d, for this. But you should not think of the confusion that must lie in all that" (9). Historians such as Susan Buck-Morss have pointed out that the economic and intellectual growth of Europe relied heavily upon its imperial endeavors in the Atlantic (*Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*). Recent scholarship has extended this claim to the Mediterranean more broadly to include what was then called the "Barbary Coast." According to historian Ian Coller in *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (2016), "[t]he French Revolution was as much a Mediterranean revolution as it was an Atlantic one. The relation was not one of center and periphery . . . but rather one of concatenating events that flowed back and forth, shaping the course of the revolution itself" (53). This dissertation extends this consideration of *both* Caribbean and Mediterranean spaces as crucial contributors to the construction of the European and American world powers and continues these assertions in a contemporary, (post)colonial context. Theologian and decolonial scholar An Yountae

emphasizes how postcolonial thought sometimes falls short in analyzing sources from imperialism and early colonization but that Latin American and Caribbean thought benefits from considering how these earlier texts forge a stronger connection between nineteenth century imperialism and the decolonial era of the twentieth century (*The Decolonial Abyss* 20). By considering a diverse temporal expanse of texts, I aim to underscore what Kincaid describes to be "how the West (meaning Europe and North America after its conquest and settlement by Europeans) got rich" from the free labor of slavery "and what a great part the invention of the wristwatch played in it, for there was nothing noble-minded men could not do when they discovered they could slap time on their wrists just like that" (*A Small Place* 10). In other words, the means by which unnuanced uses of religion in colonial contexts can create the air of a seemingly benevolent colonizer which also catalyzes progress—erasing those who suffered in order to achieve said progress—along a regimented timeframe.

This concatenating construction of power which Coller refers to includes both sociopolitical daily realities and intellectual traditions. To consider daily realities and national myth, I consider Bhabha's concept of double-time to weave the "pedagogical" myth of large-scale national origin with the "performative" reality of the diversity of any nation's population ("Dissemi-Nation"). The same work is much needed with regards to intellectual traditions which often run corollary to national myths. Postcolonial scholar Robert Young's essay "Subjectivity and History: Derrida and Algeria," confronts rejections of poststructuralist and postcolonial thought "in the name of the 'Third World' on the grounds of it being western" (413). Emphasizing the example of Algerian-born philosopher Jacques Derrida, Young explains that these assertions ignore the "very non-European work" within these theories. According to Young, arguments that construct "an opposition between western theory and the particularity of

Third World experience" often assume "either patronizingly or deferentially that theory itself is completely western, while the only thing that the Third World can be allowed is experience, never anything so conceptually or politically effective as its own theory or philosophy. Such an argument unconsciously perpetuates the relation of adult to child that lay at the heart of colonial ideology" (413). Therefore, to prevent an ongoing violent filial assumption both at the level of (post)colonial quotidian reality and discourse, it is crucial to consider the nuanced identities and histories of those who do not easily fit into the limited categories of colonizer or colonized.

As Young points out, none of the poststructural or postcolonial scholars he mentions are "Algerians proper, in the sense of coming from the indigenous Arab, Berber, Kabyle, Chaouie, or Mzabite peoples." Rather, they are "Algerians improper," who did not easily fit into the one-sided identities of "French" or "Algerian" (414). Furthermore, Stora explains that a conceptual totality of Algeria did not exist, but that, "[a]t the end of World War II, Algeria looked like a set of 'juxtaposed departements'" (*Algeria, 1830-2000* 25). One of these "Algerians improper" who preceded Derrida is Albert Camus. Born in 1913 of French and Spanish descent, Camus claimed that his family moved to Algeria from Alsace to seek refuge from the Franco-Prussian war, rather than to thrive as aspiring colonists. However, *Albert Camus: A Life* points out that this may have simply sounded better than being poor immigrants from Bordeaux or Ardèche (where parts of his paternal family came from) (Todd 4). Camus, however, is not in the categories of poststructuralist or postcolonial with which Young engages. Instead, he is often affiliated with the earlier philosophical movement of Existentialism, although, as Camus scholar Matthew Sharpe would say, he "repeatedly denied the *idée fixe* that he was an existentialist, just as he refused the label of atheist so often pinned to his breast" (*Camus, Philosophe* 3). Until Camus' final manuscript *Le Premier Homme* was released posthumously in 1994, he was often thought

of as a purveyor of colonial sentiments by uplifting ancient texts, taking an ambiguous role in the Algerian Revolution (advocating for coexistence through a federation, rather than liberation), and keeping the victim of *L'Étranger* (1942) unnamed and racialized as "l'Arabe." Edward Said even goes as far as to say that in Camus' writing that the "facts of imperial actuality . . . have been dropped away" (*Culture and Imperialism* 172). David Caroll's re-reading of Camus in a postcolonial light, *Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (2007), underscores that the identities of Algeria at the time that Camus was writing were complex—involving an intermingling of Arabs, Berbers, pied-noirs, Jews who had settled in Algeria before colonization, and many more. Each of these groups were recognized differently by the French government, in which only some were considered subjects: while the Décrêt Crémieux gave Jews French citizenship in 1870, under the Code de l'indigénat, native Jews, Arabs, and Berbers were given the inferior status of "Indigènes." As such, Caroll postulates that the identities of people in Algeria resembled the postcolonial configurations of hybridity and ambivalence that are more often considered today (*Albert Camus the Algerian* 4). For this reason, Camus' position of a *pied-noir*[8] who claimed his familial relocation to Algeria was not driven by colonialism, along

[8] *Pied-noir*, literally translating to "black-foot" means, metaphorically, to have one's foot in North Africa by way of colonization. This term was given predominantly to French colonists and their descendants. It signifies French origin but might also include an adaptation of North African culture. According to Amy Hubbell, a scholar on trauma and autobiography in Francophone contexts, the term's "mythical" roots come from two stories about French conquest in 1830. Hubbell's book *Remembering French Algeria: Pied-Noirs, Identity, and Exile* explains that the first myth of the name comes from the black boots worn by colonists and the second myth comes from the dark stain on the feet of those who have "stomped their grapes to make wine" (9). However, she underscores the likelihood that these are mythical origins in that their linguistic origin is French: why would those speaking Arabic and Berber have created this term in French for the French colonists? Hubbell subsequently lists various supposed French definitions of the term, all of which conflict with one another (10). She, along with Benjamin Stora in *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*, underscore that this term was used more upon the return of many colonists to France after Algerian independence. For this version of the term, I find it crucial to also note the term's derogatory and racial gestures. Signified by the "noir" which makes blackness analogous to Africa, the term is typically applied to white, French speakers who had formerly been living in North African colonies. In this sense, the term "noir" could refer to the blackness of the skin of a different race, or it could be a more figurative way to say that something is "soiled." While the term applies to those of French origin, it often is used for additional people of North African origin that would have been more likely considered for French citizenship during the time of colonialism, such as the Jewish population. In addition to the racial gesture, the term bears a continental divide that separates the Mediterranean, noting migration for a colonial endeavor and, for many, a return to France after the liberation of North African

with his poor socio-economic status early in life that left him in living conditions similar to most Arab or Berber Algerians, represents, for Caroll a locus that opens up questions about the differences within various identities (8). Caroll's consideration of Camus' Algerian identity as a question of difference rather than national unity generates an imperative to closely read the ambiguous moments where Camus appears to engage with colonial mimicry to investigate whether these moments open a critique of colonialism. Although his writing about the Algerian conflict was sometimes reductive (often discussing issues in terms of only French and Arab people, neglecting Berbers, Jews, etc.), much of Camus' work also bears a subversive critique of the West itself. Despite his problematic support for a French federation rather than liberation, his thought also proposes the goal of an all-inclusive Algerian brotherhood (albeit, with the French included). This dissertation considers Camus' ambivalent position as a series of entryways through which these (post)colonial contexts are too complex to classify people into the conceptual categories of perpetrator and victim.

While one could read Camus' allusions to ancient texts to uphold a violently Western telos, I assert that his use of the founding texts often engage in colonial mimicry to expose the means by which they have been violently reappropriated. His relationship with religion was similarly ambivalent, as Camus was raised Catholic, [9] but rejected the means by which religion can drop into dogma or give transcendental answers to unanswerable questions. As a result, he was often deemed an atheist but rejected this label. M. Sharpe highlights questions central to

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countries from French colonization. This characterization of the term is not something I have learned only through research, but something I have also understood through my own positionality as someone of Tunisian descent. Because my family moved to France after Tunisia was liberated from France, members of my family have been asked if they are *pied-noir*. However, my family was in Tunisia before colonization. In turn, the term has—when applied assumptively towards my family—erased the previously (before the imposition of the French language in Tunisia) Arabic-speaking, continuously Jewish, still partially Tunisian and eventually also French pieces of our identities.

[9] See Chapter 2 for an account for his rushed religious upbringing.

Camus' thought in the introduction to *Camus, Philosophe*, including the following: "What is the relationship between the West's monotheistic (Jewish, then Christian) heritage, and its classical (Hellenic, then Roman) legacies, and what are the defining values and virtues of each we might call upon in a modern world?" (23); "How can peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds peaceably cohabit, in the absence of a single, universally agreed set of metaphysical or theological assumptions?" (24). As Existentialist and feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir put it, after the eighteenth century, the value of progress led to a use of religion in which the future involved a transcendence into life after death that emphasizes immobility rather than freedom (*Pour une morale de l'ambiguité [The Ethics of Ambiguity]* 116). With this in mind, I assert that many of Camus' references to ancient texts must be considered ambivalently, or even subversively as a means by which he can indirectly discuss the issues of history, along with his own context. This embedded critique of colonialism works in tandem with Bhabha's articulation of colonial mimicry in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984). Bhabha highlights an element of colonial logic that has helped keep oppressive forces at play in a subtle form. He explains that the creation of a slightly different Other produces oppression by placing the colonized in an ambivalence in which—by being different, but not *too* different—the source of oppression is greatly concealed. Crucially, Bhabha ties this subtle, racializing system to superficial uses of the Bible in (post)colonial contexts, all under the guise of a supposedly moral, civilizing mission. What emerges, therefore, as crucial for exposing and analyzing moments of mimicry as such, is a consideration of how both the colonized *and* the morals of the supposedly foundational texts of the colonizer become "split", scarred, wounded through the narration-building of colonial mimicry (132-3). To find the sources of (post)colonial oppression and analyze attempts to diverge from it, this dissertation

investigates the types of splits being made and consider how and why these splits are exemplified through the use of allusions to ancient texts. Considering Bhabha's simultaneous analysis of religion and race, this dissertation will investigate how Camus' evocations of religious and mythical texts are in direct conversation with his (often subtle and hidden) critiques of racism.

Throughout Camus' works, religious and mythical allusions illuminate confrontations of colonial identity, working to underscore ambivalence and leave these allusions unsettled. These unsettling references rewrite the Mediterranean from a space of undisputable origin to a space of liminality, much like the works of many pieces of Caribbean literature and theory. Camus' posthumously published manuscript *Le Premier homme [The First Man]*, whose title evokes Adam of the Bible, articulates his ambivalent position in which the Mediterranean "séparait en moi deux univers, l'un où dans des espaces mesurés les souvenirs et les noms étaient conservés, l'autre où le vent de sable effaçait les traces des hommes sur de grands espaces" (861) ["separates two worlds in me, one where memories and names are preserved in measured spaces, the other where the wind and sand erases all trace of men on the open ranges" (196)]. Here, the water of the Mediterranean becomes a liminal space which he connects simultaneously to the memories and measured spaces of France and the erasure of an impoverished colonial Algeria that must endure violence at the hands of French whims. In the (post)colonial Caribbean, such liminality began with the violence of slave trade. As Glissant points out in "La Barque Ouverte," the horrors of slavery began with the three-fold abyss of crossing the Atlantic in a caravel. With each component of the abyss evoking the unknown, the first element involves falling into the "belly" or "womb" (ventre) of the boat and being born into a "non-world." The second abysmal layer, the depths of the sea, constitutes a beginning in which time is marked by green chains—

presumably the shackles of slaves left rotting at the bottom of the ocean (6). The most disturbing component is that which lies ahead, the unknown, which also projects a reversed focus on the past left behind and cannot be regained except through memory or imagination (6-7). In both Glissant's and Camus' conception of these bodies of water, the violence of their contexts generates a violent erasure. Furthermore, the two sources for regeneration are not history, but rather, memory and imagination.

The following pages will pair Camus with Caribbean and Algerian authors who evoke memory and imagination as a response to their violent contexts through ancient allusions. Furthermore, many of these authors interrupts their own narrative by making readers aware of narration as it occurs, underscoring the impossibility of a definitive linear narration, and sometimes even violating their own purported narrative. Therefore, these Caribbean authors are not grouped by time period or location but, rather, through their tendency to expose narration as such and to leave it unsettled. While the writing of Haitian-American novelist and essayist Edwidge Danticat evokes Camus in a contemporary moment, her essays examined here involve an oscillation between her own stories and the ones that surround her. She uses biblical and Greek myth to navigate the horrors of the Duvalier Regime in Haiti, along with her own identity as a migrant. While Camus' creative autobiographical novel works through his own position inside and outside of Algeria and France, Trinbagonian-Canadian poet M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* works through the impossibility of the lost lives and memory of the Zong massacre of 1781. Although it might set off fireworks to pair Camus with Martinican psychiatrist and Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon, the imaginary work of Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud—which rewrites Camus' *L'Étranger*—helps associate them by investigating memory and violence during Algerian colonization and the War of Independence.

Thus memory becomes an intervention in (post)colonial spaces, but when memory is impossible, it can be supplemented by the imaginary work of literature, autofiction, and creative non-fiction. Postcolonial scholarship has, like European and American history, been recently confronted with the dangers of its own linearity (see Chapter 2 for more on this). Therefore, this dissertation supplements its use of Postcolonial Studies with scholarship from Memory Studies. On the one hand, Cognitive Memory Studies, such as the work of psychologist Daniel Schacter can be useful to emphasize that our understanding of the past is always rewritten in the present, incessantly renegotiating what might be perceived as a narrative of identity. Additionally, scholars of collective and diasporic memory such as Marianne Hirsch and Michael Rothberg have provided a platform through which I can investigate the intersectionality of memory. Hirsh considers Holocaust memory to investigate the means by which memory from former generations haunts those of the present. Also using the emergence of Holocaust memory in the era of decolonization, Rothberg considers how the evocation of memory in one community can catalyze the recalling of memory in another. Therefore, this project will consider the figure of temporal wounds as a means by which to analyze these violent contexts. While wounds in the psychoanalytic stream of Trauma Studies can sometimes eradicate perceptions of agency of the individuals or communities traumatized, [10] my use of memory scholarship will consider the nexus of actors involved in the both physical and epistemological violence of the contexts at hand. It will investigate how the imaginative work of literary and creative non-fiction narrations against narration can highlight this complex work of memory. Furthermore, this dissertation will consider the use of ancient allusions to be themselves temporal wounds: tropes through which

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[10] See *Trauma: A Geneology* (2000), by Ruth Leys.

each author can assess their own contexts and the broader implications of a Western teleological history.

However, throughout this project, I have been confronted with the linearity of my own writing, along with writing under the intellectual tradition of the American university. As Young importantly points out, “postcolonial critique is most visibly conducted from the universities of contemporary imperial power, the USA, or that of the nineteenth century, Great Britain” (*Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* 61). In order to prevent myself from perpetuating a colonial intellectual tradition, I must recognize this dangerous potential and interrupt my writing as I go along. I must question the mode and genre through which I write, becoming aware of my own narrative and exposing it as such. In some places, where words cannot represent my thought, I have added diagrams. Often, these diagrams assist in exposing the difficulty of generating a universal representation of temporality. At other times, I work to address the means by which studying individuals and communities can put people under a violent scope. As Haitian artist-academic-activist Gina Athena Ulysse explains, “[a]s subjects of research and representation, Haitians have often been portrayed as fractures, as fragments” (*Why Haiti Needs New Narratives: A Post-Quake Chronicle* 40). Thus I have used interruptive footnotes to underscore how even the act of academic analysis can be dangerous.

In other footnotes and margin notes, I have written myself as an American-Tunisian-French and Jewish woman, marking the academic work with creative assertions of my own positionality. While my Tunisian heritage seeps in through my taste buds, Arabic exclamations, and the rushed lifestyle of “Allez, allez, allez!” (Go, go, go!), [11] I have never even been to Tunisia. It is a part of my identity that is both intimate and alien to myself, more like Hirsch’s

[11] This is a saying that my paternal family uses to describe ourselves for our tendency to do many things and almost always be on the move.

concept of postmemory. As Young might put it, I am “Tunisian improper,” or maybe, my footnotes can help underscore that there is no such thing as proper or improper in any sociopolitical context. Similarly, my name speaks of Judaism[12] but my religious practice is endlessly up for renegotiation. In some of these footnotes, I wonder aloud how certain family members have taken it to be so concrete. Other footnotes combine my position as woman to these additional identities by questioning daily details like clothing choice. By doing so, I also forge a connection between my own experience and those that I analyze. As Rothberg puts it, "[t]he virulence—on all sides—of so much discussion of race, genocide, and memory has to do, in other words, partly with the rhetorical and cultural intimacy of seemingly opposed traditions of remembrance" (*Multidirectional Memory* 7). By rendering my academic work multi-directional, I have become more intimate with my own ever-shifting memory, along with the memory embedded within and engendered by the literary texts I study. This creates an ethical imperative, where my memory and writing can formulate at once an interruption of academic traditions and an embrace of multidirectional *histoire*.[13]

In the first chapter, I assess how art can be used subversively in times of sociopolitical unrest. Haitian novelist Edwidge Danticat puts herself into conversation with Camus, in her book *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010) which is named after Camus’ 1957 lecture, “Créer Dangereusement,” given at the conference *The Artist and his Time*. [14] Then, I will look at Danticat’s more recent work, *The Art of Dying: Writing the Final Story* (2017), to

[12] In Hebrew, my name (יהוּדת) is one letter different than the word for “Jew.” My last name, Levy (לוי), comes from one of the twelve tribes of Israel that the Bible refers to.
[13] Here, the French word “histoire” fits my purpose more effectively, as the word means simultaneously history and story. For the latter definition, it can take on the dimensions of an factual story or a “tale,” with a connotation of fraudulence. I assert that every story which appears factual is fraudulently so. Rather, every story is subject to ongoing negotiation by the teller and their listeners.
[14] I must underscore the double entendre of this title, which suggests that it is important to consider both the time at which the artist is writing and the way in which the artist engages with time.

investigate her references to *Le Mythe de Sisyphe [The Myth of Sisyphus]* (1942). Camus' 1957 lecture positions all contemporary artists on a slave ship in an era where supposed liberty is accessible by all. Simultaneously, it says we must accept the legacy of the West. I read this call as a subversive, an open-arms to accept all complexities of what he deems "West," which includes recognizing the pangs of slavery and other oppressive situations that individuals might not feel safe naming directly. I underscore that Camus indirectly refers to the Algerian War of Independence, which was marked by guerrilla warfare, torture, and ongoing racialization of the various Berber, Arab, and French groups involved. Although Camus spoke directly of the war in various publications, the Algerian War of Independence was also a time marked by French censorship. As Macey points out, "It was only in 1999 that France accepted that the Algerian war did take place and that references in legislative documents to 'peace keeping operations' should be replaced by references to 'the Algerian war'" (15). Furthermore, Macey explains that "[s]tatistics for the number of Algerians killed are still a matter for controversy. Official French estimates speak of 141,000 fighters killed; successive Algerian governments have always insisted that one million martyrs died for the revolutionary cause, and the figure tends to rise when Franco-Algerian relations are tense" (242).

Writing, hearing, and understanding through myth is a matter of censorship for Danticat as well, as she emphasizes the use of Greek myth during the repressive Duvalier regime in Haiti. Historian of Haiti Laurent Dubois emphasizes the voter intimidation and violence towards those who did not support François and Jean-Claude Duvalier in his book *Haiti: The Afterschocks of History* (2012). Much like Algeria, although there are no official numbers of deaths, the number of victims remains unknown: "estimates range from twenty thousand to as high as sixty thousand killed over the course of three decades" (326). While myth can be used as a scope to understand

one's own violent context, it can also be appropriated violently, like the way Duvalier inscribed himself mythically into national rhetoric and used the threatening imagery of the Tonton Macoutes to intimidate Haitian citizens. However, because Danticat moved to America early on in the regime at a young age and refers to the means by which Atlantic slave trade and the Haitian revolution have affected all Haitians, this chapter considers transgenerational trauma through Hirsch's notion of postmemory. For both Camus and Danticat, an ethics of writing emerges which highlights that the need to recall the past is what allows for a looking to the future; furthermore, Danticat harkens back to Camus' emphasis on the importance of risk in art creation (also related to the Greeks, for Camus) by considering artists to be people who "risked not existing at all" (19).

While the first section investigates creation myths, the second half analyzes questions of death. Similar to the unacknowledged references to Duvalier and the Algerian War in the first section, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* walks through the Greek myth to contemplate the absurdity of life in the face of death at a time when France was occupied by Nazi Germany in World War II. While Camus and Danticat highlight how the individual builds (dangerously) for everyone, Danticat's *The Art of Death* highlights how describing the death of an individual, in striving to create a universalized understanding of death, ends up particularizing the experience. This particularity allows for one to mourn the individual. Here, the mythologizing of death can allow for an individual understanding of it that can stimulate an ethical relationship with death. In conversation with and functioning like *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Danticat's essay passes through many different forms of death but rolls continuously through them without coming to finite conclusions about each (or synthesizing them). This section will highlight how, in returning to death in an active conversation with it, Danticat embodies the ethics that she purports—one that

also must adopt Camus' philosophy of absurdity and the ephemeral. This chapter considers the potential for myth to be a bridge linking people, but also potentially a dangerous force for transcendent, fixed ideals, if it is used to uphold a linear narrative without considering the particularities within. Furthermore, this chapter investigates Danticat and Camus' tendency to discuss the ethics of writing for all (not necessarily in regard to a postcolonial, immigrant context), along with their simultaneous references to the oppression of the immigrant artist, and will question how this doubling can bring about an ethical relation between those who have undergone oppression and those who have ridden on the backs of history (whether knowingly or by being unaware of privilege).

The next chapter extends questions of linear perceptions of time through the venue of biblical genealogies in Camus' *Le Premier homme* (1994) and M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008). In each text under analysis, time collapses through the biblical references to Adam—the first man—and Ruth, the first convert to Judaism. Both texts emerge as a response to the impossibility of their violent contexts, evoking a necessary telling of stories that simultaneously cannot be told or finished. Without the direct imagery of a wound, Camus' posthumously published manuscript, *Le Premier homme* confronts the ongoing emotional rupture of the main character, Jacques Cormery—a fictionalized version of Camus himself.

When Cormery visits his father's grave for the first time, he is belatedly stricken by the pain of loss and is overwhelmed by it. This realization causes time to collapse. Despite the fatal car accident that froze this text in time, Camus' notes are subversive, suggesting that the text was never meant to be finished in the first place. Crucial to this section will be an analysis of how the figure of Adam, the first man of the Bible, is evoked to question genealogy in the space of colonial Algeria. The text outlines the details of Camus' impoverished childhood, emphasizes the

ambiguity of his national identity, and bears embedded references to the violence of the Algerian War. Calling himself one of the "tribu" (tribe or clan), he asserts that all men in Algeria are orphans—caught in the violent imposition of a French identity that is alien to them, and yet they (and their fathers) must give their lives (and many have already died) for this alien cause (860-1). This section investigates how familial and colonial lineages are wrapped up with notions of linear time that build personal and collective narrations of memory and history, what makes time fall apart, and what emerges as it crumbles.

The second section analyzes the poem *Zong!* (2008) by M. NourbeSe Philip, which tells the story of the Zong massacre in 1781, the throwing overboard of slaves on the way from Africa to Jamaica when the ship was held up. Philip metaphorically tears up the legal text to bear witness to the painful event which "cannot be told yet must be told" (189). Philip's text is the testimony or the imagination of a lost event that was both horrific for those onboard but also represented a larger systemic issue: the negation of being in slavery. Throughout the poem, time is troubled, and at one point, the spine of time snaps (141). In this text, Ruth (also written as "ruth" or "T/ruth") "must hear" the story (70) and "tam/p [time] down" (152). By reading Ruth in *Zong!* as Ruth of the Old Testament, this section will pair as a foil to Camus' Adamic reference: while Camus' reference troubles the narration of the Bible, Philip's use of a female figure pushes the boundary beyond a troubling of time and narration to involve questions of otherness, woman, and the ethical imperative of impossible writing. While questions of otherness and ethics are embedded within Camus' text, they are subtle and ambiguous. Both texts are in search of an original moment that they will never arrive at. By considering Yountae's theological scholarship, this chapter investigates how these texts search for an original in the creation story of Genesis, and how the original itself is rendered opaque in both these authors' writing, along

with the Bible itself. Thus this chapter considers the use of a clear (or transparent, through the philosophy of Édouard Glissant) "original" or foundational text for Judeo-Christian society as both dangerous (by imposing homogenizing narratives) and fraudulent (by eliminating the complexities of the origin stories themselves).

Investigating the complexity of the biblical figure of Moses, the third chapter continues to demonstrate the need for opacity from the previous chapter, while also asserting the necessity of mourning the individuals lost in (post)colonial violence. In the civil unrest of today that has followed the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and too many more, a new set of hashtags has been added to those that fuel and connect the various streams of the revolution against American racial injustice: #sayhisname, #sayhername, and any other pronouns that match those we must mourn. Re-evoking the death of the unnamed "Arab" man in Camus' *L'Étranger* (1942), Algerian journalist Kamel Daoud's first novel, *Meursault, contre-enquête* (2013) does just that. Not only does he name Camus' victim and tell his story, the name he chooses makes his point all-the-more important: Moussa—the Arabic equivalent of Moses. This chapter begins with a novel reading of *L'Étranger* that underscores the means by which the national-religious morality that the main character Meursault contests, works in tandem with his own violence towards the man he kills. This exposes a large-scale system of violence that works to write Meursault into the position of a threat to French morality while simultaneously eliding the death of the unnamed man. Ultimately, this system upholds the voice of the white, Christian male and rejects those who do not fit into its narrative. Both confronting and dedicating itself to this novel, *Meursault-contre-enquête* notes the violence of Camus' writing but also consumes it by mirroring its language, plot details, and structure. By having Haroun (Aaron) narrate his brother Musa's story, the novel's claim that it goes back to a

beginning renders unclear which beginning he refers to: Camus' story, Algerian colonization, or the biblical references of Moses and Aaron. Because the Old Testament is fodder for the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the novel links the foundations of three religions that, in the contemporary world, often find themselves at odds. Importantly, it troubles the morals at the heart of these founding stories through Haroun's return violence that is at once a relief and a trap: he kills a Frenchman just after Algerian liberation. This generates questions of decolonial violence and links them to the violence of biblical Moses himself, who killed an Egyptian man after he was found beating a Hebrew man.

In a move that may rightly have postcolonial scholars up in arms, I use this evocation of the benefits and dangers of colonial violence to bring Camus into conversation with Martinican psychiatrist and Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon. While Fanon supported violence as a means of overcoming the physical and epistemological violence of colonialism and racism (*Les Damnés de la terre* 83-9), Camus upheld nonviolence and supported a French federation in order to give all persons living in Algeria rights to the land.[15] Using Daoud's novel as an interlocutor between the two, the latter section of this chapter analyzes the temporal component of Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs [Black Skin, White Masks]* (1952) and his own textual violations in comparison to Daoud's narration against (Camus') narration. This links all three authors by noting that they all confront narrations (imperial, colonial, national) that impose the values of systems of violence. This section also investigates the need for violence asserted by Fanon's *Damnés de la terre [The Wretched of the Earth]* (1961), along with its simultaneous warning to avoid corruption that repeats the same patterns of violence after liberation.

[15] See Camus' "Algérie 1958" ["1958"] for his argument for a French federation. For his assertion of non-violence, "Lettre à un militant algérien" ["Letter to an Algerian Militant"].

By using these temporal wounds to confront the question of history, the authors featured in this dissertation open these supposedly foundational texts to complexities and nuances that reach towards an ongoingly negotiated collective memory, rather than a linearly uncontested progressive history. The pages ahead underscore how pieces of art can illuminate how the past bleeds into the present, and how we can use those pieces of past as a trope by which to read a present—especially for a present that might be too violent to analyze easily or one confronted by censorship. Simultaneously, these temporal interruptions underscore that the past is not past and that neither pain nor healing are linear processes.

Chapter 1

Sisyphus and (Re)Writing in Albert Camus and Edwidge Danticat

In her collection of essays *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010), Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat explicitly puts herself into conversation with Algerian-born philosopher, novelist, and playwright Albert Camus, naming her book and her first chapter respectively after his 1957 lecture at the conference *L'Artiste et son temps [The Artist and Hist Time]* and his play *Caligula* (1945). Danticat's book assesses the difficulties and significance of writing while being connected to a nation from both within and outside, especially when that nation (for her, Haiti) has been wrapped up in a history of colonialism, slavery, the Haitian revolution, and various shifts in violent and/or neglectful domestic regimes and occupations. More recently, Danticat has continued her conversation with Camus' oeuvre in her collection of essays on the topic of death in *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* (2017), referencing Camus' philosophical essay, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942). This renewed conversation with Camus investigates death through the acts of writing and reading. Both of Danticat's books work through autobiographical moments, tying the details of her life to Haitian (and sometimes American) events of broader historical significance. In doing so, Danticat works through the themes of writing and reading as matters of active engagement with her social, historical, and political contexts. But why has Danticat imported Albert Camus to a Haitian context to work through these topics? "Sisyphus and (Re)Writing" will investigate the historical and social details of Camus' life and texts alongside Danticat's to consider how both authors' use of myth mobilizes their analysis of history and memory in both generalized contexts and in ones which underscore the themes of (post)colonialism, migration, and exile. Crucially, the first half of this

chapter will assess the various temporal models involved in history and memory—read through the trope of creation myths—to consider how different considerations and uses of time aid in Danticat and Camus' theorization of ethics through the art of writing or creating dangerously. The second half of this chapter will investigate how the use of the Greek myth of Sisyphus helps these authors build an ethics which emerges in the act of writing. In doing so, Camus and Danticat bridge the universal concept of death and specific (post)colonial and migrant accounts of death, presenting an absurdist sort of language-building which is always being questioned and reassembled.

Although often affiliated with existentialist philosophical thought, Camus was also one of its greatest critics; as a result, he serves as an ambivalent philosophical figure to navigate through questions of the individual and the historical. Existentialism involves navigating one's circumstance, or facticity, recognizing it as such, and determining one's own relationship to it through consciousness. Synthesizing her own articulation of existentialist thought with philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's, feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir explains that it is defined through ambiguity. Fundamentally, it defines man as "cet être dont l'être est de n'être pas, cette subjectivité qui ne se réalise que comme présence au monde, cette liberté engagée, ce surgissement du pour-soi qui est immédiatement donné pour autrui" (*Pour une morale de l' ambiguïté* 13) ["that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others" (*The Ethics of Ambiguity* 10). In other words, we are not defined as beings through a predetermined foundation of what being is, but when we notice our circumstances as such, consciousness arises (pour-soi) and meaning is made through our choice of relationship to those circumstances. The freedom to which de Beauvoir refers is the means by

which consciousness allows one to choose their relationship to facticity. Thus consciousness is both individual and given to others because, while the individual makes a choice in this realization, facticity includes one's social context. Although Camus approached many of the same questions, he critiqued many scholars for finding problematic methods of attaining transcendent meaning that forge a prescribed relationship between consciousness and facticity (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe* 238-54). Furthermore, de Beauvoir warns in the next lines of her explanation that to make existentialism an absurdist philosophy can lead to an anxiety and inability to formulate an ethics through which choice is made. However, it must be emphasized that Camus found the potential for "rétablissement"—recovery or reestablishment—in the act of recognizing the impossibility of an all-encompassing source of meaning.

In addition to his philosophical positionality, his sociopolitical background gives him a similar ability to straddle various ends of the topics of (post)colonialism and migration. Having been born in Algeria during colonization to a French father and a mother of Spanish descent, Camus rejected the label *pied-noir*, claiming that his family left France to seek asylum from the Franco-Prussian war in Alsace. As noted by David Carroll in *Albert Camus: The Algerian*, his socioeconomic status and his mother's disability caused the practical details of his early life to resemble those of the natives of the country who were not given rights to French citizenship (4-8). On the other hand, scholars such as Neil Foxlee and Ray Davidson have pointed out that Camus' attempts at theorizing a unified Mediterranean identity and calling for Arabic voting rights were limited in scope, as these gestures did not represent the whole of the oppressed population and could not see beyond the scope of a colonial context. [16] While Camus denounced

[16] See Neil Foxlee's "Mediterranean Humanism or Colonialism with a Human Face? Contextualizing Albert Camus' 'The New Mediterranean Culture'" and Ray Davidson's "Mythologizing the Mediterranean: The Case of Albert Camus" for more extensive analysis.

the use of violence and torture during the Algerian War of Independence, he also supported colonialism as a means of allowing those who gained a second home in Algeria through colonization to remain there if desired. His article "Algérie 1958" emphasizes that Algeria is a space of intersectionality between identities and that these identities could not merely be erased from the land in which they were born (including those born there from French families who moved there during the era of colonization), but that an apology must be properly addressed to those oppressed, especially the Arabs of Algeria (387-90). As a result, Camus was accepted by many French writers of his time but rejected by a large piece of the Arabic and Berber population who saw his emphasis on a federation with equal representation, rather than decolonization, as a disavowal of the equality which he simultaneously purported. While his ideas and positionality proved problematic for those in Algeria during Camus' life and for many postcolonial scholars, this chapter posits that his ambiguous stance—what Edward Said labels as a dangerous "colonial sensibility"[17]—can nonetheless foster a rhetoric of closeness to and distance from these topics that is useful for Edwidge Danticat's analysis of memory in response to oppressive regimes and migration ("Camus and the French Colonial Experience" 176).

Born in Haiti in 1969, Danticat migrated to America at the age of twelve. Her parents had moved there long before her to gain financial stability before their children's arrival. The family sought migration as refuge from the domestic threat of the Duvalier regime. Although both Danticat and Camus' personal, familial, and national histories involve colonization and revolution, along with foreign and domestic threats, they each take on drastically different

[17] Postcolonial critic Edward Said's essay "Camus and the French Colonial Experience" from *Culture and Imperialism* argues that Camus' fiction rendered imperialistic history as a sort of corollary component of his context, rather than a component that is open to scrutiny. He claims that Camus was ultimately a "*colon* writing for a French audience" and that his "narratives have a negative vitality in which the tragic human seriousness of the colonial effort achieves its last great clarification before ruin overtakes it" (179; 184-5).

colonial and migrant identities. While Camus might not come from a familial legacy of slavery, and while he was not of a race that was oppressed in his context, he wove the topics of slavery and racial oppression into his writings, highlighting that slavery was used throughout the region and allying himself with advocates of Arabic equality ("Lettre" 352-5). Therefore, while his positionality was troubling to many at the time of the Algerian Revolution,[18] Danticat's use of Camus troubles the notions of those who have seen him as a straightforward proponent of European ideals. This chapter investigates his work through this ambiguous intersection of identities in order to unravel Danticat's use of Camus on the topics of myth, memory, history, and writing.

(Re)Turning to Myth to "Create Dangerously"

In *Haïti: The Aftershocks of History* (2012), historian Laurent Dubois highlights that the same history through which Haiti has been read as a crumbling nation "represents the only foundation upon which a different Haiti might be built", one which "serve[s] as a source of inspiration, and even hope" (10). According to Dubois, the country—which, after the only successful slave revolution and its subsequent independence, has endured various detrimental occupations and shifts in regimes—must remember its resilience throughout these moments of animosity. By doing so, Haiti can rewrite its history, highlighting alternative details from the same moments. Writing on how history is narrated through power structures, Haitian

[18] Returning to Algeria in 1956, Albert Camus delivered a speech in Algiers that attempted to remain politically neutral and asked all involved in the war to abstain from violence that targeted innocent civilians. Despite its appeal to political neutrality, the speech was met with protests and shouts that Camus return to France. As noted by Neil Foxlee in "Mediterranean Humanism or Colonialism with A Human Face: Contextualizing Albert Camus' 'The New Mediterranean Culture'", Camus' take on Mediterranean identity has been accepted and rejected by both scholars of humanism and postcolonialism for his tendency to decry the oppression of "native" peoples of Algeria but to simultaneously be reductive in defining who he is referring to (82).

anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot emphasizes discrepancies in what he calls "the storage model of memory-history", in which "history is to a collectivity as remembrance is to an individual" (*Silencing the Past* 14). Elaborating on recent scholarship on individual memory that discusses the difficulty of understanding memory as a fixed entity that emerges from an original moment, Trouillot, in turn, underscores the rigidity of the model of history; simultaneously, he emphasizes that both memory and history involve a complex nexus between the past and present that is much more dynamic than archival models purport.[19] Highlighting a similar complexity in the rewriting of Haitian memory, Haitian-American novelist and essayist Edwidge Danticat's collection of semi-autobiographical essays, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work,* bridges the gap between the visions of history and memory—visions which defy the complexity of their structural makeup—that Trouillot and others[20] see as too simplistic.

Throughout her book, Danticat attests to the silences created within more simplistic models of Haitian memory-history.[21] She asserts that "[g]rappling with memory is . . . one of many complicated Haitian obsessions" (63). Danticat continues to explain that "[i]n order to

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[19] Citing various cognitive (neuro)psychologists, Trouillot points out that memory involves an interaction between various systems in the brain. Instead of seeing memory as one mark upon the brain that can be recalled in its originality, the authors he cites, especially Daniel Schacter, assert that the original memory trace, the *engram* cannot be found in its original form, and that each context in which it is recalled constantly rewrites it (*Searching for Memory* 58).

[20] Along with Trouillot and Dubois calling for alternative approaches to reading and writing Haiti, Haitian-American anthropologist and self-declared "artist-academic-activist" Gina Athena Ulysse writes in her book *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives: A Post-Quake Chronicle* (which coincidentally also begins with an epigraph by Albert Camus) that "[a]s subjects of research and representation, Haitians have often been portrayed as fractures and fragments" and that such portrayal means that Haitians rarely get the chance to speak for themselves (40). Thus she calls for a rewriting of Haiti from both the inside and outside, from both its domestic inhabitants and its expatriates.

[21] I will be borrowing Trouillot's term "memory-history" here as a means of highlighting his emphasis on the analogous problem of the storage model that improperly takes a past moment as separate from the present (14). Additionally, his term helps me highlight individual accounts of historical memory which illuminate the limitations of the storage-model approach. In the limited storage model, Trouillot compares the collective version of history to the means by which an individual stores memory. In "Rembering, Repeating, and Working Through" (1914), Freud underscores that "while the patient experiences [a past event] as something real and contemporary, we have to do our therapeutic work on it, which consists in a large measure in tracing it back to the past" (152). However, Trouillot's point suggests that even Freud's "reconciliation" would not be able to leave any past moment as past indefinitely. The present is always involved in the recalling of the past.

shield our shattered collective psyche from a long history of setbacks and disillusionment, homespun oppression and foreign tyranny, we cultivate communal and historical amnesia, continually repeating cycles that we never see coming until we are reliving similar horrors" (64). Danticat's description weaves memory with history while using myth to go beyond the space of Haiti, as she explains that the tendency to evoke images of "Eden-like African jungles" instead of the slave trade as an example of this collective amnesia (64). Both Danticat and Dubois acknowledge that the fraught points of history come from both inside and outside the space of Haiti, addressing that Haiti is not only disturbed but also "disturbs" in the act of gripping and asserting its autonomy (Dubois 11). While Dubois analyzes how the disciplinary functionality of history affects and is affected by Haiti, Danticat's use of semi-autobiographical, creative essays allows for a particularization of the same issues. Danticat's approach highlights how the fault-lines[22] of history build trenches around specific memory in the individual, and how an investigation of these trenches involves an unraveling of history and memory. Going further, by considering Bryan Crable's explanation that Albert Camus used myth to gain a critical distance from his topic, the use of myth can serve as a scope to determine what history and memory inform and are informed by ("Camus" 108-9). Although Danticat and Dubois differ in discipline, within their approaches lies a similar methodological analysis of time: that memory and history are each specific takes on time, that the decision to choose various pieces of time and forget or mobilize them in specific ways can affect and effect Haitian autonomy within and outside the space of Haiti. By analyzing approaches to time within "disturbed" and "disturbing" moments of history and memory within the space of Haiti, this section considers how time is involved in the

[22] As Dubois notes in his book's epilogue, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti "starkly exposed the Haitian state's inability to help its people in times of crisis" and that "the tremendous difficulties of reconstruction are aftershocks of a long history of internal conflict and external pressures that has left Haiti's population vulnerable and exposed" (*Haiti* 367).

ethics of "creating dangerously" which Danticat purports. To partake in such analysis, one must consider a reference to the past which highlights the significance of temporal disturbance in her work: Danticat's critical engagement with the late Albert Camus, a gesture which is named in the title of her book and its first essay.

The first essay of Danticat's book, "Create Dangerously", investigates the re-reading of ancient Greek texts as a response to the Duvalier regime in Haiti. In addition to analyzing the use of the past through ancient Greek authors such as Sophocles, Danticat straddles time by putting herself into conversation with Camus. Inspired by his play *Caligula* (1945) and his 1957 lecture at the conference *L'Artiste et son temps*[23] which has been titled "Create Dangerously",[24] Danticat highlights how turning back to read older texts and traditions was done subversively during the Duvalier regime. The Duvalier regime began with the Black-populist election which brought François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier into office and quickly developed into a totalitarian state in which Duvalier determined himself president-for-life and eventually his son, Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc").[25] The Duvaliers instigated the violence toward and torture of Haitian citizens who were unsupportive of the regime.[26] Danticat explains that both Camus' play *Caligula*—about ancient Rome and an emperor whose absurd take on the world leads him to torture Roman citizens—and various ancient Greek texts were (re)read as a means of provoking unnamed

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[23] While this title could refer to the time in which the artist exists, it could also refer to the artist's engagement with time, his choice of time, or/and his relationship to time.

[24] While this presentation has no title in Camus' *Ouervres Complètes* and is signified only by the year and conference only, it does have the title "Create Dangerously" in the English translation found within *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death.* This title stems from Camus declaration in the paper that to "Créer ajourd'hui, c'est créer dangereusement" (248).

[25] As Dubois notes, Duvalier rose to power after the economic struggles which continued during both Dumarsais Estimé and Paul Magloire's presidencies caused them to lose support from Haitian citizens, and that his success hinged on a "twisted synthesis of Estimé's populism and Magloire's populism, with a ferocious cult of personality at the center" (314-20). Furthermore, his victory hinged on voter intimidation and restrictions on voter registration (324).

[26] According to Dubois, although "no one will likely ever know how many perished at the hands of Duvalier's regime, estimates range from twenty thousand to as high as sixty thousand killed over the course of three decades" (326).

resistance, as well as serving as a reminder that there are other routes to death, namely those involving the *choice* of one's own death. *Caligula* traces the story of the ancient Roman emperor, the last in the lineage of the Caesars, who became cold-blooded and reckless after the death of his sister. His character in the play echoes some of the domestic violence of François Duvalier, which serves as a fruitful base through which to analyze Danticat's meditation on Camus. However, this chapter will focus on Camus' conference presentation more thoroughly than the play as a means of uncovering Camus and Danticat's approaches to rhetoric and aesthetics through the theories presented in their non-fiction. As both Camus' 1957 lecture and Danticat's book urge the artist to "create dangerously," an analysis of their goals requires a consideration of how time and myth factor into the seditious acts of writing and reading in confrontation with memory-history. Subsequently, one must consider what choices are being made to "create dangerously." How do the more fixed models of history and memory function with a potential for danger, and how have Danticat and Camus made room for a subversive response to these dangers? What role does the use of myth and ancient (con)texts play in these responses? Danticat calls herself "hopefully an artist," and an immigrant one at that, but continues to say that there might be "no such thing as an immigrant artist in this globalized age, when Algeria and Haiti and even Ancient Greece and Egypt are only a virtual visit away" (15). Thus she labels herself, and all artists, both as immigrant and non-immigrant, simultaneously. In a contemporary world where travel is frequent and communication with the other side of the globe occurs as quickly as one can pull a cell phone from their pocket, the nation-state becomes diffuse and contemporaneity can easily access the past. This section will consider how Danticat and Camus' approaches construct an ethics of "creating dangerously," as an imperative for survival for those within and migrating from unstable national circumstances. Such analysis

hinges on the assessment of a creation myth which reconsiders how the past and present inform and reassemble one another.

An attention to disturbed time[27] that facilitates a drive toward survival emerges within both Camus' artist and Danticat's immigrant artist. In his 1957 lecture at the conference *L'Artiste et son temps*, Camus historicizes his artistic positionality while simultaneously asserting a need to defy history. Furthermore, his lecture serves as a rhetorical analysis of aesthetic purpose: while working through when and whether art is a luxury, Camus suggests that art must be tied to a sociopolitical context, especially one *not* of comfort. He sees art as immersed within a sociohistorical version of reality that can be assessed more closely when the lack of comfort can be read through the lens of myth. Such art should be both aware of and *interruptive* of its time. According to Camus,

> [D]e même, devant son siècle, l'artiste ne peut ni s'en détourner ni s'y perdre. S'il s'en détourne, il parle dans le vide. Mais, inversement, dans la mesure où il le prend comme objet, il affierme sa propre existence en tant que sujet et ne peut s'y soumettre tout entier. Autrement dit, c'est au moment même où l'artiste choisit de partager le sort de tous qu'il affirme l'individu qu'il est. Et il ne pourra sortir de cette ambiguïté. L'artiste prend de l'histoire ce qu'il peut en voir lui-même ou y souffrir lui-même, directement ou indirectement. ("Conférence" 260)
>
> [Likewise, the artist can neither turn away from his time nor lose himself in it. If he turns away from it, he speaks in a void. But, conversely, insofar as he takes his time as his object, he asserts his own existence as subject and cannot give in to it altogether. In other

[27] By using Dubois' recognition of Haiti as a place that both disturbs and is disturbed, I am analyzing uses of time—especially within the context of Haiti—in a similar manner: *disturbed time* considers how a specific mobilization of time can disturb traditional notions of understanding and artistic production; it considers, alternatively, how time can be disturbed or called into question, by looking at varying temporal models.

> words, at the very moment when the artist chooses to share the fate of all, he asserts the individual he is. And he cannot escape from this ambiguity. The artist takes from history what he can see of it himself or undergo himself, directly or indirectly. (266)]

More simply put, the artist must frame his or her work temporally to be both heard and positioned. The artist's time as "object" suggests that it works to compose one's facticity, but by asserting one's subjectivity, the artist decides to negotiate a relationship to time. She or he must recognize the way time has been used in his or her context and foster a conversation with it; otherwise, the artist simply works with his or her own facticity as a project that does not recognize it as such. Thus, while the artist cannot change the details of being embedded within socio-historical time, she or he can make decisive choices about how to work with (or against) that time. Addressing one's own relationship to that time always enacts a relation to others, since people in the same socio-historical context will recognize the same details of their own facticity. The artist is reliant upon both kairos (the moment giving rise to creation) and history: she or he chooses from the part of the present moment or history which he or she has "suffered" or "undergone" ("souffrir"). By being close to this history—a history outside of comfort—the artist can also make his or her own mark upon history or use history to his or her own ends. History and myth function similarly in Camus' take on the artist: the artist serves as the mediator or interpreter between history or myth and the individual's experience.

Such temporal interventions, however, come greatly from fraught moments that affect one's (meta)physical survival. As Camus asserts, "L'artiste, lui, ne peut qu'apprécier les mythes qu'on lui propose en fonction de leur répercussion sur l'homme vivant" (260-1) ["But the artist can value the myths that are offered him only in relation to their repercussion on living people" (266)]. Therefore, while the artist serves as a mediator between history and the individual, said

mediation relies upon the artist's context, how he or she is affected by the context, and his or her decisive choice to intervene at/regarding a specific point of time. This decisiveness would equate to existential freedom, in which, by becoming conscious, the individual determines the relationship that she or he will have with the details of that context (even these details which cannot be changed). In his essay "Camus, Sartre, and the Rhetorical Function of Myth", Bryan Crable assesses Camus' use of myth in his essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), emphasizing that by redefining "myth, first as a unique symbolic form that imposes a critical distance between audience and subject," Camus uses myth as a scope to better understand his present context (109). For Crable, the temporal distance of an ancient context also helps Camus create a critical distance, "where contemporary social life, and further, *human existence itself,* can be placed into question" (110). Thus an author might use myth as a scope through which to read a historical context as a means of shedding light on what that moment suggests about human experience. Crable, too, poses the concept of this mythical scope in light of a "repercussion," highlighting the unsafe nature of writing (for Crable's purpose, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*) under the danger of Occupied France during the second World War. He explains that an attempt at a direct representation of the violence and absurdity of the time would have created an analysis that prevents an understanding beyond the scope of the dangerous context at hand. This would allow for a judgement of the facts-at-hand but would prevent an ability to generate a broader philosophy (111-2). For Camus' 1957 conference presentation, another repercussion is present, as the Algerian War was in full force, with the Battle of Algiers[28] beginning just months before

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[28] As Benjamin Stora explains in *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*, the murder of Amédée Froger, who was "president of the federation of mayors of Algeria and a virulent spokesman for the minor colons," led to an escalation of violence against Muslims which led to the deployment of French paratroopers. This sparked a series of bombings around the city, followed by a strike that lasted for more than a week. This catalyzed an increase of torture and "disappearances" of Algerians. An extensive amount of policing divided the city into sectors, using barbed wire to surround Muslim neighborhoods. This heightened state of violence lasted until the end of September of 1957,

this talk was given. Consequently, myth can be used as a distant model to read the present and to create a broader philosophy about it, but specifically for Camus, this emerges out of a fraught space where a lack of comfort forces one to understand the nature of such pain in the broader context of human experience.

For Danticat, the repercussion—the context which has affected her—lies within the detrimental effects of the Duvalier regime. Highlighting the ways memory and history develop into myth, Danticat points to the disarray of the Duvalier regime, calling it—specifically the execution of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin—a "creation myth" for herself (7). Numa and Drouin were two Haitian expatriates who were part of a group called Jeune Haïti which sought to dismantle Duvalier's totalitarian grasp of the nation. According to Dubois, "[b]ecause most members of Jeune Haïti had roots in Jérimé, Duvalier's forces killed several hundred people in the town, on the flimsiest of pretexts" (*Haiti* 341). The vast quantity of people who were killed to stifle hope behind the dissident actions of the thirteen men of Jeune Haïti, along with the crowd-heavy, televised execution of Numa and Drouin, amplified the pain of the failure of Jeune Haïti and the strength of Duvalier's bloody tactics. Danticat begins the book's inaugural chapter with a detailed description of their execution that seems to be in her own episodic memory (as it is recounted in present tense), only for the reader to find out—after their deaths occur—that she was not there; in fact, Danticat was not born until four years after their execution, in 1969. Once it becomes clear that Danticat has only seen the video of the execution, she explains that this myth "exists beyond the scope of [her] own life, yet it still feels present, even urgent" (7). Although she was not a witness in the sense of being present at the event, the urgency she attests to confuses the notion of witnessing: must one be present to bear witness to something? While

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when Yacef Saadi—one of the leaders of the Front de Libération National (FLN)—was arrested and his assistant, Ali La Pointe, committed suicide.

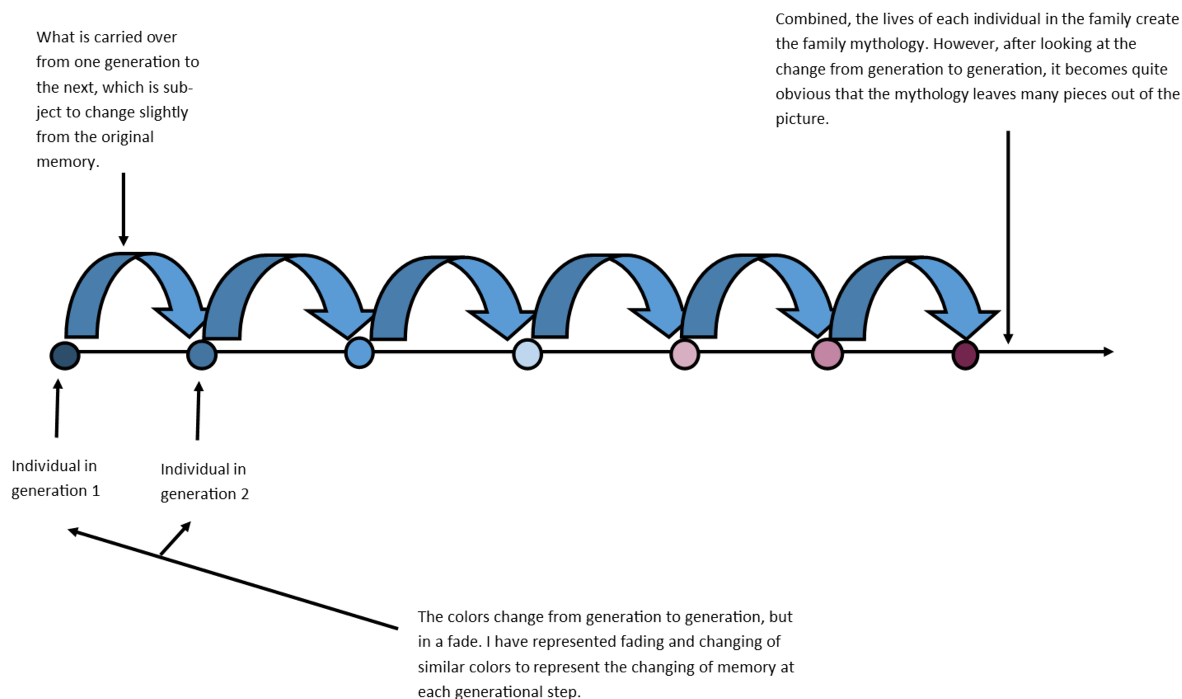
the technology of the film gave her access to the visual and audio recording of the event, it is unclear whether her sense of urgency came from the film or elsewhere. We cannot know from this text whether the film made her feel this urgency or whether she already had witnessed something related to the event before viewing the video. Her choice of present-tense description may be a means of incorporating another's memory into her own; it may also be a means of instilling another's (and now her) memory into the reader. Her fuel for creating art, then, comes from a moment of a past—before her time—that presents itself, ongoingly, in her and her reader's present.

Contrary to her lack of literal presence at the event, Danticat bears a sense of closeness to it, one which requires Crable's consideration of myth as a scope to help her gain the distance to assess the event. Simultaneously, the myth for Danticat is *formative*, one from which she cannot depart. The author's sense of urgency to write about a past which came before her suggests that she is affected by the "creation myth" generated from what the critic Marianne Hirsch would call "postmemory". In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997), Hirsch elaborates on the phenomena of "postmemory," in which someone with "generational distance" from an event feels its presence as poignantly as those who experienced it. She explains that "postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (22). For Hirsch, the person experiencing postmemory must have a close relationship to the person (or people) who encountered the memory. Furthermore, she sees the greatest difference between history and postmemory as personal connection to something before one was born or before one could remember, bridged through the

locus of community connection. Hirsch's theory relies upon family memories and photography, but the events that affect the family and spawn memory are larger "historical" events, such as the Holocaust. Danticat, having moved to the United States from Haiti after her parents, as a means of escaping the Duvaliers, experienced its horrors greatly through her family and many other members of the Haitian community. Because of Danticat's personal connection to those living at the time of the execution, she could—and felt the need to—(re)experience it through watching the televised recording left in the historical archive. Just as Hirsch explains that "imaginative investment and creation" are what give postmemory a dynamic power, Danticat's impetus for artistic creation emerges from her postmemory of this execution, giving her need to imaginatively write the memory in a way that also uses writing as a means for survival.

Visual Rendition of Marianne Hirsch's "Postmemory"

By Judith Levy



Furthermore, the family photograph, for Hirsch, highlights the nexus between myth, history, and (post)memory that also sparks creation for Danticat. Hirsch claims that, although

> the ideology of the family is as much subject to particular historical, social, and economic circumstances as the lived reality of family life. What may be constant, however, at least in the cultural moment that is the focus of the book, is the existence of a familial mythology, of an image to live up to, an image shaping the desire of the individual living in a social group. (Hirsch 8)

At play within this space of the family is a social group that aspires to a constant image (noted by the straight, forward-moving arrow in the table above), one that is at odds with the actuality of the variables bestowed upon it, constantly altering it, by "lived reality." Haitian lived reality, for Danticat, lies somewhere between the "Eden-like African jungles" that are evoked as a cultural amnesia of the slave trade and the televised executions from the Duvalier regime. The former highlights an ideal that erases a painful piece of history, and the latter highlights a painful piece of history in which the ideal seems irrecoverable. Hirsch explains that the image informing a mythical ideal "dominates lived reality, even though it can exist in conflict with it and can be ruled by different interests. It survives by means of its narrative and imaginary power, a power that photographs have a particular capacity to tap." She continues to explain that photographs can inhabit the "space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life" (8). For Danticat, the execution is the creation myth, but she does not articulate whether the filming of the execution interrupts the myth. On the other hand, she notes that the film's time seems "compressed," suggesting that something between the film and reality (either between the myth and reality of the past, or the myth and reality of her present) does not align (Danticat 3). Crucial to Hirsch's conception of the myth of the ideal is a narrative, a type of

story-building which erects a logic of the ideal, simultaneously fixing that ideal and making the narrative *seem* impenetrable. On the other hand, Crable asserts that the use of ancient myth for critical distance allows for both a "temporal and narrative distance necessary to contemplate the nature of contemporary human social relations" (108). In cases of postmemory, the memory of a former generation remains ever present in a person's mind, but its narrative power might be harder to uncover. Eventually, the myth becomes pedagogical: to be a part of the family—the community involved in Hirsch's analysis and in part of Danticat's reflection on the Duvalier regime—one must learn how the family identifies and aligns with that ideal. Lived reality, in this case, can be seen as that which interrupts the progression of the story and its supposedly fixed logic. The photograph, in its position of difference between myth and lived reality, can interrupt the myth containing the fixed ideal, jolting the logic and exposing its fault-lines.

When Danticat introduces the "biggest creation myth of all" in the same essay, she highlights a temporal progression that is similar to that which is embedded within the "narrative and imaginary power" of Hirsch's family myth. For Danticat, the biggest creation myth is the religious creation of Adam and Eve, in which they "disobeyed the superior being that fashioned them out of chaos, defying God's order not to eat what must have been the world's most desirable apple. Adam and eve were then banished from Eden, resulting in everything from our having to punch a clock to spending many, painful hours giving birth" (5). According to Danticat, what she calls in the essay "the biggest creation myth of all" generates a need for counting time, a time that moves forward (5). This time-counting corresponds to the source through which childbirth became painful, a lineage of time which parallels the pain inherent in the lineage of the family. Furthermore, the pain of childbirth condenses or heightens with the progression of time: as birth draws nearer, contractions become stronger and closer together.

What could be read as coincidental consequences of the first attempt to disobey an authority could also be read as a perpetuation of myth through the family's recorded, linear time.[29] Danticat's discussion of "biggest creation myth of all" points out that these biblical myths tend to influence widescale Judeo-Christian worldviews. By connecting the biblical creation myth to her creation myths from the Duvalier regime, she turns towards a microcosm of myth, in which its use is intended for the construction of national identity; by reading it through the lens of an ancient biblical myth, she can step back from the closeness of the postmemory in the same way Crable asserts that Camus uses myth as a critical scope.

For this reason, it is curious that Danticat notes that time is "compressed" on the film in which Numa and Drouin are executed (3). This compressed time mirrors the compressed time of the contractions in the time of childbirth. It remains unclear whether time is literally compressed because of the type of film, the way it was recorded, its age, the cramping pain (like childbirth) of its content, or something else. On the other hand, does the time of the film merely *feel* compressed to Danticat? If it is the latter, the compressed time could be a manifestation of the film's ability to be—like Hirsch's photograph—the piece that interrupts the myth, making Danticat recognize the construction and use of linear time within the myth. By following this logic further, it could be inferred that, for Danticat to create dangerously, she must become involved with multifaceted considerations of time—considering how time is mobilized by the mythical elements of the Duvalier regime and the way time is mythical in her own familial (post)memory. Thus the act of creating dangerously uses myth in two ways: the medium of art

[29] Upon reading Genesis, it is crucial to note that time is counted through the age of the men of the text. Furthermore, age is noted specifically when men are married, have a child born (in which case the pain of the child's mother is not mentioned), and when they die, keeping the notation of time only with regard to the male familial lineage (i.e. In verse 5:4 Adam's age is mentioned at the birth of Seth and in verse 5:9 Enosh's age is noted at the birth of Kenan; the mothers' ages are not mentioned.). The only woman whose age is noted is Sarah, who is one hundred and twenty-seven at the time of her death (23:1).

can apply ancient Greek and biblical myth as a scope through which to engage a topic from a critical distance; this critical distance subsequently exposes the present myth at hand as pedagogical and as a falsely linear model for reality—one which silences many of the details involved in the rhizomatic[30] nature of lived reality. Camus's conference presentation simultaneously accepts and rejects a linear, mythological legacy of culture: he gestures towards a legacy of the "West," claiming that this legacy must not be rejected (269). Here, he seemingly adopts a linear genealogy that says that the "West" was borne out of ancient Greece, among others. However, upon reading this statement next to his previous statement that the Greeks were busy with the work of creating dangerously though a concurrent acceptance and rejection of reality (265), Camus' acceptance of the legacy of the West highlights the *exception* of the impossibility of knowing reality in the Western adoption of ancient Greek ideals. Consequently, Camus' gesture towards legacy must be taken as subversive: it must be read as a moment in which he recognizes that the legacy itself is mythical, linear, and compressed—thereby missing the multifaceted pieces of lived reality (or our inability to fully know that reality).

Such mythologies of legacy can be mobilized violently to constrict freedom. In a sense, "Papa Doc" Duvalier wrote himself into history in an arbitrarily mythical way, evoking specific elements of history and silencing others, inserting himself into the pieces of time that would give him the most power, and using terms that suggested that he was a metonym for the nation. As Dubois notes, Duvalier called himself an "immaterial being," and his presence was notable even when he was not named (312). Furthermore, Paul Christopher Johnson's article, "Secretism and

[30] French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the concept of the rhizome in their book *Mille Plateaux* (1980) as one in contrast to arborous roots: instead of making meaning through lineages, meaning is always becoming, reaching plateaus of various bulbs of a rhizomatic structure—one that is multifaceted and shoots out into various directions—but never arriving at a stable sort of meaning. In *Poétique de la relation,* Martinican philosopher, novelist, and poet Édouard Glissant (1990) applies the concept of the rhizome to a Caribbean context, highlighting the break from arborous roots that Slave Trade violently facilitated.

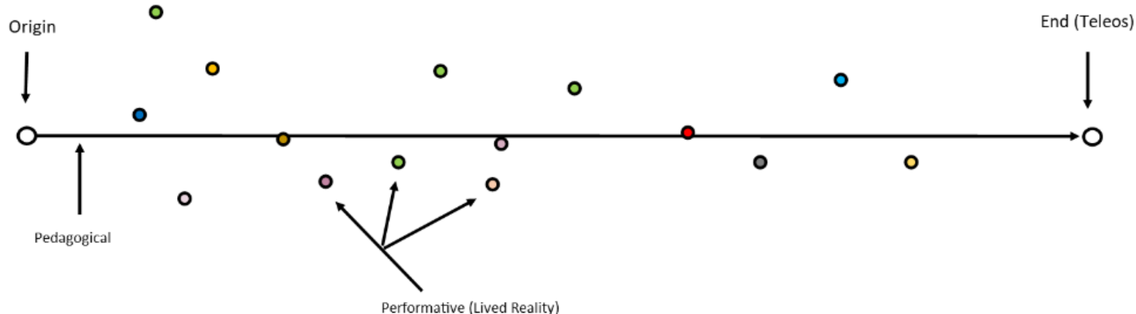
the Apotheosis of Duvalier," asserts that Duvalier's "secretist religious performance infiltrated the construction of national identifications and state apparatuses" (422). Duvalier would dress like the "Vodou lwa Bawon Samdi, the lwa of death and destruction, who wears a dark suit and top hat and is associated with the realm of the dead," according to Dubois (*Haiti* 332). This same imagery was used for the Tontons Macoutes: riffing off a childhood myth in which a boogey man would come for bad children, the Tonton Macoutes would do the dirty work for the Duvaliers, carrying out torture and assassinations, often wearing masks and hats to conceal their identities and (possibly unintentionally) recreate imagery representing destruction that stemmed from Voudou and childhood stories. Beyond his placement into a secretist, religious narrative, Duvalier would insert himself as a placeholder for the concept of the Haitian nation, claiming that he has no direct enemies, but that the *nation* has enemies, also asserting that "[t]o wish to destroy me is to wish to destroy Haiti itself" (Dubois 325; 328). Duvalier even called himself the "personification" of Haiti and stated that he was continuing "the tradition of Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines" (Dubois 339). Furthermore, upon redesigning the flag to emphasize Black leaders, Duvalier said that he himself was the flag (Dubois 344). By making these statements, Duvalier was painting a picture of himself within Haitian time and history, shaping the idea of the nation through the articulation of his own identity. To ignore Camus' subversive critique and purely take on the legacy of the "West" (or any other legacy), ignoring the gradations within it, bears the dangerous potential of creating national myths, ones which do not account for the nuances of lived experience and can be mobilized for the sake of violence.

Duvalier thus inserted himself into what Homi Bhabha would call the pedagogical dimension of narrating the nation. Bhabha's essay, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" (1999), highlights what he calls "double-time", which is a form

of identifying the nation through a narration that depends upon both the pedagogical and performative modes. The pedagogical mode has an origin in the distant past—one that almost seems mythical—and is reliant upon a teleology; however, this pedagogical mode cannot account for the experience of all the individuals of a nation. The performative, therefore, accounts for something similar to Hirsch's "lived reality." Involved in the pedagogical, "the metaphor of the national community as the 'many as one', the one is now both the tendency to totalize the social in a homogenous empty time, and the repetition of that minus in the origin, the less-than-one that intervenes with a metonymic, iterative temporality" (Bhabha 218). Duvalier has thus emptied time in claiming himself, metonymically, to be the singular being for the nation; furthermore, in doing so, he becomes the "less-than-one" by continuing the tradition of the origin (for him, the origin of the Revolution). Thus Duvalier utilized pedagogical time to solidify his presence as a part of Haitian identity. However, this assertion parallels his neglect of and violence toward the greater Haitian population.

Visual Rendition of Homi Bhabha's "Double-Time", from "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation

By Judith Levy



As Bhabha asserts, a "minority discourse" can emerge with the use of both versions of time, through what he deems "double-time" (214; 217-18). By mapping Hirsch's postmemory onto Bhabha's double-time, it becomes apparent that the narrative of the origin of the nation functions similarly to the narrative of the myth of the family ideal. But when the pedagogical mode of the nation imposes violence on the family, it makes a mark that is carried into the family ideal. Therefore, there are two forms of myth occurring for Danticat: the pedagogical myth of Haiti as a nation and the myth of her family's wound within that nation's history during the Duvalier regime. Both have their limitations, but they also inform one another. Therefore, time functions as a complicated, multi-layered instrument in the creation of an iterative individual, familial, and national identity. Furthermore, by reading the nation and her family's memory-history as myth, she can take a step back from it, gaining what Crable would call a "critical distance" necessary to assess its pedagogical function (105).

In contemplating who immigrant and dissident artists are, Danticat explains that "[w]e think we are people who risked not existing at all. People who might have had a mother and father killed, either by a government or by nature, even before we were born. Some of us think we are accidents of literacy" (19). To be an accident of literacy means to have survived by way of reading and writing, that the ability to recount these violent personal, familial, and national histories was never intended to be possible by those who catalyzed the violence. Furthermore, recounting this violence must naturally involve an impossibility of representation because of the unclear nature of who can bear witness to the violence and because of the dangerous potential for creation myths to create violent bases of limited knowledge. Writing and reading as ongoing praxis to interrupt violence, therefore, becomes recuperative in the face of the impossibility of recounting violence. In confrontation with this necessary difficulty, Danticat highlights the self-

doubt implicit within the immigrant artist, explaining that "[w]hen our worlds are literally crumbling, we tell ourselves how right they may have been, our elders, about our passive careers as distant witnesses" (19). Within this doubt lies the dual potential to disturb and be disturbed. On the one hand, doubt—especially as the difficulty of confronting myth or Bhabha's "pedagogical"—forces the artist to always question what he or she is creating in a way that leaves it disturbed, making it difficult to come to fruition. On the other hand, while "passive" could mean unproductive or drawn from the past, it could also mean to watch (how) the world pass(es). According to Bhahba, "[t]he people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address" ("DissemiNation" 214). For the postcolonial critic, asking for representation in a present that eludes the mythological past or origin is what allows for double-time to function. If writing is seen as an act of representation, as watching (how) the world pass(es), then it becomes an *active* means of representation, regardless of its subtleties. The act of the pass-ivity of writing is, therefore, an active means of survival. Immersed within the idea of art being an imperative for survival, if read doubly like so, is a close attention to time. For Danticat and Camus alike, (immigrant) artists are those who both dwell in time and watch it move by.

While reading the act of creating dangerously through Hirsch and Bhabha suggests that it is a greatly social endeavor, both Danticat and Camus also phrase it as an inner battle within the artist. In her chapter entitled "Another Country," Danticat expands the term "immigrant" to go beyond transplants, explaining that "one can so easily become a refugee within one's own borders—because one's perceived usefulness and precarious citizenship are always in question, whether in Haïti or in that other America" (*Create Dangerously* 111). Here, the individual is

imprisoned by a social context—because of the battle being waged within Haiti during the Duvalier regime and the ability to become trapped within its walls whether inside or outside of the country. This social battle, however, creates a need to search inward, in which Danticat explains that "two countries are forced to merge within you" (112). Thus the socially driven, multifaceted temporality of the performative and the pedagogical, the way it comes into conversation with the family dynamics of postmemory, and how it can create battles within the individual, are crucial to Danticat's ability to import Albert Camus to Haiti to assist in her rhetorical goals.

As Algerian-born and of French and Spanish descent, Camus was in a position ripe with an inner battle that reflected his uneasily locatable position within his sociopolitical context. As David Carroll asserts, Camus' identity is "the locus of a problem. . . . Rather than the unity of a national identity it evokes a fundamental relation to difference and otherness that is, at the same time, an integral part of a self that remains in large part a stranger to itself" (*Albert Camus the Algerian* 8). Camus, through his position as "neither strictly French nor Algerian, neither European nor African, but both at the same time" (Carroll 8), can fit into neither a French nor an Algerian pedagogical framework. Therefore, he turns to art as a means through which to navigate between ideologies, explaining that

> Créer ajourd'hui, c'est créer dangereusement. Toute publication est un acte et cet acte expose aux passions d'un siècle qui ne pardonne rien. La question n'est donc pas de savoir si cela est ou n'est pas dommageable à l'art. La question, pour tous ceux qui ne peuvent vivre sans l'art et ce qu'il signifie, est seulement de savoir comment, parmi les polices de tant d'idéologies (que d'églises, quelle solitude!), l'étrange liberté de la creation reste possible. (248)

> [To create today is to create dangerously. Any publication is an act, and that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing. Hence the question is not to find out if this is or is not prejudicial to art. The question, for all those who cannot live without art and what it signifies, is merely to find out how, among the police forces of so many ideologies (how many churches, what solitude!) the strange liberty of creation is possible. (251)]

Camus posits that art is, by necessity, a confrontation with the ideologies of one's context, one which is often an imperative for survival. Thus it becomes crucial to explore from what rhetorical elements art bears a potential for liberty. However, he explains that "[l]e problème est plus complexe, plus mortel aussi, dès l'instant où l'on s'aperçoit que le combat se livre au-dedans de l'artist lui-même" (248) ["[t]he problem is more complex, more serious too, as soon as it becomes apparent that the battle is waged within the artist himself" (251)]. This solitude of the artist emerges from the recognition of the facticity of these ideologies and the decision to revise one's relationship to them. Camus, therefore, engages in (de)historicizing art: he recognizes that art must be within a legible sense of time, and therefore it ascribes to pedagogical notions of history; however, the act of creating art must confront the ideologies embedded within the pedagogical. When he mentions ideologies, he gestures to churches ("églises"), but crucially, the noun "church" is plural. Therefore, he does not point to religion only; instead, he may (also) be pointing to the church-like functionality of ideals (possibly of the "West"). If he is pointing to religion, it is not necessarily toward a singular type, but towards the limitations of the transcendental knowledge that religions tend to offer. This parallels Danticat's note on the limitations within the creation myth of Adam and Eve. To find how this confrontation with ideologies functions is Camus' ultimate goal, one that must be contemplated through a

consideration of whether (and if so, when and how) art is a mere luxury. His question, however, pushes beyond the era in which he contemplates, searching for a potential for the creation of art that goes beyond its own time, asking how creation *remains* ("reste") possible.

Dangerous creations can remain possible if artists (re)write subversively, reusing the pedagogical against itself, critiquing it while remaining connected to it. Hirsch describes the imagination involved within postmemory as one which comes from a "desire" that is "the need not just to feel and to know, but re-member, to re-build, to re-incarnate, to replace, and to repair" (243). By using dashes in the words such as "re-member", Hirsch suggests that this is an iterative process, one which never ends, and that postmemory is an ongoing interruptive engagement between myth and reality. Similarly, Camus explains that art is "ni le refus total ni le consentement total à ce qui est. Il est en même temps refus et consentement, et c'est pourquoi il ne peut être qu'un déchirement perpétuellement renouvelé" (259) ["neither complete rejection nor complete acceptance of what is. It is simultaneously acceptance and rejection and this is why it must be a perpetually renewed wrenching apart" (264)]. Just after this assertion, he turns to the Greeks, highlighting the importance of wavering between reality and rejecting reality. Because of Camus' emphasis on the Greek tendency to question, I posit that his articulation that "il n'y a pas de culture sans heritage et nous ne pouvons ni ne devons rien refuser du nôtre, celui de l'Occident" ["There is no culture without legacy, and we cannot and must not reject anything of ours, the legacy of the West"] is a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the "West" (263; 269). At the same time that Camus suggests a need to consider the pedagogical "l'Occident," he highlights a disparity within it: that the civilization often considered as the origin of the West—ancient Greece—carried a restlessness between rejecting and accepting reality that defies the singularity of the pedagogical; rather, the performative and the pedagogical must work together.

Therefore, Camus' image of Europe is subversive by being critical of Europe at the moment he suggests that its legacy must be adopted.

Importantly within this nuanced adoption of the West, Camus notes that we must remember both the beautiful and the humiliated within this legacy (264). Consequently, to foster an understanding of "the West", one must explore the pain within that legacy. As Bhabha refers to Partha Chatterjee's discussion on nationalism coming from a hollow notion of Enlightenment ideals ("DissemiNation" 211), the French Enlightenment ideals that came from the French Revolution—those of fraternity, equality, and liberty—were denied to the slaves in French colonies. One such colony was Haiti, which was the first to gain liberty and the only one to overturn slavery through revolution. As Buck-Morss, Dubois, Trouillot, and Danticat note, Haiti has always confronted the world around it, even confronting the silencing of its own autonomy by world powers. But importantly, Danticat notes that, mixed up with this externally-founded silencing, a pain coming from a domestic front can exist simultaneously. Reading Haiti through the myth of the family, the myth of the nation, and the myth of "the West" illuminates that, at each level, there is a linear and closed approach to time that generates silence and pain, but that this approach can be interrupted when considering the multiple, lived realities.

At each level, art bears a potential to present, aesthetically, the difference between linear temporal models of mythical-time and the multifaceted reality which breaks up its linearity. For this reason, Danticat notes that the articulation of the immigrant experience, in its particularity, is always also connected to an ideal (18). Similarly, Camus notes that in the act of making art (not out of mere luxury) shines "fugitivement . . . toujours menace que chacun, sur ses souffrances et sur ses joues, élève pour tous" (265) ["forth fleetingly the ever threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all" (272)]. However, this

building is not a mere ideal-building; in fact, "[i]t is sometimes impossible even for those of us who are on the same side of *lòt bò dlo* to find one another" (Danticat 94). Haitian creole for "the other side of the water", *lòt bò dlo* refers to both the immigrant experience of physically being away from the island and the experience of death (*Art of Death* 22). The particularization of each immigrant's experience might not match another's; however, they will both be referring to some sort of ideal understanding of what the nation is. Similarly, the French saying "etre de l'autre bord"—to be on the other shore—is an idiomatic phrase used to highlight that one has a different political position. The metaphor of being on the other side of the water, in both contexts, implies a recognition of national ideals and the distance that one can undergo when those ideals do not align with one's own. Creating dangerously, then, is a means of recognizing an ideal in a way that also defies it. To do so, one must unfold time's complexities, rather than see it as a flat surface, lest potential be silenced, building walls between insights, which eventually builds walls between beings. In order to create dangerously as a response to a painful mythology of history, family memory, and the immigrant experience, one can benefit by using myth to understand where one has been wounded by time and pierce time back, exposing its multifaceted functionality.

The Work of Sisyphus: Particularizing the Universal of *Lòt Bò Dlo*

By addressing the need to write and read as subversive confrontation with oppressive regimes and the difficulty of migration, Danticat's *Create Dangerously* addresses an immanent potential for danger, and therefore possible death. Her recent book, *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* (2017), however, confronts the question of mortality by working through her

mother's death and the deaths of many others in her own life and the lives of various authors. Her book was written as part of Graywolf Press' "The Art of" Series, a collection of critical essays on various topics in art. The book's first chapter, paradoxically entitled "Living Dyingly", returns to the distance of the *lòt bò dlo*, explaining that her "mother at forty was already *lòt bò dlo*, on the other side of the water" (22). Confronting the idea of knowing, in advance, that death is coming, the book's inaugural chapter thinks through death using the same metaphor as the immigrant experience: water and distance. Furthermore, her mother has undergone (or is undergoing, since she is still alive at this point) both transitions to the other sides of death and immigration. By thinking through them together, death and the immigrant experience become interwoven for Danticat and her mother. While thinking through her mother's physical death, Danticat must confront her mother's immigration to the United States to find a safeguard from the Duvalier regime. In doing so, she acknowledges that her mother faced death and sought freedom from it earlier than the illness which took her life many years later. Moreover, Danticat highlights the ambiguous space one inhabits after the death of one's parents, since it spawns the realization that death is a possibility for oneself. Why, then, is the metaphor of being across the water applicable to both death and the immigrant experience, and what rhetorical purpose does this metaphor serve for Danticat? What sort of productivity emerges from the ambiguity of the realization of the possibility of death? By exploring Danticat's ongoing discussion with Albert Camus' *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) in her critical essay *The Art of Death*, this section assesses the method created by a rhetoric of distance and closeness, of the universal and the particular, to create an ethics of (re)writing.

Camus' seminal essay uses the trope of Sisyphus from Greek mythology to work through the absurdity of life while knowing that death is at its end. Although not explicitly mentioned by

Danticat, the mythical Sisyphus encountered and evaded the ancient Greek version of *lòt bò dlo*—death—by tricking Hades or Thanatos (depending on which version of the myth you encounter) to avoid returning to the underworld. To do this, he asked his wife, Merope, to abstain from performing the rites to allow him entrance into the underworld, which he then used as a means of persuading Persephone that he was not welcome there. As punishment, Sisyphus was doomed to push a boulder up a hill repeatedly, the ball rolling back to the bottom each time he would reach the summit. Thus the myth behind Camus' philosophy of the absurd is directly related to her subject matter more thoroughly than Danticat divulges. Her first entrance into discussion with Camus is found in the absurd nature of the inability to experience death, since death, by definition, is the end of lived experience. Early in her book, she poses the paradox of writing about death, the un-experienceable experience. Quoting Camus, Danticat posits:

> 'In reality there is no experience of death.… it is barely possible to speak of the experience of others' deaths. It is a substitute, an illusion, and it never quite convinces us,' Albert Camus writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, his treatise on his philosophy of absurdism. Still, we continue to speak of other people's deaths, as Camus did in his novels and essays. We write about the dead to make sense of our losses, to become less haunted, to turn ghosts into words, to transform an absence into language. (*The Art of Death* 29)

In her ruminations, the paradox of wanting to talk about something that cannot be talked about emerges. However, this paradox which underscores an impossibility also creates a desire: the loss of another through death creates a desire for understanding through language. But in this attempt at desire, Danticat points to another paradox: to think through one's end, one's death, one must think and write about *life* (14). Danticat's consideration of writing to think through

death emerges as the closest thing to building a bridge across the water: it not only links life and death, *it enacts an absurd creation*[31] *that connects beings through the pain of death.*

As she thinks through the topics of life and death, Danticat exudes a key quality of Camus' absurd creator: endless investigation and becoming, one which never arrives at a finite sort of knowledge. In his essay, Camus calls the paradox in the logic of death an absurd reasoning. It emerges when one notices the facts of life, rather than running through the daily motions without thinking about them. Noticing the motions of life as we progress towards death, many answer this paradox with a hope that is sourced through some "grande idée" ["grand idea"] that gives meaning to life or what comes afterwards. This, however, is elusive; instead, one must generate an endless logic or scrutiny of life in the face of death (224-6; 7-10). Importantly, only a method can emerge from this reasoning, one that is "d'analyse et non de connaissance. Car les méthodes impliquent des métaphysiques, elles trahissent métaphysiques, elles trahissent àlleur insu les conclusions qu'elles prétendent parfois ne pas encore connaître. Ainsi les dernières pages d'un livre sont déjà dans les premières" (227) ["of analysis and not one of knowledge. For methods imply metaphysics; unconsciously they disclose conclusions that they often claim not to know yet. Similarly, the last pages of a book are already contained in the first pages" (11)]. In Camus' take on absurdity, one might know that death is the conclusion of life but cannot become acquainted with death ("connaître") during the time of one's life. Thus a methodology cannot go beyond analysis, since, as long as one is living, one has not experienced death fully. Both Camus and Danticat consider a paradox that requires endless working through, one that can never arrive in a finite and all-encompassing knowledge. Importantly, Camus' concept of an absurd

[31] Absurdity and an "absurd creation" refer directly to Albert Camus' philosophy of absurdity but can also be taken in the colloquial understanding of strange, astonishing, or illogical. Camus' philosophy of absurdity and "absurd creation" will be expounded further throughout this section.

framework of *analysis* must always involve a temporal analysis, along with any additional analytical scopes.

According to Camus, this absurd logic and temporal analysis emerge out of a moment in which one is interrupted within the rhythm of routine life. This pause allows for the emergence of the question "Why?" which leads to consciousness (228). There is always a chance to leave the conscious awakening of absurdity and return to the rhythm, but if one remains within absurd logic, there are only two possibilities: "suicide ou rétablissement". Camus explains that suicide is not a proper answer to absurdity, but more importantly, within his version of "rétablissement"—recovery or reestablishment, bearing the potential for *redefinition*—is a moment in which time no longer carries each individual, but the individual carries his or her own time (228). If we connect this potential to define the parameters of one's time to the idea that absurd reasoning is a method of analysis and not knowledge, it follows that a certain version of time—the one which bears rhythms, the one which, by way of gesturing to Heidegger, Camus highlights as a source of anxiety—is a prescribed source of knowledge that is not all-encompassing. In confrontation with this *prescribed time*, then, is an *absurd time* which always recognizes time *as* time. Through this recognition, absurd time bears the potential to see the ends of times in its beginnings. This creates a sort of logic of the absurd, one which is, importantly, a model that defies a finite knowledge, one that endlessly returns to reproduce itself anew.

Crucially, myth functions as a tool that allows Camus to forward his idea of the logic of the absurd. Crable asserts that this type of absurd logic building is one that requires myth as "a radical pathway into examination of the human condition, the best possible vocabulary for inquiry into the nature of human symbolicity" ("Camus" 105). As mentioned earlier, the temporal distance of ancient Greek mythology allows Camus to have a critical distance from his

subject, but additionally, Crable points to the idea of myth as culture in ancient Greece. He asserts that there was no separation between myth and logic in ancient Greece, as opposed to the "modern conception of myth, one that posits it as the 'other' of science, logic, reason, and truth" (108). Going further, Crable highlights that ancient myth had limitations imposed by its oral circulation and that today's literate society naturally has a different relationship to myth because of its relationship to writing (109). This difference is what subsequently leads to the necessity to "redefine myth as a unique symbolic form that imposes a critical distance between audience and subject" (109). While Crable highlights the necessity of Sisyphus' mythical story for Camus to gain a scope and critical distance, he also gestures toward a contemporary culture of writing in which certain forms of writing are considered definitive or logic-building, serving as the basis for building forms of knowledge. Camus must therefore utilize myth as a means of rebelling against the forms of prescribed knowledge in a contemporary context that he sees as limiting when they are taken as full-filling[32] knowledge.

Because Crable's goal is to theorize Camus and Sartre's methods of communication, his article does not assess more thoroughly the confinement inherent in modern (post)colonial epistemological contexts that lead to what he highlights as the separation of myth and logic. In his book *Orientalism* (1978), postcolonial critic Edward Said highlights a mythologizing of the Orient, or the other, that is violent and functions as the inverse of Crable's critical temporal distance. Said asserts that various pedagogical[33] texts confine the Orient to ancient versions of

[32] The knowledge that Camus combats is one in which some sort of transcendence is drawn from an abstract belief that serves as the catch-all for answering and subsequently negating the absurdity of reality. Religion, for instance, gives an answer to the absurdity of living a life that is always headed towards the unknown of death. Thus it becomes full-filling in that it gives an answer beyond absurd reality, filling it up with meaning, a knowledge without analysis. See Chapter 2 for a more extensive account of the violence of knowledge (also known as transparency) in a (post)colonial context.

[33] To be clear, Said is not using the term "pedagogical" in the same way as Bhabha, as discussed earlier. Said was writing before Bhabha, and he is referring to the texts used academically to build a curriculum around the understanding of the Orient, a form of academic scholarship that—in its limitations of scope on the Orient—

their cultures (222). So while Crable notes how Camus uses myth as a distant scope for an approachable analysis, the practice of placing and fixing the Orient in a distant past can fix any "other" into a mythic version of itself that erases individuality and contemporaneity. Despite Said's critique of Camus' writing as filled with a "colonial sensibility",[34] if we combine Said's assertion of textual and temporal confinement of the Orient with Crable's notion that a contemporary culture of writing has separated logic from myth, then the Orient would be confined to a temporally fixed space without contemporary notions of logic ("Camus and the French Colonial Experience" 176). Going further, in *Orientalism*, Said asserts that the writing of knowledge systems is what creates the oppression of the Orient, claiming that "the source of pressure is narrative, in that if any Oriental detail can be shown to move, or to develop, diachrony is introduced into the system" (240). Thus the contemporary, written logic system fixes the Orient, by way of its distant temporality, into a space that gives it no access to that system because of its inability to define logic in modern terms. Crucially, Camus' assertion that the logic of the absurd is a methodology of analysis and *not* of knowledge attests to the rigidity of knowledge systems implied by Said and pushed forward by my analysis of Crable. By using myth to reach this open-ended conclusion, Camus can access the ancient combination of logic and myth, averting rigid, contemporary knowledge structures, giving him the ability to tap into the critical distance that Crable asserts is crucial for his ability to write. He can also subversively

confines the subject at hand. In that sense, Said's pedagogical *functions* similarly to Bhabha's, but they are not *necessarily* referring to the same content. On the other hand, their content would overlap if the national myth (Bhabha) is built into the pedagogical disciplines which seek to understand the other (Said) or vice versa.

[34] Importantly, Said's critique of Camus was published in 1993, before the posthumous publication of Camus' novel *Le Premier homme*, a text which has been used by scholars such as David Carroll and Debra Kelly to posit Camus' colonial ambivalence. See Chapter 2 for more on the scholarly shift in approach to Camus after this posthumously published manuscript.

critique a type of mythologizing inherent in these knowledge structures that tends to fix its subjects[35] into limited definitions.

Danticat engages with writing and learning as an ongoing praxis in a way that defies the type of fixated logic built by the systems which Said critiques. Bridging gaps between authors, Danticat considers the space of writing to be a place to think and rethink death with others, noting

> [t]hese authors have provided me with hints, clues, maps that I hope might lead me to some still-undiscovered and undefined "other side," which is often mislabeled as closure. I am writing this book in order to learn (or relearn) how one writes about death, so I can write, or continue to write, about the deaths that have most touched my life. (Danticat 7)

Using others' ideas on death can help her *wrestle* with it. Importantly, this is an ongoing struggle: she must learn and relearn, write and rewrite. At the moment that Danticat attests to the need for her own iterative authorial practice, she also builds an ethical relationship between authors. In the act of reading about others' encounters with death, she can head toward an "other side" which she will never (during her own time of living) arrive at; in the act of writing she can continue her meditation on the topic. Danticat's open-ended reading and writing leaves her in the space of analysis, which Camus sees as crucial to absurd reasoning.

The rigidity of knowledge systems and their temporalities is furthered by Camus' section on conquest: when defining "L'Homme absurde," Camus explains that the absurd man is aware that he has freedom over time ("liberté à terme"); in the subsection on conquest, he takes on the voice of the conqueror (noted by the use of quotation marks) to highlight his decision to stand

[35] By "subjects," I mean, literally, "topics of study." However, by way of making them subjects of the study of Orientalism (and its repetitions that often have removed the signifier "Orientalism"), they become objects, removing their subjectivity and capability for a nuanced definition that encompasses both their contemporaneity and potential to change and bear alternatives to the cultural majority.

within his time (265; 277). In this section, the conqueror decisively chooses history over eternity because it bears more certainty. Furthermore, the conqueror explains that

> Il faut vivre avec le temps et mourir ave lui ou s'y soustraire pour une plus grande vie. Je sais qu'on peut transiger et qu'on peut vivre dans le siècle et croire à l'éternel. Cela s'appelle accepter. Mais je répugne à ce terme et je veux tout ou rien. Si je choisis l'action, ne croyez pas que la contemplation me soit comme une terre inconnue. Mais elle ne peut tout me donner, et privé de l'éternel, je veux m'allier au temps. (Camus 278-9) [One must live with time and die with it, or else elude it for a greater life. I know that one can compromise and live in the world while believing in the eternal. That is called accepting. But I loathe this term and want all or nothing. If I choose action, don't think that contemplation is like an unknown country to me. But it cannot give me everything, and, deprived of the eternal, I want to ally myself with time. (Camus 86)]

Instead of a distance with time (as is the case with the making of an Orient), the conqueror voluntarily bears a closeness with time while recognizing that this closeness is what also prevents his freedom. He understands that his recognition of the end of death leads to a contemplation of life, but contemplation and accepting absurdity cannot give him all that he desires. The paradox of living in the present with a recognition of its end in death ignites the work of contemplation but does not allow easy access to acquisition of property, including the intellectual property of knowledge. Thus while the conqueror acknowledges the absurd in his recognition of contemplation as a space for liberation, he chooses this confinement for the sake of ownership of his (albeit limited) epistemology, one that no one (by way of his being a conqueror and subsequently asserting a knowledge-structure that is falsely presented to others as all-encompassing) can take from him. Camus demonstrates that the logic of conquest involves an

impossible and confining source of knowledge, one that is allied with a perception of time that is finite and inflexible, far from the absurd methodology of endless analysis.

In his essay "Rethinking the Absurd: Le Mythe de Sisyphe," David Carroll highlights how Camus' three vignettes of absurd characters—Don Juan, the actor, and the conqueror—recognize the absurd but are limited illustrations of absurd practice. Referring to these vignettes, Carroll explains that

> if they see clearly, they know their limits and they do not go beyond them, but they do not use art to exhibit this difference between the ability to see clearly and the actual inability to possess a full-filling knowledge. Therefore, they use the absurd to their own gain. The artist-creator, on the other hand, would be one who communicates the absurdity of the bridge between the desire for clarity, to conquer knowledge, and the impossibility of this endeavor. (Carroll 60)

Remarking on the difference between Camus' vignettes of absurd characters and his analysis of the artist-creator, Carroll pushes forward the idea that the knowledge of the conqueror is a hollow model, one that acts as if it is all-encompassing but never can be. Using Camus' consideration of the act of absurd creation, especially in his section about the novel, he emphasizes that writing is one of the rare spaces in which a "bridge" can be gapped between absurd impossibilities and the desire to understand them.

Danticat engages in this attempt to bridge the gap by thinking through other authors' thoughts on death and by using the space of writing as one of constantly renewing the search for knowledge. While each authors' words are helpful to her, she must note that "[e]very writer brings a different set of beliefs, experiences, and observations to their writing about death" (22). Similarly, "[e]ach death is as singular as the individual who is dying, and in the end we will get

no definitive answers. Lacking absolutes, all we have is our faith and belief and imagination to either haunt or comfort us" (22). Camus' idea of the artist-creator, the best example of absurdity (better than the vignettes discussed earlier) engages in this form of writing that reaches towards but never arrives at the concrete. He says that "[f]or an absurd work of art to be possible, thought in its most lucid form must be involved in it. But at the same time thought must not be apparent except as the regulating intelligence … The work of art is born of the intelligence's refusal to reason the concrete" (97). Danticat's work takes the details of individual deaths—of both people in her life and the lives of others—and works through them to very nearly come to a conclusion, but just when it seems that she will arrive, she begins to roll Sisyphus' stone up the hill again. In the previous quote, she *operates* through thought: thought is ready-at-hand but cannot provide more than a scope for analysis.

When thinking through Zora Neale Hurston's writings on her mother's death, Danticat highlights that Hurston's voice both "personalize[s] and mythologize[s]" death (125). Shortly thereafter, Danticat considers how Hurston's (and other authors' writing by daughters on the deaths of their mothers) makes her feel as if they are all daughters of "the same mythical mother"; going further, she even claims that their mothers *become* her mother. In this instance, the personal details of various authors, writing from various times and contexts, can bring them together through the distance of the universalized idea or myth of mother. Here, they are bridged by the locus of myth, one which distances them from the individual accounts but can bring them together. Returning to Camus, writing the difficulty of death through the myth of Sisyphus can create a myth that each individual can tap into to understand the concept in a way that is distanced from the particular accounts and how they shift for each individual. But importantly, his absurdist philosophy also articulates a rhetoric of a constant tossing and turning from

universalizing to particularizing in order to bridge the gap between myth and specific context: this is where analysis emerges, regulated through consciousness, but not forming a rooted sort of knowledge (or if it is rooted, it is through a sort of tug-of-war between the two that never ends). Danticat engages in this rhetorical approach, forwarding the modest but thoughtful claim, "I realize I'm writing this in circles. This is the only way it makes sense to me now" (136). Danticat's writing becomes endless and circular, like Sisyphus pushing his boulder up the hill. In doing so, her personal and sociopolitical context can be tied to others in the act of thinking through death. Her ethical approach resides in the constant overturning of the boulder, one that is more easily approached through Camus' notion of absurdity.

Camus' ambivalent positionality—one often posed as problematic—is crucial to thinking through colonial knowledge structures while simultaneously denouncing the concept of finite knowledge embedded in "Western" ideals. Danticat and Camus posit that the individual is always close and far from the sociopolitical contexts to which they are connected, finding liberation in the idea that knowledge will never be possible, but that a method of ongoing analysis can allow a form of creation that can articulate this strangeness. The act of creating dangerously, for them, is a rhetorical method that recognizes ideological genealogies and the compressed, violent, linear time they bear. Freedom can be attained in watching the functionality of time and presenting it to others in subversive ways. One such way involves recognizing creation myths and using them to disrupt the meanings they often transmit. Opposite to creation (in limited, linear trajectories of time) is the end of existence: death. Just as it is imperative to investigate, use, and interrupt creation myths, to unfold death's complexities might not allow for an arrival at knowledge. Instead, it often leads to a particularization, but this attempt at universal

understanding (that always also must bear the specificity of individual death) can at least begin to build a bridge toward the other side of the water: between life and death, but also between beings in different sociopolitical contexts, assembling an ethical approach to endlessly learning about the lives and deaths of others. In the next chapter, I will investigate more extensively how Camus' sociopolitical context informs his critical value of knowledge and how the transparency of knowledge must bend to opacity when considering the pangs of Algerian colonization, along with Atlantic slave trade through the work of M. NourbeSe Philip, and the violent legacy of each set of disastrous events.

Chapter 2

Adam and Ruth: (Un)Writing Time in Albert Camus and M. NourbeSe Philip

When Albert Camus died suddenly in a car accident in 1960, a manuscript of an unfinished novel was found in a briefcase in the car. In this unfinished novel, entitled *Le Premier homme [The First Man]*, scenes of violence from colonization and the Algerian War of Independence are embedded within the text. As a hybrid between fiction and autobiography (which could be called a work of autofiction[36]), these scenes are often entangled with other thoughts on Camus' impoverished childhood, his family's varying levels of cognitive ability and lack of access to education, their relationship with religion, and his simultaneous alienation from France and Algeria as a *pied noir*. Thus the manuscript presents a raw take on Camus' stance towards (post)colonial violence, his wavering national identity, and an understanding of how French national identity is accessed through race, socioeconomic status, education, religion, and familial duty.

By addressing these topics, the manuscript presents itself as a space in which readers can trace Camus' sociopolitical stance through a reconsideration of the topics of time, memory, and

[36] In the genre of autofiction, a fictional character takes on the real-life details of the author who is writing. This term was first crafted by Serge Doubrovsky for his novel *Fils* (1977). Doubrovsky, too, was in France during World War II and interacted closely with Sartre (*Serge Doubrovsky: Life, Writing, Legacy* 1-7). While Doubrovsky is the first to have this genre attributed to him, Camus' creative autobiography was written in part before Doubrovksy's book (discovered in 1960), but was not published until 1994. In "La Morale d'Albert Camus" ["The Ethics of Albert Camus"] (1960), without having read Camus' manuscript, Doubrovsky claims that Camus' work generates an openness geared towards being and participation that steps beyond Sartre's emphasis on thought. Importantly, Doubrovsky highlights the change in temporality between the two, noting that Camus maintains the importance of the present while Sartre is more posed towards the future (78). Comparing him to a poet, Doubrovsky assesses Camus' philosophy, essays, and novels to forward the notion that Camus had the sensibility of a poet, in which he may need to generate an air of reason but that these potential draws toward reason are often distorted (73). Therefore, Doubrovsky's assessment of Camus' prose echoes—after the writing of *Le Premier homme* yet before its publication—many pieces of Camus' autofiction that I will find crucial to assess to explore Camus' investigation of his own alienation between France and Algeria. Interestingly, his assessment of Camus which I find in conversation with Camus' work of autofiction comes before Doubrovsky was known for the genre of autofiction himself.

history. Furthermore, as an unfinished manuscript, the book involves an additional multi-faceted impossibility: the reader is left with notes of what Camus intended to write—some of which confuse his intention altogether. An entire chapter, for instance, has a note next to its title that says the chapter is "à écrire et à supprimer" (756) ["to be written and deleted" (29)]. This leads to a difficulty in a methodology of reading which is also apparent in many scholars' readings of his text: the text presents itself as *unfinished,* while the notes throughout it also present it as a text with authorial intent.[37] Crucially, the moment that author died and we lost access to him was the moment that this manuscript was discovered, restricting our understanding of his authorial intent to his notes throughout the manuscript. Such methodological difficulty is pushed further by the "Notes et plans" ["Notes and Sketches"] section of the manuscript that highlights that this text "*doit être* inachevé" (927; emphasis in original) ["*must* be unfinished" (297; emphasis in original)]. Subsequently, the reader who is drawn into speculation of what Camus would have accomplished had he not died is left hanging with the knowledge that Camus would have somehow left it unfinished regardless. As a result, this chapter will assess the impossibility of reading the manuscript in conjunction with Camus' confrontations in his personal life, politics, and religion. It will then turn towards Trinbagonian-Canadian poet M. NourbeSe Philip's

[37] The writing and publication of Camus' texts straddles the period of literary criticism which turns against reading the text as a means of reading the author and the eventual reduction of emphasis on this deconstructive approach. Camus wrote his text in 1960, and Foucault and Barthes published their essays interrogating the use of the author in criticism in 1969 and 1967, respectively. However, Camus' manuscript, left unpublished until 1994, emerged at a time in which Foucault and Barthes' call to reconsider the author were already beginning to fade, as mentioned in my discussion on Sharpe below. Barthes importantly notes that the value of the author emerged from "English empiricism and French rationalism" which valued the "prestige of the individual" ("The Death of the Author" 875). Furthermore, he emphasizes that the use of the author in literary criticism draws a temporal divide of before and after the author wrote the text. Although unanticipated, Camus' death and delayed publication further complicates this temporal divide. While Camus' text may have been published after the author had already been killed and partially reborn by literary scholars, his unfortunate circumstances make his text ahead of his time temporally, in a way that puts his own critique of the West alongside Barthes' emphasis that the author was born from crucial components of the West—empiricism and rationalism.

poem(s) *Zong!* (2008) to compare the similar impossibilities embedded within the history and memory of Atlantic slave trade.

Despite being from a different context and of a different genre, Philip's collection of poems, *Zong!*, shares the need to write events that cannot be fully understood while maintaining that such writing might never be finished. In doing so, Philip's text traces, unwrites, and re-writes the very same memory-history of the West, albeit from a different angle. Furthermore, both authors' tendencies to pose imperative yet impossible writing practices presents the question of how to read their writing. Philip's collection of poems attempts to "not tell the story that must be told" of the Zong massacre of 1781, in which the owners of a British slave ship threw somewhere between 130 and 150 slaves overboard to claim insurance money (Philip 189; Walvin 1). Because the legal case refers to the slaves as property rather than humans, allowing for the declaration that "the argument from the law respecting indictments for murder does not apply," Philip tears up the legal text to give voice and being to those who were murdered (211, 191). From the cover alone, however, Philip's authorial intent is subtracted by its declaration after the author's name that it is "As told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng". Upon opening Philip's book, one might notice that it is dedicated to Lord Yeates. Therefore, it is worth noting that Setaey is Yeates spelled backwards. The name Adamu could be said to be derived from the name Adam, and if so, can be used to further my biblical reading that will come later in this chapter. The name Boateng comes from the Akan people of Ghana. In an article titled "The Sociolingusitic of Akan Personal Names [sic]", Kofi Agyekum explains that Akan names are given for various reasons, both synchronic (situation, time, place) and diachronic (family, culture) (208). Furthermore, patrilineal names are derived from the 12 Ghanan tribes. In Agyekum's tables, the names Boate and Boaten are derived from Bosompra and Bosomtwe,

respectively. Later, when noting that occasionally females add their husbands' name to their own patrilineal names, he also uses the name Boateng as an example (but its tribal origin is unaccounted for here). On the other hand, Philip's collection of poems is concluded by her "Notanda" in which she explains much of her writing process and authorial intent. Yet this section is still elusive: she often does not come to full conclusions and she must analyze her own writing by referring to her writing journal. For instance, when she asks what we can and cannot know about what happened on board the Zong, emphasizing that "the complete story does not exist," she then turns to her journal in which she brainstorms what she will write (197). Even within this reflection from her writing journal, she explains her thoughts but also claims that "some poems just seem to offer themselves up" and that an old page of notes mysteriously floats into her space, presenting itself as if it should be written by its choice, not hers (196-7). By turning to her journal rather than answering how a story of such violence could ever be complete, she leaves the reader hanging without an answer while implying that her notes—some of which she writes and some which present themselves to her—must be as much a part of this incomplete experience as the event itself. Thus, both Philip and Camus' texts, by way of their imperative to be read and simultaneous impossibility of being read, beg the question of how to read.

This difficulty of reading runs correlative to the struggle to understand each author's sociopolitical topic and events at hand: French colonization of Algeria and the Algerian War of Independence for Camus, and Atlantic Slave Trade and the Zong massacre for Philip. Both authors' topics address centuries-long expanses of violence but center their analyses on specific, extraordinarily troubling events within the duration of their epochs. In order to read these difficult events in conjunction with the impossible imperative to read these stories, this chapter will enter both texts through the moments in which time collapses. While time falling apart

might seem to compound the impossibility of these texts further, I am proposing the converse: that the collapse of time functions alongside an impossibility of authorial intent and reading as a means of emphasizing the difficulty of exploring the personal and historical events that both authors wrestle with. By entering through time's collapse, we might learn more about the violent events—and their greater contexts—to which each author refers. When read together like so, memory, and subsequently discourse and history, also bear an imperative impossibility. It follows that these texts and their broader historical contexts are no longer necessarily read linearly, nor do they necessarily allow for narratives that are teleological in nature.

Strangely so, these authors' impossible approaches at writing and their subsequent collapses of time are inherently tied to a piece of Judeo-Christian cultural memory: biblical allusions. Although Camus has often and improperly been labeled as an atheist,[38] *Le Premier homme* is an allusion to Adam of Genesis. This chapter will therefore trace Camus' relationship with religion in order to consider why he decides to evoke the Bible, especially Genesis, where time is first created. For Camus' main character, Jacques Cormery, who is a fictional version of Camus, time falls apart when he visits his father's grave at age 40. At his graveside, Jacques realizes that he is now older than his father was at his time of death, fighting for the French during World War I. When read with this biblical allusion, the collapse of time brings the idea of paternal lineages forwarded by Genesis into conversation with Camus' critique of Western civilization, colonialism, and the violence of war. In *Zong!*, Philip's focus on the violence of Atlantic slave trade also highlights a collapse of time that is forwarded by a biblical allusion. In

[38] As Matthew Sharpe points out, Camus was critical of Christianity, but refused a complete label of "atheist." Sharpe summarizes his critiques as "epistemological (concerning the limits of human knowledge), ontological (concerning the value of the natural world, sexuality, and the body, and the nature of history), and ethical or political." Sharpe underscores the later, pointing to Camus' *L'Homme rèvolté*, in which "the 'sacred world' of medieval Christendom" leads to "a world in which 'metaphysics is replaced by myth'" and religion gives answers, rather than opening questions (457).

Zong!'s "Manifest," the account of items on board, she includes a column entitled "Women Who Wait." Within this section and throughout the rest of the poem are many biblical names, including Eve, Mary, and Ruth. However, the one who is named the most frequently throughout the poems—over twenty-five times—is Ruth. While Ruth often appears as Ruth as a proper noun, her name often also emerges when the word "truth" is torn asunder, as "t/ruth." Furthermore, the narrator explains that he testifies directly to Ruth and tells her that time must be broken apart (70, 141). Although some scholars have noted Ruth's appearance, none have yet to emphasize this detail: that the text is narrated *to* Ruth. By considering Ruth as a figure who welcomed a new culture (1:16), who represents lovingkindness because of her dedication to her mother-in-law (16:17-9), and who re-inscribes the female into the paternal counting of time through familial lineages (4:10-21), this analysis will consider how her implication in the breaking of time in *Zong!* transports the ethical imperative of witnessing the Zong massacre to populations beyond the legacy of slave trade. This chapter will assess how these authors' use of ancient Judeo-Christian allusions exposes the violence inherent in the foundation of Western civilization, wrestles with and testifies to its violence, and opens spaces for ethics.

By considering the use of an ancient text to question time, this chapter must analyze what time means for each author's "present" context and corollary biblical allusion. This chapter will trace these allusions as a means of straddling time, to work through the impossibility of reading and the destruction of time within these texts. In doing so, I intend to unravel the ongoing debate around each author's emphasis on the colonial imperial endeavor. The section on Camus' *Le Premier homme* will unpack this impossibility in conjunction with the debate surrounding his impossible position between attempts to be apolitical and the desire to combat oppression, between agnosticism and a connection to ancient biblical texts. In doing so, I will highlight how

his ongoing search for memory is a simultaneous investment in and a devolvement from patriarchal lineages that mirrors the functionality of history and cultural memory within the ancient texts that he both evokes and disavows.

The section on Philip's *Zong!* will follow the allusion to Ruth in order to see how time is a crucial component to the misunderstandability of violence and its simultaneous need to be told. Furthermore, this section will consider Ruth as a figure who may hold the potential to open a space for re-writing this painful past, leading to an ethics of indeterminacy and connectability. This chapter will therefore assess how both texts have emerged from a capitalism of bodies, in which the roots of capitalism must be assessed in conjunction to cultural and religious memory-history. By analyzing the Bible's potential for indeterminacy[39] and the way its indeterminacy is sometimes eliminated to purport transparent modes of knowledge, this chapter will question how these critiques of the colonial-imperial endeavor and its aftermath expose a limited use of the Bible as a means of foreclosing potential epistemological alternatives.

Rupturing Discourse: Colonial Ambivalence and Literary Opacity

Before delving into a close reading of each text through its broken time and biblical allusions, an analysis of the differentiation between humans[40] that has been generated by the Western imperial and (post)colonial endeavor must be accounted for. By analyzing colonial

[39] While this chapter will address An Yountae's assessment of the Bible's indeterminacy in depth, the "Introduction to the Pentateuch" of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* comments at length about the potential that the Bible was composed by various authors, using the repeating and differentiated accounts of creation as an example.

[40] To be clear, my discussion of humans is to emphasize the access to a *conception* of humanity as forwarded by the imperial and (post)colonial endeavor, rather than to make the category of human distinct from other beings. As Cary Wolfe emphasizes in *Animal Rites*, especially within "Faux Post-Humanism, or Animal Rights, Neocolonialism and Michael Criton's *Congo*," distinctions between animals and humans function similarly to the distinctions between humans in postcolonial contexts. Furthermore, many distinctions between animals and humans, although inexplicitly stated, are directly linked in thought to neocolonialism (Wolfe 169-89).

ambivalence, we can gather an understanding of how the grammar of colonization creates definitions that can be limited or even slippery under the guise of transparency, as a means of forging slight differences that generate hierarchies between humans. Furthermore, this differentiation must be read in conjunction with (post)colonial uses of the Bible, especially when alternative uses of the Bible can run parallel to the differentiations that cause or preclude colonial difference. By considering the slippage in definition between types of humans involved in postcolonial critic Hommi Bhabha's articulation of colonial ambivalence, this section will move towards an analysis of how Martinican philosopher, poet, and literary critic Édouard Glissant's discussion of transparency and opacity are used to both generate and disavow the same forms of ontological and epistemological violence outlined by Bhabha. Furthermore, this section will consider how religion has been used in colonial contexts as a means of generating transparency and how, by erasing the Bible's inherent opacity, the partial use of religion has contributed to oppression and colonial ambivalence.

Both Camus' and Philip's texts note a forged differentiation between humans that highlight a fundamental component of the types of violence incurred by each. For Philip, it is crucial to note that the legal case, *Gregson v Gilbert*, does not refer to slaves as humans; instead, they were considered mere property. As a result, the text of the case claims that "[t]he argument drawn from the law respecting indictments for murder does not apply" (211). While discussing the case in the "Notanda," Philip explains that both the law and poetry use language carefully to craft their "precision of expression" as a means of attaining their goals (190). The law, in this case, used precision to maintain a difference between beings—human versus cargo—as a means of preventing a charge of murder; however, this also conceals the violence of the event and

subsequently must be analyzed as one of the many linguistically-born differentiations that assisted the ongoing violence of Atlantic slave trade.

Humanity is also removed temporarily from colonial subjects in Camus' *Le Premier homme*, when Jacques' father makes comments on the violence of native Moroccans (779 French; 65 English). Importantly, his account comes from the standpoint of a *pied noir* obligated to fight for the French army in North Africa and includes a counterargument of sorts. Jacques Cormery, the main character, learns from the principal of his school, Levesque, that his deceased father was in the war in Morocco. Because Jacques (read: Albert Camus) is born in 1913, it is most likely that this refers to the establishment of the French protectorate of Morocco. Upon switching shifts for the sentinel post, Cormery senior finds both guards from the previous shift dead, with their genitals chopped off and placed in their mouths. Although Cormery says that "les autres n'étaient pas des hommes" ["their enemies[41] were not men"], Levesque refutes Cormery's statement, emphasizing that "on était chez eux" ["we were in their country"]. Jacques' father then retracts his generalized statement about their enemies and simply states that "[u]n homme ne fait pas ça" (779) ["[a] man doesn't do that" (65)]. While Cormery's take on what defines a man is based on certain measure of civility or a certain limitation to violence, Levesque's statement helps Cormery step back from a generalization about all Moroccans and transition to a statement about specific forms of excessive violence. Cormery senior fights for France, but because of Jacques' limited knowledge through this short explanation from Levesque, it is unclear to what extent he assumes a sense of duty towards France as a fatherland. Thus it is impossible to say whether Cormery's initial response is a manifestation of colonial

[41] The translation changes the word "autres," meaning "others," to "enemies." While "autres" is likely intended to mean "the other side," suggesting their differences in position during a time of war, "autres," when read through the analysis of Homi Bhabha that will come later could be taken as reference to alterity beyond simply opposing sides of a war.

impressions of native Moroccans. Regardless, this scene exemplifies how the battles of the era of imperialism could sometimes grow out of or/and foster generalizations that delineate what is and is not human. In this case, Levesque's intervention inhibits it from becoming a generalization about Moroccans and shifts the focus to violence and humanity more broadly.

A similarly violent distinction between humans in the case of English colonization is pointed out by postcolonial critic Bhabha in his critical essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse".[42] In his essay, Bhabha begins by reflecting on British politician Lord Roseburry's speech in which he distinguishes the colonizer and colonized as "human and not wholly human," respectively (Bhabha 126). Importantly for Bhabha, Roseburry's gesture towards the divine writing of this humanity and lack thereof creates "irony, mimicry, and repetition" (126). For Roseburry, the definition of human is derived from theology which is subsequently used to generate a hierarchy of humanity. By pointing to postcolonial critic Edward Said, Bhabha notes that time and narrative work in tandem with this divine definition of humanity, becoming crucial players in the slippage involved in ambivalence. Bhabha explains that

> Within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse which Edward Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination—the demand for identity, stasis—and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history—change, difference—mimicry represents an ironic compromise. (126)

Here, Bhabha's emphasis on the "tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination" refers to the first part of Said's book *Orientalism* in which he explains that the

[42] This essay was first presented at a panel entitled "Colonialist and Postcolonialist Discourse" for Modern Language Association in 1983 and later published in *The MIT Press in 1984.* It appears, reprinted, in *The Location of Culture* in 1994. This paper will be citing its 1984 first printing.

creation of Orientalism as a discipline froze the Orient in the past. This subsequently removes the Orient—a term emerging from eastern cultures, but ultimately ends up marking difference in many "Others"—from the linear teleological narrative that the Occident values. While the Occident moves forward and becomes more and more "civilized," the Orient remains primordial or worse: primitive. Thus a temporal fixation of the Orient in the past is a used as a pretext to its supposed inability to reach the distinction of "wholly human."

Crucially, Said underscores that these differences "between races, civilizations, and languages was (or pretended to be) radical and ineradicable" (233). Subsequently, the "truth" of these forged differences

> went to the bottom of things, it asserted that there was no escape from origins and the types these origins enabled; it set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins. (233)

Therefore, by writing the Orient as a fixed subject that is stuck in the past—leaving it out of the forward moving, changing, and improving narrative that the Occident has access to—the understanding of the Orient through this discipline eliminated an inherent commonality between beings. In this account, Said explains that the panoptic vision of the Orient through this discourse relies upon narrative as a medium of pressure (240). Bhabha's intervention into Said's work hinges upon Said's explanation that if the means of fixing the Orient in the past to understand it is disrupted by the potential for change that is inherent in history, the discipline of Orientalism—and the "othering" that emerges from (or parallel to) it—would be destabilized. Said explains that "[h]istory and the narrative by which history is represented argue that vision is insufficient,

that 'the Orient' as an unconditional ontological category does an injustice to the potential reality for change" (240). The "ironic compromise" of ambivalence that Bhabha refers to, then, is a manifestation of Said's "ontological category" to which the Orient is fixed, one which excludes the Orient from the potential for diachrony. For Bhabha, colonial subjects are read as ontologically different in that they are considered—under the guise of colonial difference—to be slightly less human. This slippage in being thus eclipses the potential for change that Said notes could allow for change in the Orient. For this reason, the goal of Bhabha's essay is to assess how "colonialism takes power in the name of history" (126). By limiting some humans to a lesser status of being, they no longer have access to the potential for change inherent in history. Diachrony and subsequently teleological narratives of progression through history (namely of the change from primitivity to civility) are only accessible to those who are deemed fully human.

What I propose is that Camus and Philip use the idea of narrating a teleological history, only accessible by those deemed "wholly human," in order to expose these hierarchies of humans and the limitations of the same type of teleological history. Bhabha explains that "what emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable" (128). If, as Said and Bhabha purport, narrative is the component of history that creates pressure on the colonized subject, then writing in a mode that exposes writing's inherent potential for pressure bears the most potential for exposing the pain embedded in the foundation of the "monumentality of history." For Philip, this begins by noting the historicity embedded within language, along with the way language is used in historicity. She explains that

> I deeply distrust this tool that I work with—language. It is a distrust rooted in certain historical events that are all of a piece within the events that took place on the Zong. The language in which those events took place promulgated the non-being of African peoples, and I distrust its order, which hides disorder; its logic hiding the illogic and its rationality, which is simultaneously irrational. (197)

Therefore, history and the language required for it are intended to be logical and rational. When their forms are created and taken as logical and rational, they erase its inherently messy properties. Furthermore, Philip points out that a "grammar must be present" to communicate the order within history and language (197). That means that to account for history's violence—its messy places—grammar must come undone and narration must be exposed as narration.

Importantly, Philip points out that there are some exceptions to the rules of grammar and narration which can be found in "religious or spiritual communication with nonhuman forces such as gods or supra-human beings, in puns, parables, and, of course, poetry" (197). Despite Philip's reference to religion as a potential place to break from grammar, in Bhabha's concept of colonial ambivalence, the Bible is used in a manner that emphasizes its monumentality and narrates in a manner similar to history. For Bhabha, however, this occurs in what he calls the "'partial' diffusion of Christianity, and . . . moral improvements which will construct a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity" (127) This partial presence creates a morality that generates a measured and restricted (by way of tight morals) colonial subject but entails some "strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself" (127; emphasis in original). In this case, the Bible is used in a sort of depleted way, one that gives the colonized subject a sense of moral duty, but this only allows for an imitation of the colonizer's culture and discourse without full access to it. For this reason, Bhabha explains that "[m]imicry

repeats rather than *re-presents*" (128). In this approach, the Bible generates a grammar similar to the linguistic grammar that Philip is wary of: it appears monumental; it forwards reason and morals; but its inherent irrationality is also obliterated. This repetition of the Bible, through the image of its monumentality that one cannot access, does not allow one to use it or represent it in its full, abysmal form, including its opacity and ability to be re-represented or presented anew.

By reflecting on the notion of the abyss inherent in both Neoplatonic theology and in the Old Testament, theologist An Yountae places theological opacity into conversation with (post/de)colonial thought, especially that of Édouard Glissant. In his book *The Decolonial Abyss: Mysticism and Cosmopolitics from the Ruins* (2017), Yountae charts the figure of the abyss through "(theo)poetics" as a means of "negotiat[ing] the boundary between the spiritual and the political with the end of articulating the unnameable name of the divine and the unbearable memory of pain and suffering in the same term" (24). He emphasizes this unnameability of the divine in the theology of Dionysius, one of the first Christians in Athens in the first century A.D. By reflecting on Dionysius' apophatic theology—generating knowledge of the divine through negation rather than concrete knowledge—Yountae emphasizes that "divine wisdom" is only possible through "halt of reason" (37). While Bhabha notes that colonial ambivalence relies upon an emphasis on reason that excludes the potential for its opposite, Yountae tracks an unspeakabilty and difficulty of reason in theology to emphasize a groundlessness in theology that is helpful to account for the sociopolitical groundlessness of colonized subjects and why some decolonial thought also emerges out of a similar groundlessness.

By working through ancient Christian theology and modern theological analysis of "tehom" (תְּהוֹם),[43] or abyss, in Genesis, Yountae tracks an abyss in theology and then examines where philosophy picks up the same idea to conceptualize ontology through the same groundless figure of the abyss. Like Philip's articulations of the limits of grammar and her emphasis on religion and spirituality as a place that grammar can be broken, Yountae points out that, according to Dionysius, "[t]ruth is unreachable unless one throws oneself into the abyss and travels to the limits of reason and speech" (38). The notion of the abyss thus takes on the role of a grammatical and representational amorphism. Yountae's assessment of ancient theology thus opens a space beyond reason that answers Philip's articulation and Bhabha's hints that there is much more to discourses like history and theology than simply their rational monumentality. Instead, there is an inherent chaos, one which some theologians emphasize might come from the Babylonian influence on the Old Testament. When read with Yountae, it becomes apparent that Bhabha's emphasis on the monumentality of discourse highlights the obfuscation of the potential for irrationality and indeterminacy in theology, history, narrative, and even—as I will assert by the end of this chapter—*time*.

By moving from ancient theology (and its modern critics) to German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic philosophy, Yountae charts the movement from groundlessness in theology to the groundlessness of the individual's ontology, and how that is inherently driven by one's sociopolitical context. When drawing out Hegel's philosophy from its theological origins into Hegel's own sociopolitical context, Yountae explains that if we read the "wider ethico-political landscape of the global context as we reflect on the notion of the abyss,

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[43] As explained in the commentary of the New Oxford Annotated Bibliography, the word "tehom" also could mean "deep," but it has no definite article. The commentary also explains that "[s]ome see 'tehom' here to be related to the Babylonian goddess Tiamat, a divinity representing oceanic chaos" (Genesis 1:2).

suffering, and the other," then the abyss isn't just the groundlessness of [G-d[44]] or a material "void"; rather, "the groundlessness of being signifies the symptom of the loss of historical and politico-economic ground within the context of oppression, particularly, (neo)colonial oppression)" (80).[45] For Yountae, it is important to note a danger in the idea that mutual recognition between subjects could lead to a full-filling form of knowledge and a teleological end (56-7). He explores Hegel's dialectical (and its syntheses—what comes out of the movement between each side of the dialectic) in order to highlight that reason via Hegel is not intended to form a teleological narrative. Rather, synthesis manifests itself as a brief, elusive achievement that is ever-shifting through new dialectical encounters (59). Thus before Yountae explores the details of Hegel's sociopolitical context, his ideas of Hegel's dialectic echoes Bhabha's warning about reading recognition through reason. When Yountae does turn to Hegel's sociopolitical context, he explains that Hegel's master-slave dialectic is already "haunted by the cries of unrecognized others that burst out from underneath his Euro-Christian-centric philosophy of history" (80). Although Yountae alludes to the colonial practice of slavery that was underway during the time of the writing of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Susan Buck-Morss' book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2005) more explicitly asserts that Hegel wrote his master-slave dialectic with the Haitian Revolution in mind and that he was not in a social, economic, or political position to mention this underlying catalyst for his philosophical project. Thus, Youtae's assertion that Hegel's dialectic represents the "loss of historical and political-economic ground" and that we must connect this to (neo)colonial contexts might be much closer to Hegel's initial

[44] For my personal, religious preference, I have replaced the "o" with a dash because Judaism requires a special ceremony to dispose of any documents with the Lord's name on them.
[45] In Hegel's master-slave dialectic, individuals generate their consciousness through an encounter with another being. But while the slave looks for recognition from the master, the master's position is reliant upon that (desire for) recognition from the slave, which also flips their positionality and relationship.

intention than Yountae anticipates. Through this abyssal philosophical and sociopolitical window, Yountae turns to Glissant as a means of considering how Hegel's dialectic is connected to the decolonial thought that emerged in the Caribbean—one which centers its philosophy on the catastrophic abyss of slave trade.

Yountae draws his analysis from Glissant's *Poétique de la relation [The Poetics of Relation]* (1990) in which Glissant opens with "La Barque ouverte," a poetic philosophical portrayal of the horrors of slave trade. Crucially for Yountae, Glissant explains that the experience of being plucked from one's world and crossing the depths of the ocean to enter slavery creates a "gouffre, trois fois noué à l'inconnu" (18) ["abyss, three times linked to the unknown" (6)]. This abyss entails being born into a "non-monde" ["non-world"], generating a new sort of beginning that still projects an "image renversée" ["reverse image"] of the past, while generating a new, relational knowledge of the "Tout" ["Whole"], understood by the entire community affected by this violent uprooting (Glissant 6-8, English; 18-20, French). Yountae compares the groundlessness of this oceanic abyss to the groundlessness of theology in which we could "thus decolonize the idea of [G-d] so that we think of [G-d] no longer as the promise of a full form or full presence but as the abyss of namelessness from which we begin" (109). If we return to Bhabha, it appears that the idea of G-d is in fact colonized simultaneously while colonization subjugates the other. He explains that "[i]n the ambivalent world of the 'not quite/not white,' on the margins of metropolitan desire, the founding objects of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental *objets trouves* of the colonial discourse—the part-objects of presence. It is then that the body and the book lose their representational authority" (132). When the Bible is taken as grounded, as an object of knowledge, and used as a template for an ideal colonial subject, that same subject loses its own means of bodily representation—

now defined by an external discourse that says that its body is a thing, that it does not *be* in a full sense. Furthermore, when the Bible is used as an object of presence, it loses what Yountae would highlight as its inherent absence (or namelessness)—its abyss. As a result, Bhabha claims that "[b]lack skin splits under the racist gaze" and the Bible is "dismembered" (132-3). Thus my analytic goal is to investigate how Camus and Philip's use of biblical allusions prompts a critique of colonial assertions of biblical presence and its violence to the bodies of those deemed slightly-less human or not human at all.

The presence to which Bhabha refers as the bearer of knowledge and discourse is much like Glissant's emphasis on the distinction between transparency and opacity, also discussed in *Poétique de la relation.* Furthermore, Glissant emphasizes that language itself can be used, when considered as a full presence, as a mode of knowledge "ou du moins l'épistémologie que nous nous en faisons" (125) ["or at least the epistemology we produce for ourselves" (111)]. Glissant's emphasis that this is a *produced* epistemology highlights its limitations and prepares him to set up his linguistic and conceptual alternative: opacity. Opacity, conversely, is "that which cannot be reduced" (191). As an example of transparency, Glissant turns to the notion of a lingua franca, calling a universally understood language "apoétique" (126) ["apoetical" (112)]. Importantly, he explains the paradox that the French language is taken to generate meaning for all its speakers, but it conversely is also dedicated to the individual. This creates a hierarchy of value in which those who speak it in ways more closely to the "French French" (Glissant 127-8, French; 113-4, English). Conversely, Glissant poses literature as a manifestation of opacity because it outlines the "image" of a language, rather than its "function" (129, French; 115, English). Thus, while the teaching of language as a vehicular, fully-formed meaning generator can be confining by its inability to account for the nuanced experience of specific communities

and individuals, the flexible use of language in literature becomes its foil. Because language, especially in literature, is subject to interpretation, it retains its opacity and can generate nuanced meanings for both author and reader.

Despite this opaque flexibility within literature, Glissant emphasizes that the use of literature in language courses can be violent if its opacity is removed to pair with the transparency of teaching language. He stresses, however, that a bit of transparency needs to be used in the act of translation (129-30 French; 115-16 English). To underscore this distinction, Glissant turns to the example of Camus when emphasizing the always-present-absence of opacity. He notes that French language learning classes are wrong to consider strictly the transparency and clarity of Camus' language in *L'Étranger*. He explains that this transparent approach "faisait l'impasse sur le drame situationnel que les événements d'Algérie avaient noué en Camus et qui retentissait sur la structure serrée, fiévreuse, retenue du style qu'il avait adopté, pour se confier tout en se retirant" (130) ["skipped right over the situational crisis that events in Algeria had formed in Camus and the echoes of this in the tight, feverish, and restrained structure of the style he had adopted to both confide and withdraw at the same time" (116)]. While Chapter 3 will address the simultaneous confiding and withdrawal within *L'Étranger* more thoroughly, this chapter reads *Le Premier homme* through the lens of opacity, considering its more explicit account of Camus' alienation from his Algerian and French contexts, along with its unfinished nature—both because of his death and his assertion that the book could never be finished. Glissant's discussion of language will help mobilize my discussion of Philip's decision to tear language asunder as a means of both witnessing the horrors of the Zong massacre while simultaneously leaving them opaque.

Importantly for Glissant, opacity in literature is multifaceted, and the act of analysis is an engagement with transparency that cannot necessarily be realized. This, he asserts, is because of "celle irréductible de ce texte" ["the irreducible opacity of the text"], along with "celle toujours en mouvement de l'auteur ou d'un lecteur" (129) ["the always evolving opacity of the author or a reader" (115)]. Therefore, an ethical reading of *Zong!* and *Le Premier homme* must involve the indeterminacy inherent in opacity. This involves a consideration that the author, text, and reader are each opaque and, as Glissant asserts, "always evolving." In doing so, this reading will posit an ethics of relation and connectability. However, this must be paired with a reading of each author's critiques of reason and transparency. As Glissant claims, understanding opacity requires that one analyze the nature of its "weaving fabrics," rather than its distinct characteristics, since the latter would be too static and therefore transparent (204 French; 190 English). For this reason, my emphasis on tracing the collapse of time emerges from the goal of maintaining opacity, while my emphasis on reading the Bible manifests from my interest in reading these authors' critiques of transparency. In the following section, I read *Le Premier homme* alongside the "tehom"—or abyss—found within Genesis. By exploring how the tehom re-writes understandings of time and how time collapses for Camus, the following section explores Camus' relationship with Algeria, France, and religion. To do so, it must also explore his experience of language and discourse, through the opposing experiences of his family and his education. Then, by tracing the figure of Ruth in *Zong!*, I emphasize that she bears witness to the need to break time's foundation. By considering Philip's destruction of language and time along with Ruth as a female figure from elsewhere, representing lovingkindness, this section will postulate an ethics of connectability that emerges from impossible re-presentations of colonial violence. In order to trace what Glissant terms the "weaving fabrics" of each text's gesture

towards opacity, the following sections intend to explore the texture of time's collapse as a means of reading through impossibility. By adopting opacity as a mode of reading, the following sections intend to unravel, rather than grasp[46] the means through which colonial ambivalence generates epistemological violence by differentiating between beings, between bodies. Finally, the following sections will move to consider opacity as a platform for ethics, to emphasize the imperative to witness these events whose violence is simultaneously impossible to comprehend.

Time and Adam in *Le Premier homme*

Le Premier homme [The First Man], left unpublished until 1994, has been read as a fictional autobiography, in which the main character, Jacques Cormery, lives a life very similar to Camus.[47] His daughter Catherine Camus, also the editor of the published manuscript, explains that after her father's death, the political climate surrounding Camus was still too tense from his "denouncing totalitarianism, and in advocating a multiculturalism in Algeria where both communities would enjoy the same rights" leading him to "[antagonize] both the right and the left" (v-vi). As Camus scholar Matthew Sharpe has observed, a Camus renaissance of sorts occurred partially because of the publication of the manuscript, and partially because it was more clear in the early 90s (as Sharpe points especially to "the fall of the Eastern bloc after 1989") that Camus was ahead of his time in denouncing communism and colonial violence while

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[46]See Glissant's discussion of the word "comprendre" in "Pour l'opacité" (205-6 French; 191-2 English), in which he emphasizes that opacity is not to grasp or understand in a way that traps or appropriates meaning, but that it "donner-avec" ["gives-with"] (205-6 French; my translation). In this instance, he points to the ancient (or older; he doesn't point to an era but claims that we are "loin" ["far"] from these practices) practice of tragedy and myth as an exclusive practice of grabbing what is digestible and returning it to oneself.

[47] See Marc Blanchard's "Goodbye, Sisyphus," Assia Djebar's "Camus, *The First Man*, the Last Book" and *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, Daniel Just's "Literature and Ethics: History, Memory, and Cultural Identity in Albert Camus' *Le Premier Homme*," Robert Royal's "The Other Camus," and Matthew Sharpe's *Camus, Philosophe*.

simultaneously considering the FLN's means of liberation to be too violent (8). Furthermore, Sharpe emphasizes that Camus, along with his contemporaries like Jean-Paul Sartre, had been rejected by the poststructuralist movement which overturned its predecessors as a means of stepping away from structured language and discourse that is built from a lineage of previous knowledge. Sharpe explains, then, that the publication of this novel is ideally timed at a moment in which poststructuralism is beginning to be critiqued, one in which it is possible to see that Camus' philosophy encompasses a disavowal of truth similar to poststructuralist theorists such as Jacques Derrida (12-18). In "Goodbye, Sisyphus", one of the first articles published after the manuscript's publication, Marc Blanchard notes that the novel "is barely a fictionalized memoir particularly fitting our times of search for an elusive subject" (8). In a footnote, he emphasizes that "*The First Man* is a memoir written in an age without memoirs (many years before the publication of Sartre's *Les Mots* or Barthes' *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*—Simone de Beauvoir had already come out with her autobiographies, but she has an excuse, admittedly: she was only a woman[48]) [sic]" (16). Importantly, the search for the subject noted by Blanchard encompasses an alienation that emerges from Camus/Jacques' position as a *pied noir* within the colonial context of Algeria.

Just as David Carroll points out in *Camus the Algerian* that Camus was not inherently political but that he was merely opposed to oppression, Sharpe argues in *Camus, Philosophe* that *The First Man* is "a lyrical, inescapably escapist fantasy: that of an ahistorical, virtuous and poor *pied noir* community emblematized by his mother. Possessing nothing, not even collective

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[48] Here, Blanchard does not dismiss de Beauvoir's autobiography; rather, he remarks upon the dismissal of her contemporaries who did not take her seriously because of her gender. Camus is included in these dismissals, as he wrote a letter to her after she published *Le Deuxième sexe* in which he, "en quelques phrases moroses, d'avoir ridiculisé le mâle français" (La force des choses 208) ["in a few morose sentences, accused me of making the French male look ridiculous"] (190).

memory" (Carroll 6-7; Sharpe 381). However, this "ahistorical" *pied noir* makes its title and topic one that is inherently linked with pieces of history and collective memory, referencing various conflicts throughout the entire expanse of French colonization in Algeria and alluding to ancient history through the Bible in its very title. After assessing the arc of Camus' oeuvre, Sharpe notes that the entirety of his writing constitutes as "a bold and singular attempt to trawl through the entire cultural memory and unconscious of the modern West, seeking the causes of its *malaises*, and those resources it could draw upon 'beyond nihilism' towards a second renaissance" (42). Although Sharpe highlights Camus' tendencies to straddle an ancient-modern divide as a strength of his thought, Blanchard emphasizes that Camus' reach towards connecting all strands of life resembles the Greek practice of "*aduneton*," explained as "literally an impossibility" (Sharpe 38; Blanchard 15). For Blanchard, the genre of memoir has striking relevance: as he explains in a footnote, "by parading as a memoir, [the novel] aims to radicalize, properly, to finish off, the writing of history" (16). Thus the novel presents itself as an impossibility, connecting the folds of life from across an entire cultural and historical memory of the West while simultaneously ending that very history. While I assert that the politics of Algeria is a crucial component to Camus' writing and unwriting of history, the book's genre and form are also imperative to reading Camus' challenge to the history of the West.[49]

As previously stated, the book's form is simultaneously autobiographical, fictional, and unfinished. Its unfinished nature is both by accident and by choice, as the author died but also

[49] As Sean Meighoo asserts in *The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales* (2016), the critique of Western ethnocentrism that emerged between the thought of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida is often ethnocentric itself. Central to Meighoo's point is the emphasis that, in conceiving of the West as an actual set of spaces and ideologies that emerged from a direct lineage, these thinkers create a "negative teleology" that resurrects or retains the teleologies they wish to dismantle (xi-ii). Amidst these thinkers, Camus' persistent use of ancient allusions to reconsider notions of origins is closer to what Meighoo calls a "hyperbolic" type of representation in which the use of biblical and ancient Greek references seeks to "[undermine] the discourse of cultural purity wherever it might be found" (xvi).

emphasized its need to be unfinished (927, French; 297, English). These impossibilities trouble any reading and subsequent analytical practice, as there are pieces to be read, pieces to be deleted, notes to be considered, and sections crossed out. The novel's first impossibility is presented on its first page, in which he dedicates the book "À toi qui ne pourras jamais lire ce livre" (743) ["To you who will never be able to read this book" (3)]. Because this dedication appears after he lists his mother as the "Intercessor," one could presume that this dedication is addressed to his mother, who could not read and only spoke with a lexicon of a few hundred words. However, because the notation about her as the intercessor comes separate from the dedication (to the side of it, separated by a drawn line), we must consider more possibilities for this dedication. The first is more obvious: those who would never pick up the book. The second, on the other hand, involves all readers, who can never read the book in a finished form, as it is (both intentionally and unintentionally) unfinished. Thus all readers must commence the novel with a question of reading practice and experience: how do we read this book? What does it mean to know, going into a reading practice, that it can never be read, with regards to both completion and understanding? I propose that entering the text through this impossibility of reading aids in an unfinished yet imperative attempt at understanding the multifaceted alienation that Camus himself experienced in his family life, education, religion, and national-political context. This alienation extends from Camus to the greater community of Algerian inhabitants at crucial moments throughout the text to characterize the colonial space as one fraught with impossible violence that literally and figuratively orphans its only survivors. By the end of this section, I will show that this alienated reading experience mirrors the abysmal versus rational approaches to theology in a postcolonial migrant context as discussed by Yountae and Bhabha.

An impossible or multifaceted reading experience complements the means by which the novel straddles time, both with its setting and the collapse of time that the main character undergoes. Importantly, both exhibitions of temporal gymnastics are connected to Jacques Cormery's fraught relationship with the French and Algerian components of his identity. First, the novel's setting and structure ongoingly perform temporal acrobatics: the novel was written during the Algerian War and part of the plot is also during the same war, but the novel also flashes back to Cormery's childhood so fluidly that the past and present are often blurred together, sometimes within the same sentence. After the novel opens with an imaginary[50] description of Jacques' birth scene, it turns back to his adult life, in which he visits his father's grave for the first time. Jacques' father died at the onset of World War I, fighting for the French Algerian army on French soil. As the novel later explains, they were rushed to the front of the conflict, their bright hats giving them away as easy targets, so they were wounded or killed almost immediately. Camus emphasizes that they were killed on what was, to them, foreign soil, and that for the next four years, "centaines d'orphelins naissaient dans tous le coins d'Algérie, arabes et français, fils et filles sans père qui devraient ensuite apparent à vivre sans leçon et sans héritage (782) ["hundreds of new orphans, Arab and French, awakened in every corner of Algeria . . . who would now have to learn to live without guidance and without heritage" (69-71)]. Victims of World War I leave their children as orphans in Algeria, both native inhabitants and inhabitants who have arrived since French colonization, but as the novel later asserts, these literal orphans also become figurative orphans by way of their alienation from France as a nation. As postcolonial and feminist scholar Françoise Vergès points out in *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance* (1999), the French colonial conception of La Mère-

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[50] I call this scene "imaginary" because it is the only scene that Camus could not have remembered himself, having been born towards the end of this scene.

Patrie generated a parental figure of the colonizer giving birth to a thankful colonized in a collapsed family triangle in which the mother and father are merged (4-8). In this model, the colonized becomes indebted to the supposedly benevolent, giving figure of La Mère-Patrie, despite the manual (often forced) labor, sexual prescriptions, and cultural appropriation that the colonizer bestows upon the colonized. Amidst her analysis of what seems to be owed to the colonizing Mère-Patrie, Vergès turns to Glissant to emphasize the false origin and restrictive unidirectional root created by La Mère-Patrie (4). This imposed perception of a linear family by way of France makes those Algerians who died fighting for France caught in a moment of filial irony: they have died to give back to the supposedly giving Mère-Patrie who never gave in the first place. Furthermore, their children awaken as orphans. This awakening is therefore both with regards to their actual parent and to the imposed and fraudulent colonial parent. During Cormery's realization of those who have been orphaned by France, while visiting his father's grave, the second type of temporal disruption occurs: time falls apart.

This collapse of time emerges from a realization of inter-national and colonial violence, which leads to a reversal in father-child roles. As it will become clear later in my analysis, I hyphenate "inter-national" to play on the word "international" with regards to the nature of WWI while simultaneously representing the strange inter-national position of a *pied noir*, representing and feeling closely connected to two different nation spaces. This parent-child role reversal is not only personal; it is also social. In this scene, graves as monuments—especially for those coming from poorer families who do not own many objects of memory for the dead, such as photographs—fail to account for personal and social memory of those lost. Visiting the grave, Jacques realizes for the first time that his father died at an age younger than him. This thought

"l'ébranla jusque dans son corps" (754) ["shook his very being" (25)]. At this moment, the roles reverse between father and child:

> Et le flot de tendresse et de pitié qui d'un coup vint lui emplir le cœur n'était pas le mouvement d'âme qui porte le fils vers le souvenir du père disparu, mais la compassion bouleversée qu'un homme ressent devant l'enfant injustement assassin. Quelque chose ici n'était pas dans l'ordre naturel et, à vrai dire, il n'y avait pas d'ordre mais seulement folie et chaos là où le fils était plus âgé que le père. La suite du temps lui-même se fracassait autour de lui immobile, entre ces tombes qu'il ne voyait plus, et les années cessaient de s'ordonner suivant ce grand fleuve qui coule vers sa fin. (754)
>
> [And the wave of tenderness and pity that at once filled his heart was not the stirring of the soul that leads the son to the memory of the vanished father, but the overwhelming compassion that a grown man feels for an unjustly murdered child—something here was not in the natural order and, in truth, there was no order but only madness and chaos when the son was older than the father. The course of time itself was shattering around him while he remained motionless among those tombs he now no longer saw, and the years no longer kept to their places in the great river that flows to its end. (25-6)]

While Jacques' goal is to generate a memory of his father, his search cannot culminate in memory. Instead, he arrives at chaos and madness. Furthermore, his family lineage encounters a reversal: he takes the place of his father and is overtaken by the emotions of mourning. Crucially, this reversal occurs because of the realization that his father died at an age younger than himself. As Jacques looks around, he realizes that this section of the cemetery is filled with many other men who died during the same war as young as his father, and that "ce sol était jonché d'enfants qui avaient été les pères d'hommes grisonnants qui croyaient vivre en ce moment" (754) ["the

soil was strewn with children who had been the fathers of graying men who thought they were living in this present time" (26)]. Each man whose father rests in the surrounding soil—although absent from the scene—incurs the same role reversal and can no longer exist in the temporal template of father in the past, "me" in the present, and children in the future. Consequently, Jacques' troubles go beyond himself and a community is formed: a community of men who have died in the first World War, fighting for a country whose soil some of them only set foot on for the battle(s) that led to their demise; this community includes their children who must prematurely take on the role of parent because of this violence. This is compounded for those who inhabited Algeria and died for France. In this case, France becomes a country that, because of its presumption of colonial "heritage," called itself the mother *and* fatherland of inhabitants who did not necessarily feel that way towards it. Furthermore, it was now also the creator of orphans. Any man like so who thinks he is living in the present will lose his temporal orientation and become dizzied by this realization.

Importantly, this realization makes Jacques consider that his interest in education, "les livres et les êtres" ["in books and people"] must be "partie liée avec ce mort, ce père cadet" (755) ["intimately linked with this dead man, this younger father" (27)]. Although Jacques does not know the source for his inclination to connect the two, and the connection between the two are not explicitly stated by the end of the book, my reading will explore this connection. During the first part of his exploration, Jacques notes that he had learned how to discern right and wrong on his own because he had no father, but that now he needs someone to help him: "non selon le pouvoir mais selon l'autorité. J'ai besoin de mon père" (761) ["by right not of power but of authority, I need my father" (36)]. The importance of a father may be connected to how Jacques built knowledge through education, but he marks the contrast between authority and control in

the need for a father figure. In this distinction, authority, or *author*-ity, can be read as guidance, rather than seizure or imposition. Therefore, while assessing how knowledge is connected to his father, it is equally important to investigate whether the knowledge system given to him through education represents power or/and authority. However, this realization is within a chapter that starts off with a note that it will be written and deleted (756 French; 29 English). While the purpose of Jacques' goal is to fill an abyss in memory of his late father, readers fall into a similarly abysmal reading practice: their temporal experience of reading the book from front to back needs to be reassessed. Instead of reading temporally, one alternative option is to read thematically. Since the abyss in the memory of Jacques' father and the rupture of time are ultimately linked with Jacques' own interest in building a foundation of knowledge, one thematic reading approach is to read the rupture of time alongside the knowledge, chaos, and time in the Bible, as the novel's title invites us to do. By following the biblical allusion of *The First Man*, Adam, we might learn more about Jacques' inclination to connect his education to understanding his father. Doing so will require a reading of time in Genesis, followed by a comparison of Jacques' experience of the knowledge structures of the nation, religion, and education. These will be posed in contrast to the oblivion encountered by Jacques and his family, along with the other inhabitants of Algeria.

By noting that there are varying descriptions and conceptions of time within Genesis, especially when translated and interpreted differently, we can trace how time in Genesis is inextricably linked to both Yountae's understanding of the abyss and Bhabha's emphasis on discourse and knowledge. The first line of Genesis has a discrepancy which some scholars translate as "When G-d began to create," while others translate as "In the beginning G-d created" (Tanakh 1:1). Importantly, the former highlights the catalyst of creation, but the latter follows a

more linear temporal model with a point of origin. In my analysis, the former represents an incitement of creation in the midst of an already-ongoing time. The latter represents a teleological version of time in which an origin is marked and informs a unidirectional means to an end. This teleological time builds communities and constructs narratives which help define those communities; however, when taken too straightforwardly, it can silence those who are left out of its narrative. This teleological translation of the verse puts "created" into past tense, suggesting that the scene of creation is finite itself. A few verses later, light is deemed "Day" and dark is termed "Night" (1:5). However, it is not until the "fourth day" that day is separated from night by the "lights in the expanse of the sky," and even more importantly, that "they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years" (1:14). If this is not determined until the "fourth day," how is day, and therefore time, determined before this point? This discrepancy underscores that the marked version of time does not arise until the fourth day, in which a signification process leads to "set times."

For the remainder of Genesis, time is counted by noting a man's age when he is married, when he has a child, and when he dies. Therefore, besides simply through light and day, time is also counted through the paternal lineage that establishes the memory of the Hebrew people. One could read this marking of time as an extension of the type of time created on the fourth day, in which time is marked through a distinct signification process. Furthermore, it extends the linearity that emerges from the translation that suggests a point of origin: G-d created earth, then man, and man's legacy progresses in a unitary direction. In contrast, before the light appears, when time is still unmarked, the earth was "unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep" (1:2). The word "deep," here, is where the Hebrew word "tehom" appears—the

catalyst for Yountae's analysis and eventual attention to Glissant. Tehom is abyss,[51] void, and—if we follow the potential Babylonian origin—chaos. Therefore, I propose that the unmarked form of time is inherently linked to Yountae's discussion of "tehom" or "abyss" in Genesis 1:2. The two always coexist, pointing to finitude and infinity simultaneously (Yountae 32). However, as Bhabha asserts, the Bible is read in limited ways when used to promote a specific form of morality or subjectivity (127). This limited reading of the Bible leaves it to build an uncontestable and inaccessible form of knowledge that would eclipse access to the reading of the abyss within Genesis that Yountae extracts. When Jacques Cormery visits his father's grave, it should be a marker of time and memory to reinforce a direct lineage; instead, time becomes ungraspable, and he is left to forage amidst chaos. This visit to his father's grave catalyzes his search for the father while, simultaneously, the scene closes with him "abandon[ant] son père" (756) ["abandon[ing] his father" (28)]. This concurrent search and abandonment—in which the father becomes an orphan—suggests that, while this moment shakes him to the core, it also sparks his interest in understanding and departing from unidirectional paternal lineages and the type of memory they foster. As Yountae notes, the biblical abyss points to the distinction between G-d and the world, but it also can refer to a split within oneself, or a split within the being of the deity (9). Therefore, by considering Jacques' search as one in which he traces this abyss, he is addressing his internal alienation, hierarchies between beings, and possibly fissures within these hierarchies. By assessing who the first man is in the novel, along with Jacques' religious and *lycée* education, I will address how his Algerian and French identities come into conversation with both forms of biblical time.

[51] I have intentionally not included a definite article in order to follow its grammatical form in the Hebrew.

During his search to learn more about his father, Jacques visits Solferino, the small village where his parents lived before World War I. Although he does not learn much about his father from this visit, it leads to many meditations on the way that colonization of Algeria affected the Arabs and French settlers. While the categorization of all non-French inhabitants as "Arab" is limiting and reductive, this scene provides insight into colonization's violence towards individual inhabitants and the broader context of history. On the flight back to France, Jacques drifts in an out of sleep while he considers the orphaned lineages of those who settled throughout Algeria and died for France's battles. Calling Algeria a land of "immense oubli" ["immense oblivion"], he emphasizes that the use of orphans to help settle the area further generates a "le lieu d'aboutissement d'une vie commence sans racines . . . Comme si l'histoire des hommes, cette histoire qui n'avait pas cessé de cheminer sur l'une de ses plus vieilles terres en y lassant si peu de traces s'évaporait sous le soleil incessant avec le souvenir de ceux qui l'avaient vraiment faite, réduite à des crises de violence et de meurtre" (859-60) ["final destination of a life that began without roots . . . As if the history of men, that history that kept on plodding across one of its oldest territories while leaving so few traces on it was evaporating under the constant sun with the memory of those who made it, reduced to paroxysms of violence and murder […]" (194)]. Here, the oblivion refers to various violent upheavals: Algeria was orphaned and France inscribed itself as its mother-father; many of the people in Solferino came after they were promised land following unrest of the 1848 revolution (854 French; 185 English); and more orphans (Algerian, French, and I would add Berber, Jewish, and more, sometimes hybrid, identities) were born each moment that men died fighting for France in World War I. The oblivion, importantly, is created by the action of history, in which its "plodding across . . . while leaving so few traces on it" becomes violent, reducing memory to violence. This moment both

shows history's assumed monumentality and mocks it as such, like Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, because it exposes the violence that history incurs on those who do not write it and are instead (according to Camus) subject to oblivion.

Amidst the same meditation, Jacques returns to the thought of himself, considering himself a part of "la tribu" ["the tribe"], "cheminant dans la nuit des années sur la terre de l'oubli, où chacun était le premier homme, où lui-même avait dû s'élever seul, sans père" (860) ["wandering through the night of the years in the land of oblivion, where each one is the first man, where he had to bring himself up without a father" (195)]. The use of the word "tribu," or tribe, manifests itself as an alternative to the French "pays" for country or nation. In a North African context, "la tribu" is also a family unit, stressing that Camus either sees himself as family to the native Algerians or that he sees his own family makeup to appear similar. His meditation on the first men pairs the native inhabitants of Algeria with the French settlers (especially of low socioeconomic status like Cormery). Furthermore, it echoes later books of the Bible in which the Hebrew people are composed of twelve tribes. In this moment, France's violence through history enacts a reference to Adam, the first man. Importantly, every man in this land is the first man: it is not *only* Jacques (although it is *also* him); and it is not only Adam of the Bible. However, because it manifests as a fatherless oblivion, these first men challenge the linear counting of time through the father that Genesis bears. In *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse* (2007), Caribbean scholar Valérie Loichot underscores that "family relationships serve as models for temporal structures and define the nature of narrative authority," albeit in the drastically different context of the postplantation Caribbean and American South (4). Just as Loichot highlights that the "subverted genealogies" in authors such as Toni Morrison generates origins that bear a

"creative indeterminacy" (4-5), Camus re-writes the origin story of Adam, creatively spreading the notion of the first man to any (especially Algerian) orphan of the imposed Mère-Patrie of France. By reflecting on the nation's false imposition of parenthood, paired with the creative use of the Bible to re-write the origin story of the Bible and Algeria simultaneously, Camus critiques the form of unidirectional time sometimes imposed by family lineages in Western and (sometimes[52]) biblical patrilineage.

Along with challenging time that is traced through a paternal lineage, the allusion to Adam also underscores the contested position of knowledge within Jacques' context. In Genesis, Adam's fatherhood commences the growth of the community of the Hebrew people, but before this, his existence is tarnished by his and Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit. The fruit bears "the knowledge of good and evil" and the day that they "eat of it, [they] shall die" (2:17). Knowledge, for Adam, comes with a warning, as it leads to a death. For the men of Algeria—as posited by Jacques—oblivion eclipses knowledge. Not only does Jacques have to learn on his own, but also "à naître enfin comme homme pour ensuite naître aux autres, aux femmes, come tous les hommes nés dans ce pays qui, un par un, essayaient d'apprendre à vivre sans raciness et sans foi" (861) ["to be born as a man and then to be born into a harder childbirth, which consists of being born in relation to others, to women, like all men born in this country who, one by one, try to learn to live without roots and without faith" (193)]. Furthermore, they "devaient apprendre à naître aux autres, à l'immense cohue de conquérants maintenant évincés qui les avaient précédés sur cette terre et dont ils devaient reconnaître maintenant la fraternité de rac et de destin" (861) ["had to learn how to live in relation[53] to others, to the immense host of the

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[52] The next section of this chapter will highlight a counterexample to linear, patriarchal family models that is embedded but sometimes overlooked in the Bible.

[53] The translation here changes "naître" (to be born) to "live." "[N]aître aux autres" would translate more literally to be "born *to* or *for* others," which is probably why the translator added the word "relation." Importantly, the word

conquerors now dispossessed, who had preceded them on this land and in whom they now had to recognize the brotherhood of race and destiny" (195-6)]. If each child of a deceased father in the context of colonial Algeria is the first man, by way of following the biblical allusion, they would each consume the fruit and eventually gain knowledge of good and evil. However, the space is renamed the "land of oblivion," suggesting that it is either not possible or not that simple for those orphaned by colonial France.

Importantly, this scene takes place in the air, while Jacques is suspended above the Mediterranean, a space that "séparait en moi deux univers, l'un où dans des espaces mesurés les souvenirs et les noms étaient conserves, l'autre où le vent de sable effaçait les traces des hommes sur de grands espaces" (861) ["separates two worlds in him, one where memories and names are preserved in measured spaces, the other where the wind and sand erases all trace of men on the open ranges" (196)]. By following his former thoughts about Algeria as oblivion, the spaces of France and Algeria become posed against each other: Algeria involves erasure, while France composes memory.[54] This opposed epistemology reveals the alienation that Jacques refers to throughout the novel. By keeping in mind this epistemological clash while reading his personal life, we can gain insight into Jacques' take on the nation. These often intertangled manifestations

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"naître" emphasizes the relation embedded in the creation of life itself and extends Camus' notion of "la tribu" and "la fraternité."

[54] In the introduction to *La Gangène et l'oubli: la memoire de la querre d'Algérie* (1991), Jewish-Algerian historian Benjamin Stora emphasizes that, in the French confrontations with Algeria during the Algerian War, the French national imaginary spread myths and left wounds (8). It was an exceptional circumstance because of its obliteration of memory, leaving Algerians with "un ensemble subtil de mensonges et de refoulements [qui] organize la 'mémoire algérienne'" (8) ["an ensemble of falsehoods and repression [that] organized the 'Algerian memory'"] (my translation). Stora puts 'Algerian memory' in quotations to emphasize its inadequate representation of memory. Writing just three years before the posthumous publication of *Le Premiere homme*, Stora underscores a key component of the reason behind the manuscript's publication by highlighting that France hid the atrocities of the war and viewed the combatants of the war under the anonymous, false unities such as the FLN, which collapsed the complexities of the violent situation at hand. As a critic of the FLN, therefore, Camus had contested what many at the time saw as a single side of the Algerian War. Furthermore, Stora unintentionally underscores another component of the reason for the delay of the publication of *Le Premiere homme* by explaining that it was necessary to wait a full generation—thirty years—in order to begin to uncover a history "moins mythique" (9) ["less mythic"] (my translation).

of erasure and memory correspond to Jacques' ability to access and enter communities related to the nation, education, religion, and socioeconomic status.

By looking at his religious and *lycée* education, we can learn more about how France becomes memory and knowledge while Algeria simultaneously becomes oblivion and memory in the eyes of Jacques. While Jacques thrives in school, before he can attend the *lycée,* his grandmother insists that he complete his religious education and confirmation. Because this education is rushed, Jacques becomes completely lost by the concept of religion, unsure of its teachings or use. Jacques explains that his family was "catholique comme on est français, cela oblige à un certain nombre de rites" (842) ["Catholic as they were French; it entailed a certain number of rituals" (165)]. They never used the word "G-d," and there was no room for religion amidst poverty (842; 165). He is rushed to take the course on catechism in one month instead of two years, in which he only learns by memorization, without understanding the meaning of what he is learning. Camus himself was a critic of religion and, as Sharpe notes, he had a problem with Christianity's inherent sacrifice. However, he also "refused the label of atheist so often pinned to his breast" (Sharpe 3). Because of Jacques' rushed religious education, religion becomes a meaningless duty. Jacques memorized the catechism but did not have the potential to digest its meaning, so it became a hollow corpus of knowledge that informed certain social norms that he did not understand or fully have access to. When he completes his First Communion, as his family enjoys a slightly larger meal than usual and the atmosphere lifts around him, instead of becoming elated too, he breaks into sobs. He can only understand why he is crying after looking at his mother, who gives him a "petit sourire triste" (846) ["sad smile" (172)]. Although the details of his newfound understanding at the glance exchanged between him and his mother are not explained, one possible explanation could be found in his mother's lack of

language and subsequent lack of consideration of history or discourse. Jacques is confused by the social attention to his communion because his rapid education leaves it depleted of meaning. In this moment, they share a separation from those who read religion in a greater context that bears some relevance to their individual and social lives. By opposing Jacques' rapid and depleted religious education to his critical yet mythical *lycée* education, we can begin to understand how education carries knowledge to be wrestled with, along with similarly depleted knowledge. Furthermore, these forms of education bear an inherent relationship to the way France poses itself against the space of Algeria in a way that furthers Jacques' position of alienation.

Coming from a position of low socioeconomic status, Jacques' education is a means of gaining access to a part of the French nation that could put him in a better economic position with the careers it has to offer. Before beginning the *lycée*, Jacques bears "peine" ["anguish"] rather than joy, as he knows that his school has "arraché" ["uprooted"] him from poverty (848-9 French; 176 English)]. However, it creates a gap between him and his family, as his family had no use for this form of knowledge because their low income requires them to dedicate their attention to surviving. Furthermore, they are unable to read (except for Jacques' brother). At this realization, Jacques compares race to class, noting that the differences between races and how they were treated in this country is more "clear-cut" than the distinctions between classes (863 French;203 English). This distinction, along with his alienation from the space of France, factors into what he can digest and understand from his education before and at the *lycée*. While many components of his education are digestible and enjoyable, they further separate him from his family. Conversely, the elements that he is unable to digest—much like his religious education—become mythical, distancing him from identifying fully with France and people of higher socioeconomic status. Although Jacques loves reading and enjoys this aspect of his

education, the stories from France being taught in the Algerian *lycée* are mythical to him, because they don't match the setting of his life in Algeria. However, "ces récits faisaient partie pour lui de la puissant poésie de l'école" ["these stories were part of the powerful poetry of school"] and the classroom becomes a "préfiguration de cet univers édénique où les enfants en sabots et en bonnet de laine couraient à travers la neige vers la maison chaude" (829) ["harbinger of that Garden of Eden [referring to France] where the children in wooden shoes and woolen hoods ran through the snow to their warm homes" (145)]. Thus France becomes a space with a different climate Jacques cannot understand, with characters who can afford to keep their houses warm and wear clothing he has never thought to wear. In this moment, France becomes the Garden of Eden by way of abstraction and unattainability: as Jacques learns more, he becomes aware of what he is excluded from. Fundamentally, in the Bible, *knowledge* is what the Garden of Eden has to offer that ultimately leads to Adam and Eve's exclusion from it. Thus, while France becomes both money and snow, it also becomes a figure for a knowledge system that he cannot fully gain access to. If we read this moment with Jacques' rapid religious education, in both cases, Jacques gains something that is simultaneously withheld from him. Much like Bhabha's point about presenting discourse that the colonial subject does not have access to, the discourse of French education has been given to Jacques in a shape that he does not have full access to. In the case of his *lycée* education, he can use the Bible as a trope to explore his inclusion and exclusion from French culture and memory in a way that mirrors his own experience with religion.

The *lycée* also gives Jacques a chance to meet other French-Algerian inhabitants who have access to this mythical France, by way of their altering socioeconomic status. This gives him an understanding of France as a nation that relies upon money as an access point to the

memory that generates one's identification with it. By comparing his experience to his school friend Didier, who has the fiscal capability of visiting France, where they have a home filled with memory-laden trinkets, Jacques realizes that France is only an abstraction to him. As opposed to Didier who feels a sense of duty to France,

> cette notion de patrie était vide de sens pour Jacques, qui savait qu'il était français, que cela entraînait un certain nombre de devoirs, mais pour qui la France était une absente dont on se réclamait parfois, mais un peu comme le faisait ce [D'] dont il avait entendu parler hors de chez lui et qui, apparemment, était le dispensateur souverain des biens et des maux, sur qui on ne pouvait influer mais qui pouvait tout au contraire sur la destinée des hommes. (866)
>
> [this notion of country had no meaning to Jacques, who knew he was French, and that this entailed a certain number of duties, but for whom France was an abstraction that people called upon and that sometimes laid upon you, a bit like that G[-]d he had heard about outside his home, who evidently was the sovereign dispenser of good things and bad, who could not be influenced, but who on the other hand could do anything with the people's destiny. (208)]

In this moment, France and religion take on the same purpose of laying a burden of limited and unquestionable duties upon their subjects. Both France and religion should be uplifting, dispensing good, but this potential conflicts with the power over the people that they retain. It must be noted that the details about religion, in this case, come from outside of Jacques' home. Didier's duty to France comes from his ability to retain memory through his higher socioeconomic status, meaning that access to memory is granted through material objects. As Jacques explains earlier in the novel, "[l]a mémoire des pauvres déjà est moins nourrie que celle

de riches, elle a moins de repères dans l'espace puisqu'ils quittent rarement le lieu où ils vivent, moins de repères aussi dans le temps d'une vie uniforme et grise. . . . Le temps perdu ne se retrouve que chez les riches" (788) ["[p]oor people's memory is less nourished than that of the rich; it has fewer landmarks in space because they seldom leave the place where they live, and fewer reference points in time throughout lives that are gray and featureless. . . . Remembrance of things past is just for the rich" (80)]. This reference to Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, when read with Jacques' lack of understanding of the nation, emphasizes that, to access the nation, one must have the fiscal capacity to retain memory. Furthermore, this access parallels the access to religion, notably the religion he hears about beyond his home. If his family does not have the economic capacity for memory, it cannot bear the memory of the nation or that of the Bible.

These meditations continue but are stifled by Camus' death, and the novel ends, unfinished when Jacques reaches adolescence, witnesses more violence between Frenchmen and Arabs, and has his first love affair. What the notes and sketches offer us gives us more matter to contemplate what would come between the erasure of memory and its preservation: a necessarily unfinished form of writing. Along with Camus' note that the novel must remain unfinished, he gives the example of Jacques heading back to France by ship (927 French; 297 English). Camus' therefore uses the Mediterranean as a liminal space that suspends Jacques between his altering alienation between knowledge and oblivion. But if we read another note, there is a goal in this: to highlight that "[[l]a noblesse du métier d'écrivain est dans la résistance à l'oppression donc au consentement à la solitude][55]" (945) ["[t]he nobility of the writer's occupation lies in resisting oppression, thus in accepting isolation" (319)]. Although the double brackets are used by the

[55] This French quotation is in brackets to denote that it has been crossed out by the author.

editor here to note an illegible word in the manuscript, maybe it serves a better purpose as a blank, something for readers to fill in themselves. Importantly, this line goes on:

> Exception faite pour l'antiquité.
>
> Les écrivains ont commencé par l'esclavage.
>
> Ils on conquis leur liberté—il n'est pas question qu'ils la résignent. (945)
>
> [Write one's [] to find the truth[56]
>
> > Except in [antiquity]
> >
> > Writers started out in slavery.
> >
> > They won their freedom—no question []. (320)]

This note, which visually resembles a poem, emphasizes a difference in the writers of antiquity, with regards to finding the truth, the origin of writers, or their writing as a resistance to oppression. Regardless, writers can win their own freedom. For Jacques, his forms of isolation emerge from an oscillation between straightforward modes of knowledge that rely on specific platforms to access and the oblivion that a lack of access creates. Therefore, there is another way in which the book's dedication to the reader who cannot read resonates: any reading should not be taken as a mode of transparent knowledge. Rather, any reading surfaces as one marked manifestation of time's inherent chaos and our drive to understand it. By using the Bible as a trope, Jacques can contemplate his own context by reconsidering "Western" history. By considering the Bible's complexity and where it becomes hollowed out to create a depleted sense of duty and moral subjects, Jacques, Camus, and his unfinished readers can begin to understand the broader implications of discourse as knowledge without complexities. Unfortunately, in the case of Jacques and his fellow Algerians, violence catalyzes the understanding that time, and

[56] This line has been added to the English translation.

therefore every narrative and piece of discourse (history included), bear inherent complexities that must be wrestled with ongoingly. By exploring an impossible reading practice in which linear time falls apart and the text is unfinished, readers enact the same wrestling match between straightforward, discourse-based knowledge and an undefined time and its open-ended knowledge systems. As Sharpe puts it, Camus' writing underscores the "alterity or hybridity of his conflicted identity, of a division at the very core of the self that constitutes an opening or receptivity to others" (8). By encountering this schism and getting lost within its impossibility, readers can both understand the complex identity of Albert Camus while experiencing and subsequently understanding the inherent limitations of straightforward time, narration, and systems of knowledge.

Cracking Time's Spine: Ruth in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*

Like *Le Premiere homme,* the poem *Zong!* invites readers to be lost within a drastically different impossibility: the violent murder of slaves who were considered mere property. In one sense, the story of the Zong massacre cannot be told because this horrific event has no recorded account of witnessing. The written record of the trial, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, does not refer to any witness who was on board the ship. James Walvin's *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law, and the End of Slavery* (2011) mentions that two witnesses were alive whose accounts were known at the trial: Robert Stubbs and James Kelsall. Stubbs was a passenger who took the position of captain when Captain Collingwood fell ill, and Kelsall was the first mate (although he was suspended from this position for a few weeks just before the massacre) (85-90, 95). Walvin points to their lack of credibility, along with the difficulty of determining the actuality of their accounts: Stubbs

was well known as an immoral, self-driven, and irresponsible character; Kelsall claimed to have simply taken orders; it is unclear whether these orders came from Stubbs, the feverish Collingwood, or whether the orders themselves were a falsehood created by Kelsall (Walvin 76-101). Captain Collingwood had died by the time of the trial, and the remaining survivors were slaves who, at the time, were not considered subjects who could testify before a British court of law. Although the legal text is the only document that recounts the event, it simultaneously disregards that these deaths were a product of murder. *Gregson v Gilbert* addresses the victims as property rather than beings, calling the massacre "a throwing overboard of goods," and that, therefore, "[t]he argument drawn from the law respecting indictments for murder does not apply" (Philip 211). Philip's non-linear collection of poems tears apart the text of the legal case to give voice to the victims of the massacre, while her account presents a multidirectional reading experience that also retains the impossibility of understanding such a violent event. As the ability for this terrible event to be told becomes both necessary and impossible, two key factors in the configuration of storytelling must also be reconsidered: language and time.

While many scholars have taken an in-depth approach to how Philip's use of poetic innovation and epic cataloguing assist her ability to tell this impossible story,[57] few scholars have read her critique of grammatical language in conjunction with the text's emphasis on breaking time. Furthermore, although many of the same scholars have noted Philip's references to various cultural traditions and monumental texts such as the Bible, the biblical reference that occurs the most (over twenty-five times) and requires further analysis is the name Ruth. In *Zong!*, the narrator testifies to Ruth, and she is called upon to break time. Because Ruth is implicated in both the language of narration and the conception of time, this section follows the biblical

[57] See Erin M. Fehsken's "Accounts Unpaid, Accounts Untold" (2012) and Evie Shockley's "Going Overboard" (2011).

allusion to address how Philip enacts an abysmal reading experience that mirrors the difficulty of bearing witness to the event. While I argue that there is an inherent opacity or complexity that is characteristic of all language, memory, and time, the indeterminacy that emerges from these complexities is covered up by the presumption of a "Western" tradition that forwards an ideal of linear, narrative-based models of language and time. I begin by considering how Philip uses the historical archive as a means of exposing the limitations of linear writing as a measurement for memory, events, and beings. This leads to a performative approach to writing in which Philip revokes her authority. Instead, the poem's authority is dispersed between Philip, the spirit who tells her the story, the archival text, and the poem itself. This leads to a means of writing that is ongoing and always unfinished. Subsequently, readers of *Zong!* must enact a performative reading experience that is not completed by the perception of narrative but rather involves a tracing of the gaps *towards* (but never to arrive at a finished version of) imagining the horror of the massacre. Considering biblical Ruth as a figure of lovingkindness allows readers who recognize the reference to be drawn into the story of the Zong massacre in a way they might not have been able to access if they are not directly or knowingly connected to the legacy of slavery. When discussing lovingkindness, I refer to the Jewish mitzvah, or commandment, of gemilut hasadim (גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים), to bestow acts of lovingkindness. Acts of lovingkindness are given through actions, objects, money, or, importantly, paying respects to the dead ("Gemilut Chasadim"). Therefore, asking why *Zong!* testifies to Ruth allows for a simultaneous emphasis on dispersing the monumentality of history, countering history with (new) memory, contemplating a new approach to familial lineages and time, and mourning for the victims of the Zong.

By considering a critique of history's monumentality, my reading of *Zong!* continues the above critiques of history in Postcolonial Studies. However, in order to consider Philip's discussion of reading and memory, I will use Cognitive Memory Studies to discuss the experience of reading *Zong!*.[58] This consideration of the cognitive function of individual memory is also theoretically applied to consider an ethical history through a more referential and ever-emergent structure. To extend this idea to collective memory, I turn to Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009). As Rothberg points out, "not strictly separable from history or representation, memory nonetheless captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side and the collective, social, and constructed side of our relations to the past" (4). Therefore, despite an inability to construct a cognitive understanding of *collective* memory, Cognitive Memory Studies can be fruitful when put into conversations about collective violent pasts because of Rothberg's emphasis that memory straddles the individual and collective while often being wrapped up in the act of representation. Rothberg underscores that Holocaust memory poured out from its victims simultaneous to the era of decolonization and emphasizes that the memory of violence towards one people can often elicit the memory of another (16-18). Similarly, Rothberg writes just after a Holocaust memory boom which involves the new memory of the secondary witnessing of Holocaust survivor's children.[59] Furthermore, Evie Shockley's "Going Overboard: African American Poetic Innovation and the Middle Passage" points out that the 1990s began a boom of

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[58] My emphasis on Cognitive Memory Studies will be primarily focused on the cognitive psychological makeup of memory as accounted by Daniel Schacter and Alan D. Baddeley. In Baddeley's *Essentials of Human Memory*, he explains that much of the information and testing done on memory is verbal because "verbal coding plays an extremely important part in human memory," can be easily tested, and can be written or spoken (7-8). Because I seek to give an account of the reader, this discipline's emphasis on language will maintain my conversation with language in history, memory, and *Zong!*.

[59] For more on *secondary witnessing* and *postmemory* in the 1990s, see my chapter on Camus and Edwidge Danticat, which involves a discussion of Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames.*

memory of the Middle Passage, starting with the surfacing of the sunken slave ship *Henrietta Marie* (794). Shockley continues to remark on a growing emphasis on the historical poem in the early twenty-first century, claiming that

> these poems argue that the Middle Passage was a rupture that has been and continues to be inscribed in multiple discourses informing and shaping the subject position of African Americans, even into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Any healing to be found in these poems will be produced not through a textually manufactured wholeness, but through a reckoning with the discursive evidence of that rupture. (795)

Ultimately, I emphasize how fostering a new memory of this violent event generates an ethics of connectability in which readers seemingly disconnected to Atlantic Slave Trade undergo the impossible imperative of witnessing the horrors that took place throughout the centuries that slavery occurred.

Philip's goal is to tell this impossible story to restore the slaves' "be-ing" as an ethical imperative (200). To do so, Philip must find a means of uncovering the memory of the individuals as *beings* by tearing apart the legal text—the representation of the legal apparatus which silenced the pain of this horrific event. Philip explains that, in such a moment of impossible writing, she must relinquish her *author*ity, that her

> intent is to use the text of the legal decision as a word store; to lock [her]self into this particular and peculiar discursive landscape in the belief that the story of these African men, women, and children thrown overboard in an attempt to collect insurance monies, the story that can only be told by not telling, is locked with in this text. (191)

What type of writing does Philip enact by undoing her agency in the act of writing? And how does reading through Ruth's breaking of time re-write the story of the victims of the Zong

massacre, along with Atlantic Slave Trade more broadly, and draw new readers into the ethics of this story? As Rothberg asserts, “a certain bracketing of empirical history and an openness to the possibility of strange political bedfellows are necessary in order for the imaginative links between different histories and social groups to come into view; these imaginative links are the substance of multidirectional memory" (18). This account of Philip’s approach to writing, along with readers’ experience, of *Zong!* considers Philip’s revulsion towards “empirical history” by enacting a multidirectional moment whereby reading biblical Ruth in conjunction with Atlantic Slave Trade evokes both the Hebraic slavery in the book of Exodus and the horrors of the Shoah. Furthermore, it can also extend beyond Rothberg’s connections between different races, ethnicities, and religions, as I will extend this discussion to the position of the female in ancient Hebraic society.

Philip presents a relational approach to authorship because *Zong!* emerges from not simply her writing but the tearing up of the legal text, the poem’s own offering to her, and because of the denunciation of her authority on the book’s cover. Philip’s authorship is built upon by the cover’s declaration after the author’s name that it is written “As told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng”. While my comments above note how this author may have been crafted by Philip herself, she never explains these details. Additional remarks on this author’s name have been made by Loichot in her book *Water Graves: The Art of the Unritual in the Greater Caribbean* (2020). These analyses of the name reflect the pain of the event, the consideration of an origin, and a reflection on the sea itself, noting the sound of “Setaey” as “c’etait” (“it was”) and “Adam” of “Adamu” as a potential origin (206). Without an explanation and before such analysis, however, readers might presume that Boateng told Philip the story and Philip has inscribed the story for Boateng. This underscores that Philip was not at the event,

echoing the lack of witness in the legal text and giving it a human or/and spiritual presence to restore being to those on board the ship. In this sense, *Zong!* itself becomes a sacred memorial for those who were lost. The first line of *Gregson v. Gilbert* explains, “This was an action on a policy of insurance, to recover the value of certain slaves thrown overboard for want of water” (210). In order to uncover the pain of this moment, the poem explores water as a site for violence and linguistic fluidity which seeks to depart from the representational rigidity of linear language. In “*Zong*! #1”, for instance, the tearing asunder of the words “want” and “water” make it sound like one is begging, constantly attempting to find a source of water, but too weak to speak clearly, let alone seek a source of water (4). The words take on the shape of a wave, which could represent the violence of the sea; however, it also resembles an infinity symbol, which could also represent an enduring memory. As a result, the text of the legal case is broken into a moment that evokes the voice of starving and thirsty slaves on board the ship. Using water as a locus for both erasure and ingenuity, this page simultaneously mourns the deaths of those who may have died in this early stage of the voyage, listing the names “Aba Chimanga Naeema Oba Eshe” at the bottom (4). In Shockley’s “Going Overboard”, she emphasizes that “we read these named figures as being, additionally, underwriters of the text, an interpretation that both attends to their visual placement and recalls the gesture Philip makes on the title page, where she indicates that *Zong!* is the account ‘as told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng’” (814). The interaction between Boateng’s telling the story, Philip’s tearing asunder of the legal text, and the poem’s own manifestation (including its underwriters) are all working together to compose the text and restore being through this impossible attempt at understanding the horrors of the event. This authorial play confronts the violence of representation, inherent in the legal archive. Philip (and

her coauthors) thus engage(s) in a performative approach to (re)writing, in which writing becomes subject to ongoing negotiation, revising both purpose and "author."

This approach lends itself to constant (re)reading, generating a poetics of gaps (or poetic indeterminacy) which opens an abyss of reconsiderable meaning. If we recall the biblical "tehom" or "abyss" (to follow Yountae's account of this concept throughout Christian history), there is an indeterminacy in the moment of creation that also underscores a deep complexity within the Bible itself. The first verses of Genesis in the English translation of the *Tanakh* read as follows: "When G[-]d began to create [or In the beginning G[-]d created] the earth being unformed and void [or abyss], with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from G[-]d sweeping over the water" (1:1-2). The bracketed alternative translation in the first verse suggests that there is a teleology inherent in the moment of creation, that a definite origin exists. The other translation, when "G[-]d began to create," suggests that creation is unfinished and ongoing. This translation involves constant re-working and opacity. Furthermore, this translation in conversation with Glissant's declaration that writing bears a gap, an indeterminacy, between the opacity of the text along with another gap between the always-evolving author and reader (129 French; 115 English). With these gaps inherent in the text (the text's opacity, according to Glissant), the reader's first reading renders unclear meaning, potentially even confusion. This is especially so in the case of *Zong!*, as readers could gather various interpretations, like they could

of any literary text. However, in this case they can also read in multiple directions and determine which words fit into these multifaceted micro-readings. From this opacity alone, a first read of *Zong!* is often a violent and disorienting experience. Thus the reader must return and cycle back through the text in order to work through (but never arrive and remain at a singular) meaning. This work forges a community of struggling, disoriented readers. Loichot explains that in *Zong!* "[t]he cracks allow readers to project their own pain, and thus to compose a community precisely, through its fissures" (*Water Graves* 203). It then becomes apparent with each (re)reading that the reader is in a different positionality—both as an ongoing, everchanging individual, along with a continuing understanding of the words of the text through repetition, with a change.

This potential for an ever-changing entanglement of emergent authorship and readership poses a direct challenge to the reductive claims inherent in discourse as posed by Philip's discussion of legal discourse, Bhabha's emphasis on colonial discourse, and Yountae's assessment of limited theological discourse. Each presents a counter to this violence in the indeterminacy presented by an abyss of meaning. For Philip, the legal text's prescription of who are beings and subsequently who is (or in this case, is not) a murderer, exonerates the crew of the Zong. If a partial use of the Bible splits "Black skin . . . under the racist gaze," "dismember[ing]" the bible itself, a reading of discourse that mocks it as such can expose this violence (Bhabha 132-3). As Yountae asserts, this must

I remember first reading *Zong!* in a busy coffee shop in downtown Decatur, Georgia. Caffeine coursing through my veins as my eyes traced over the disparate words on the pages, I grasped at any meaning which I could. After many hours, I ended my reading, tired and wired, disjointed words floating through my head as I walked home. Words like "want for water" and "facts own their lives/lives own their facts" lingered before my mind's eye as I drifted to sleep. Suddenly, I was on board the Zong on a warm day. The sun was bright, but a few heavy clouds occasionally restricted its light, shadowing the ship in scattered patches. Standing at the edge of the boat, I looked down at the ocean's tumultuous waters. I knew that chaos ensued on board the ship behind me: scenes of horror towards which I could not fully turn to witness. As I looked at the water below, I knew I had to jump. As daunting as the waves appeared, beholding a strength that could crush the ship, I knew that the water would be warm and comforting, and that jumping would be only the beginning of a necessary embarkation. Climbing onto the ship's ledge, I felt the boat rocking and the wind in my face. Despite my fears, my legs held steady as I mounted side of the ship. As I jumped, I woke from the dream. Despite awaking, I knew my time with this event, with this text, with this horror, would never be finished.

involve a recognition of the abyss involved in discourses such as theology. He explains that "[t]he abyss conveys the unspeakable: both the unspeakable pain of the colonial wound *and* the unspeakable state of the self who lives in the suspended present, awaiting for the unforeseeable future to unfold" (Yountae 12). Importantly, Yountae expounds upon Glissant's articulation of the abyss of slave trade in order to arrive at this reading of the abyss inherent in the bible itself. In Glissant's poetic opening to *Poétique de la relation*, "La Barque ouerte" ["The Open Boat"], he explains that what made the experience of Slave Trade petrifying was confronting an unknown: a threefold abyss that manifested through being born into a "gouffre-matrice" ["womb-abyss"], the depths of the sea and the frequent throwing overboard of slaves, and the reverse projection of the past that the slaves were torn from and forced to leave behind (17-19 French; 5-7 English). Glissant's layered explanation of this violence is both compounded and abysmal. Yountae places the namelessness of this violence in conversation with apophatic theology but emphasizes that "[t]he mystical connotations that frame the trope of the abyss have, over the course of history, generated an understanding of spirituality that is distant from the political reality of human lives" (84). Glissant, however, by locating his theory in the context of Atlantic Slave Trade, avoids the "self-absorbed" type of "ontological finitude" that Yountae claims is "*existential* but disconnected from the *reality of existence*" [emphasis in orginal] (85).[60] Thus, it is the representation of a historical wound, being born into the paradox of slavery, that Yountae sees as a mark of complexity within Glissant's work that is in conversation with the

[60] Although Yountae uses the word "existential" without referring to Existential philosophy explicitly, some of the language he uses to outline the nature of the abyss is much in conversation with Camus' *Le Mythe de Sisyphe.* Just before this, he explains that "[t]he abyss in the writings of mystical thinkers indicates the infinite plentitude and transcendence of G[-]d, which, paradoxically, intersects with the ontological finitude of human beings" (85). Importantly, Yountae's idea of G[-]d does not create the type of transcendence that Camus critiques in Chestov and Kierkegaard's use of religion because the G-d which Yountae refers to bears a "depth of unknowability" which leads to a "grounding foundation only as the result of a long and persistent process of self-dispossession that entails submission to the unknown" (85).

complexity in the theological conception of the "tehom." For Glissant, the wound's indeterminacy fosters a new type of knowledge, one that could be posed as a counter to the prescriptive knowledge of a discourse. He explains that "l'inconnu-absolu, qui était la projection du gouffre, et qui portait en éternité le gouffre-matrice et le gouffre en abîme, à la fin est devenu connaissance" (20) ["the absolute unknown, projected by the abyss and bearing into eternity the womb abyss and the infinite abyss, in the end became knowledge" (8)]. Crucially, this knowledge that emerges from the abyss is a knowledge of the "Tout, qui grandit de la fréquentation du gouffre et qui dans le Tout libère le savoir de la Relation" (20) ["Whole, greater from having been at the abyss and freeing knowledge of Relation within the Whole" (8)]. Glissant's use of capital letters for "Tout" could be read as the making of a discourse as a seemingly finite maker of knowledge, comparable to Bhabha's notion of the metonymy of presence inherent in the perception of a discourse (Bhabha 130). In this reading, Glissant's knowledge of the "Whole" is a recognition that the idea of wholeness in discourse is contrived, limited, and constricting. His capitalization of his theory of "Relation" is then posed as a foil to a fraudulent wholeness. Thus Glissant's abyss can be read in conversation with ambivalence for Bhabha, since the two generate knowledge by mocking configurations of knowledge and becoming acquainted with the relation inherent in the abyss. *Zong!*'s performative writing between authors and its subsequent performative reading, then, functions by using the legal text to become aware of its violent "Whole" as a means of catalyzing "Relation."

While Bhabha and Glissant's critiques of reason emphasize the means by which Philip's use of the legal text are in conversation with Postcolonial Studies, a look at Memory Studies can help investigate how *Zong!* confronts both the perceptive whole and actual indeterminacy of memory through this abysmal reading experience. Memory's function shows that indeterminacy

is embedded within the described functionality of some of the brain's processes. Neurology and cognitive psychology define three different and seemingly separate forms of memory: semantic (memory of knowledge, i.e. history), episodic (memory of experiences encountered by an individual), and procedural (memory of processes, i.e. how to walk) (Baddeley 16-7). In the "Notanda", Philip explains that by departing from linear patterns of writing, and therefore reading,

> *there is something happening in the eye tracking the words across the page, and the larger 'meaning' together—the eye trying to order what cannot be ordered, trying to "make sense" of something, which is what it must have been like trying to understand what was happening on board the Zong—meantime there are smaller individual poems to be found in different places on the page as the lines are juxtaposed and work togethe*r (192; emphasis in original).

Here, semantic and episodic memory become confused. Because the reader was not physically present on the ship, the Zong massacre can only be known through semantic memory; however, the gaps involved in the reading process entail a process of working through reading that mimics working through episodic memory. This pattern of reading allows semantic memory to *bear a weight as if it is episodic.* The water of the Atlantic Ocean thus becomes a site for the erasure of the episodic memory of the victims but also the ability to allow forms of memory to diffract through one another.[61]

Furthermore, episodic memory itself is an indeterminate measurement of the past and the present. As cognitive psychologist Daniel Schacter explains in *Searching for Memory: The*

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[61] The water makes recovering the pain of the memory all too difficult, as the bodies could not be exhumed. As opposed to massive exhumations to recall traumatic, silenced pasts (such as the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime), Philip explains that this event is much more difficult to uncover because of its location in water.

Brain, the Mind, and the Past (1996), the *engram,* or memory-mark left on the brain, is changed by the context in which it is recalled (69-71). He asserts that "[a] neural network combines information in the present environment with patterns that have been stored in the past, and the resulting mixture of the two is what the network remembers" (71). The cue, the scenario which evokes the recall of a memory, interferes with the matter of the engram, rewriting it as it is recalled. Thus memory itself is an indeterminate entanglement of the past and the present. To be clear, Schacter's discussion is specific to an individual's own episodic memory—what an individual has seen with their own eyes. Philip's discussion on memory is therefore compounded by the fact that on the one hand, there is no record of witnessing this event and, on the other hand, that the importance of remembering this event is felt far beyond those who fell victim to the violence on board the ship. In an essay that she footnotes in the "Notanda," entitled "In the Matter of Memory" (1996), Philip turns to similar massacres in the contemporary world, such as the Holocaust, to contemplate how memory is materialized and therefore comes to matter (*Fertile Ground* 22-3). While emphasizing the importance of memorials, Philip asserts that the "most poignantly powerful have been those of piles of ordinary things like shoes, toothbrushes, household utensils and so on" (22). She continues to explain that while "the events of the African holocaust have been recorded by History, for many reasons, not the least of which is the tension between history and memory, this fails to satisfy that impulse to materialize memory" (23). Instead, Philip insists that memory is "found in the interstices, the silences, the half said, the stories that are passed on, the markers of absence" (23). Writing in the era of new Holocaust memory[62] and just as Postcolonial Studies began to critique itself for its linearity and arrival in

[62] See Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames* for a discussion of the silence of Holocaust memory and its opening in the 1980s and 1990s.

discourse,[63] Philip's discussion of the memory enacted in the reading experience emphasizes the indeterminacy of memory itself at a time when the discussion of critiques of reason, like Bhabha's, were challenged with their positionality within limited frames of discourse. Therefore, while my reading of Postcolonial Studies can engage with a critique of history, discourse, and reason, it must also engage with Philip's emphasis on how memory is materialized. Inherent in this material of memory is an interaction between the past and present, in which the present re-writes the past, rendering its original mark indeterminate.

As the types of memory become entangled in *Zong!*, so too does the past and the present. While postulating the difficulty of an "exaqua," as opposed to concrete material of an excavation, Philip realizes that her text must become "hauntological; it is a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the specters of the undead make themselves present" (201). Without generating closure between ways of reading, ways of meaning making, and therefore forms of memory, *Zong!* gives the reader an open experience of the event which makes it *matter*—both makes it be and gives it relevance—and allows the present to be haunted by the past. Remarking that language, and therefore some poetry, can bear "hidden agendas," Philip emphasizes that the linguistic strategies in her work "signpost a multifaceted critique of the European project" (197). For this reason, she uses the text of the past, "the legal report[,] almost as a painter uses paint or a sculptor stone" (198). At this moment, she refers to Henry Moore, a sculptor who sees the work being locked in the stone to be sculpted itself (198). For this reason, Philip's writing becomes a performative engagement between her and the legal text. Subsequently, Philip's performative

[63] See Benita Parry's "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies" (2004) and Robert Young's "Postcolonial Remains" (2012) for an account of the limits of Postcolonial Studies as a discipline. Parry accounts for the ways in which the discipline sees itself as a direct lineage from other disciplines such as Poststructuralism, presenting itself as limited and unable to account for the reality of ongoing oppression in the contemporary world. Similarly, Young emphasizes that the postcolonial is not finished, that it is ever-present and that "the continuing projection of past conflicts into the experience of the present, the insistent persistence of the afterimages of historical memory that drive the desire to transform the present" (21).

approach to writing can generate a performative approach to reading which emerges as an ongoing response to the text. The openness generated from such an approach allows an ongoing reconsideration of meaning that intends to expose the over-determinacy of legal language which oppressed the victims of the Zong massacre.

While writing becomes indeterminate for Philip, time also is broken and fluid throughout *Zong!*, as an old event is (re)illuminated through the new memory of the experience of reading. In one moment (and even one way of reading this moment depending on which direction one is reading), it becomes apparent that "this story ne/sts in the ne/t the we/b of ti/me" but that it must be tamped down (152). As the ability for the horrific event to be understood becomes necessary and impossible, a key factor in the configuration of storytelling also becomes misconstrued: time. Throughout the text, time is troubled, and in the section "Ferrum" (which means Iron) the text says ""i/ am we a/re their e/yes stare/ see thin/gs we ne/ver wil/l let my s/tory my tal/e my g/est gift ri/se up in ti/me to sn/ap the sp/ine of tim/e" (141). Here, time takes a form that is rigid, like the human spine, which may have some range of motion or curvature, but still maintains a linear shape and snaps under too much pressure. The image of time as a spine suggests that time is typically conceived of as linear; however, the narrator asks that it (or they) be allowed to break time. If time is broken and language is indeterminate, what do readers do to fill in the gap as their eyes trace along the page, as Philip posits (192)? Since Philip asserts that readers make new memory through this tracing, it becomes up to the reader to connect their own language, experience, and memory in order to work through the text. Therefore, I assert that the use of *elaborative encoding*, memory building through references to already known ideas, is one tactic that readers can use to work through this impossible text. Furthermore, by following the example

of the allusion to Ruth of the Bible, I will enact one potential moment of elaborative encoding that extends *Zong!*'s critique of linear time.

Because of the text's indeterminacy through its critique of language and multidirectional poems, readers must generate their own theory of reading. Furthermore, it might be a wholly new approach to reading if they have never encountered a nonlinear text. One potential component to a reader's approach could be to supplement their reading experience with previous knowledge and experience. This means of reading entails elaborative encoding which, according to Schacter's *Searching for Memory*, "allows you to integrate new information with what you already know" in a way that makes the memory more readily recalled. He explains that "something that is meaningful will be more easily remembered than something that is not" (45). *Zong!* is riddled with fodder for elaborative encoding, as it has many languages, known objects, and references to cultural material. There are references to the Bible, ancient Rome, and Yoruban deities.[64] In the "Manifest," the account of items on board, Philip includes a column entitled "Women Who Wait" (185). Within this section and throughout the rest of the poems are many biblical names, including Eve, Mary, and Ruth. However, the one who became a marker of my own elaborative encoding, who is named the most frequently throughout the poems—

I returned to *Zong!* to analyze it for my Mapping Memory course with Professors Angelika Bammer and Hazel Gold, to explore how it functions as a piece of memory. This time, reading *Zong!*, it would have to be more than chaos; it would have to lead to analysis. Drowning amidst torn words, floating limbs, chiasmas, and various modes of reading, my brain latched on to something, a name: Ruth. From then on, her name appeared everywhere, over twenty-five times. It was if she held my hand, guiding my reading. As I read, I thought of my cousin's daughter Ruth. How, when I visited them in Israel, she and her sister were doing handstands in the yard before the start of Shabbat. She must have been 7 years old or so. I wanted to join, but I could not do handstands because, being prepared for shabbat, I wore a knee-length skirt. This was not common for my fashion choices. I would wear this type of skirt in America only on the occasion that I would enter a synagogue, which in more recent years has been a rare occurrence. But in Israel, I would dress like this to fit in with my religious family. Despite my cautious dress choice, I still did not fit in: the girls, much younger than me, had leggings under their skirts, so they could do handstands. This personal memory made me realize: my cousin's daughter is named after the book of Ruth. I remembered that biblical Ruth came from elsewhere, that she also was the first convert to Judaism, but otherwise, this piece of cultural memory was only an echo within me, because I had not appeared at the synagogue or engaged with the actual text of the Bible in many years.

[64] Yoruban dieties Ògún, Òrí, and Òsun appear, along with the biblical references of Jesus, Mary and Eve; these and more are found throughout the text and some are also listed in the Glossary and Manifest (183-7). Latin words such as "*ag/nu s dei"*, a Roman Catholic lamb offering to Christ, also appear throughout (141).

over twenty-five times—is Ruth. While Ruth often appears as a proper noun, her name often also emerges when the word "truth" is torn asunder, as "t/ruth." Furthermore, the narrator explains that he testifies directly to Ruth and tells her that time must be broken apart (70, 141). The words "y/ou ruth" also appear just before the above quote that claims that the story is found in the "ne/t the we/b of ti/me" which means that we might read Ruth as the one responsible for tamping it down with the "flam/e of this ta/le" (152). Although some scholars have noted Ruth's appearance, none have yet to emphasize this detail: that the text is narrated *to* Ruth. By considering biblical Ruth as a figure who welcomed a new culture, who has become a figure of lovingkindness, and who re-inscribes the female into the paternal counting of time through familial lineages, this analysis considers how her implication in the breaking of time in *Zong!* transports the ethical imperative of witnessing the Zong massacre to populations beyond the legacy of slave trade. I therefore assert that a reading experience involving elaborative encoding based on ancient Judeo-Christian allusions exposes a violent limitation to time and narration inherent in the foundation of "Western" civilization, wrestles with and testifies to its violence, and opens spaces for ethics through a re-reading of classical texts such as the Bible.

Early in *Zong!*, Ruth is called upon to be its listener: "I argue my case/ to you/ ruth/ you must hear me" (70). Not only does Ruth become the audience of the text, it becomes imperative that she listen. Although one might not read Ruth as a biblical allusion, subtle hints throughout the poems suggest this could be Ruth of the Bible. Biblical Ruth was not Hebrew; she was from Moab, and Elimelech and his mother Naomi met her there when they relocated from Bethlehem to Moab due to a famine (Ruth 1:1-4). In *Zong!* the narrator claims "*j'ai/ faim* for ruth for t/ruth" (157). Instead of simply using the words "I'm hungry", Philip uses the French "*faim*" which echoes the word famine. This is one of the many moments in the text in which the slaves

onboard the Zong were starving while the ship was held up, but this specific moment, by using the French, also potentially recalls the starving of Hebraic Bethlehem by telling Ruth of this hunger. More broadly speaking, the use of various languages such as French (and many more which appear in a glossary) highlight the representation of a variety of peoples aboard the Zong, exhibiting an actual intersection between various peoples at the time of the massacre and throughout the Slave trade. By bringing Ruth into the picture, the poem creates textual intersections that expand the potential for intersections between cultures, races, ethnicities, and religions.

In another moment that might exhibit that this is Ruth of the Bible, the text asks, in apparently handwritten text/font, "was/ that a fair/ trade ruth i/ ask you i/ am a fair/ man" (170). This, if we connect it to the Bible, could refer to the trade that was required for Boaz to marry Ruth. After Elimelech died and Ruth was widowed, she returned to Bethlehem with Naomi and sought a new husband. When she offered herself to Boaz, he realized that there was another man closer in line to marry her, so he went to this man and offered him the estate. However, when he explained that Ruth would come with the estate, the other man said he could not accept the offer (3:1-4:6). In this moment, women are wrapped up in the exchange of property and are unable to speak for themselves in the moment of exchange. A sandal is exchanged under the table in order to solidify the transaction, and Ruth's voice is nowhere to be found in this scene (4:1-10). Although Ruth got the marriage she desired, her story highlights an element of women in Hebraic society that is also encountered in Zong: in

This is where I found myself at odds with the skirts I wear on Shabbat, only while in the presence of my more religious family. While I dress in their fashion to respect their traditions, watching Ruth and her sister do handstands required that I leave a piece of myself behind, the piece of me that loves wearing shorts and pants in order that I can have a fully freeing physicality—one in which I can do a handstand at any moment. When I visited again, three years later, I brought a pantsuit with me for Shabbat. After my aunt saw my clothing choice, she offered some skirts of hers for me to borrow. What she offered as a gesture of kindness, I took as her complicity in the silencing of my handstands. I know this is not intentional, as she also is a confidant: on other days, we have exchanged knowledge and practice of various yoga poses. While this makes me wonder about the patriarchal influences over these clothing choices, my female family members proudly make these choices for themselves and will happily cite the strength of women in Judaism. To start, women hand down the religion to their children, despite that Genesis marks only the ages of the males. But that strength of the female lineage is not what *I* feel in the dress choices given by this tradition. And yet, out of love for my aunt, I opted for silence, accepting the skirt handed to me.

both these instances, the law deems beings (women and slaves) as property, silencing their voices in the moment of transaction. The poem also explains that “in it was hang/ him overb/oard throw h/er never se/en again mar/ry time to t/ruth you t/o me ruth” (153).

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deuced they p   ray into wat
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Here the marriage occurs, not Ruth to Boaz, but Ruth to the narrator and time to truth. Truth, however, can also be married to “ruth” if this word is read alone with the line break. However, adjacent to this, slaves are thrown and hung overboard. Thus the celebration of time and truth’s marriage becomes violent in its juxtaposition to the pain occurring a few words over. Echoed in this entire quote is Ruth’s marriage in the Bible, in which her voice is not present in the transaction of marriage between Boaz and the other redeemer. By no means are these types of intersections between Slave Trade and biblical text equated through this reading, neither in their situational nor traumatic elements; they do not exist for the mere purpose of comparison. Rather, they have been linked, on the one hand, to foster a cross-cultural, religious, racial, and gender intersection which aids in both highlighting the danger for silencing within law and, on the other hand, an ability for readers who see “ruth” as biblical Ruth to have a moment of connection that merges the unknowable story of the Zong with a story that has been told for a long time.

Furthermore, bringing Ruth of *Zong!* into conversation with Ruth of the Bible can help us better understand the way both re-write time itself. Ruth emerges throughout the *Zong!* not only

as a listener who is married to time, but also as the person responsible for breaking time: "ter wine and y/ ou ruth/ this story ne/sts in the ne/ t the we/ b of ti/me tam/p it down do/ use the flam/ e of this ta/le what pro/fit me if *mon/ coeur non est*" (152). Here, time appears as a net, but also as a web—a web might more likely allow for intersections within time; however, the fact that it is connected to a net still suggests that it is constricted (or constricting) and limited. Ruth is called upon to be the one who "tamps it down," pushing time down. Is she silencing time here? Is she eliminating a particular conception of time? It might be that she is expanding perceptions of time which can be confining: those in which it remains rigid and fixed to assist in the traps that reason has to offer.

As Philip asserts, the legal text cannot account for the lives of the victims of the massacre. Because law builds upon reason, but the lives lost in the massacre were not seen as human lives, a violent logic is generated: murder applies to humans; slaves are property; slaves cannot be murdered because they are not considered humans. In this case, reason itself becomes violent, because it silences beings, removes their humanity, and exonerates their murderers. Time is wrapped up within this violent encounter with reason, as *Zong!* asserts that "the trap/ of rea/son binds u/s in the net/ of time" (169). If the legal text were to stay in its linear form, representing reason at its finest, it would trap the story within one moment, binding the victims to their lack of humanity. Furthermore, if time maintained a linearity that can form equally violent logics and narratives, it too could generate violence. Glissant's theory of relation in fact relies upon a simultaneous continuity and discontinuity that emerges from the abysmal experience of the Slave Trade. As a result, within his theory of Relation, an oblivion occurs along with an intensification of memory (19-20 French; 7-8 English). Relation, therefore, poses itself as an interruption of a teleological time. The violence of the abyss and subsequent

recognition of the Whole illuminates that the Whole only goes one direction. Part of the violence of this Whole is its exclusion of those who do not fit in with its unidirectional time and the narrative that follows. In comparison, engaging with Relation can allow one to notice the linearity posed by the Whole. Philip (or Boateng, or the reader engaging with the poem) therefore must break time in order to break the narrative inherent in the reason generated by the Whole.

Importantly, Bhabha sees the use of the English Bible, presented to colonial subjects as a false original, as a means of forwarding that teleological and violent version of time and narrative. In *The Location of Culture*, just two essays after the reprinting of "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha takes his analysis of colonial ambivalence and considers it in specific contexts involving colonial uses of the English Bible. He emphasizes that

> [a]s a signifier of authority, the English book acquires its meaning after the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior, archaic image or identity. Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be "original"—by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it—nor "identical"—by virtue of the difference that defines it. (153)

It is as if this presentation of the Bible generates a fraudulent original for Glissant's Whole, a foundation for morality that only applies to those deemed subjects in the eyes of the English, rather than the colonial subjects it is given to. According to Bhabha,

> The discovery of the book installs the sign of appropriate representation: the word of G[-]d, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history, and narrative. But the institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Enstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition—the dazzling light of literature sheds

> only areas of darkness. Still the idea of the English book is presented as universally adequate: like the "metaphoric writing of the West", it communicates 'the immediate vision of the thing, freed from the discourse that accompanied it, or even encumbered it" (149)

Here, *Enstellung* refers to psychoanalysis in which the latent thoughts become manifest in dreams but in distorted ways. Subsequently, interpretation must be used to reach towards an understanding of them, much like Glissant's discussion of the opacity inherent in literature. As a counter to the opacity of literature, the presentation of the English book to the colonial subject generates the "practice of history, and narrative." Therefore, while Glissant's discussion of the rupture of Atlantic Slave Trade emphasizes that there could be no narrative that is strictly linear, Bhabha's emphasis on the use of the English book suggests that the linearity of narrative is contrived by the imposition of the book on colonial subjects. In the supposed original to which he refers, Bhabha explains that the concept of truth only "emerges as a visible sign of authority only after the regulatory and displacing division of the true and the false" (157). What is true, therefore, is reliant upon its negative, what is false, a negative which has been generated by the colonial use of the English Bible.

In *Zong!*, Ruth serves as a trope through which readers can use elaborative encoding and refer to their knowledge of the Bible in order to recognize the trap of a reason-driven time. Furthermore, this reference can allow readers to consider the re-inscription of a more performative version of time within the Zong *and* the Bible itself. In another instance in *Zong!*, time is not merely being tamped down, it is being wooed, explaining "this is/ a tale told/ cold a yarn/ a story dear/ dear ruth i/ woo time/ and you do/ I have y our/ ear" (64). Here, both the reader and Ruth can woo time, to ask time to give its support to the victims of the Zong massacre

and Ruth herself. This asking of time for something different than its net-like trap suggests that time has more to offer than its purported uses. Schacter points to memory as a space where time can be constantly reconfigured, explaining that "[t]he idea of remembering as 'mental time travel' highlights something that is truly remarkable: as rememberers, we can free ourselves from the constraints of time and space, reexperiencing the past and projecting ourselves into the future at will" (17). Since the Zong massacre, as Philip notes, had no representation of memory through witnesses, it was not free for the time travel of which Schacter speaks. Thus the Zong massacre emphasizes a double set of temporal restrictions: time as linear and unchanging, representing a reason that allows for silencing and horrific events as such, but also a void in memory which troubles a reworking of time.

This doubly constricted time might be what leads the narrator to ask of "ruth I b/eg you let/ us have a ne/w act a new s/cene new a/ct new sce/ne" (133). The repetition of "new act new scene" suggests that the reworking of time is continuous, the word "beg" emphasizes that the reworking is imperative, that lives rely upon it. While Ruth of *Zong!* is married to time, can woo time, and is the person that may be able to strike up a "new act new scene," Ruth of the Bible similarly bears the potential to re-write the lineage of the Hebrew people through a woman. In the book of Genesis, time is created and marked with day and night, but in the remainder of the book, time is marked by the age of a male

After noticing Ruth in *Zong!* and making her part of my research experience, I embarked upon reading the Book of Ruth in full for the first time in my life. Before this moment, I had only heard her discussed by people around me: the thoughts of rabbis and other Jews composed a distant and partial knowledge of Ruth and her biblical significance. Reading the entire book, I learned the pieces of her story that have become imperative for this analysis of *Zong!*. Besides being the first convert, biblical Ruth helps generate a shift in lineages as compared to Genesis: she carries on the lineage of Elimelech, her deceased husband and his mother Naomi. Reading the end of the book of Ruth, I stopped in my tracks as the Book accounted for my own cousin Ruth's lineage by declaring, "This is the line of Perez." Realizing that my cousin's surname (Ruth's mother) is Perez, my body trembled. For my aunt, carrying the Jewish lineage is of utmost importance: this is why she wants me to wear skirts on shabbat and marry a Jewish man (as she says, "We must build"). I see her drive to build as a response to the various threats that Jewish people (my family included) have incurred. In her mind, by strengthening the Jewish lineage, we can avoid repetitions of anti-Semitism. But now that I know the story of Ruth, of the family line into which my aunt herself married, I wonder if she sees the complexity at work within the one of the important historically Hebrew families. The next time I return to Israel, I will return ready to ask her how the story of Ruth fits into her narrative and whether it throws the narrative of a closed Jewish lineage (which I see as her response to the violent narrative of anti-Semitism with the building of a new narrative) into question. See my discussion of the "responsive trap" in Chapter 3 to understand the dangers at work in narrative building as a response to violent narratives.

when he is married, has a son, and dies. When Ruth re-marries to Boaz, Boaz revokes his own lineage and says that this marriage will "perpetuate the name of the deceased [Elimelech]" (4:10). Then, when Ruth bears a child, the community tells Naomi (Ruth's mother-in-law) that Ruth is better to her than her own sons have been (4:15). Importantly, the remainder of the book tells the story of Ruth's lineage, which leads to the birth of David (later King David) (4:17-21). Ruth of the Bible, therefore, represents a crucial re-inscription of time as a woman from outside of the land of Canaan, when time is typically carried through a masculine, Hebrew lineage. Readers of *Zong!* who recognize the name Ruth from the Bible can enact elaborative encoding that may make them retain more memory surrounding these components of the poems. Even more importantly, if they recall an in-depth reading of the Bible, they can draw upon its acceptance of a female from elsewhere, and her ability to inscribe herself into the Hebrew lineage.[65] Because the book of Ruth throws the masculine, linear time of Genesis into question, this reading, especially in conjunction with *Zong!* emphasizes that foundational Western texts

I often joke that I go to Israel to practice my French more than my Hebrew. My family there is originally Tunisian, and Arabic—except for a few words that slip into our language—died in my family with colonization (I grew up not knowing that some of these words were Arabic, which made for at least one embarrassing moment when I finally learned enough French to speak with non-family members). After decolonization, my family moved to France—the best place because of their colonial citizenship—after some men came around asking the owner of the building whose homes belonged to Jews. They wanted to vandalize the place, but luckily the landlord lied and did not inform them of my family's religion. So France became their home, until they realized that the anti-Semitism there was just as strong, and that branch of the family moved to Israel. When I visit, the languages French, English, and Hebrew are thrown around like wildfire. For this reason, we pronounce the name Ruth like the English word "root" which, I imagine, might be pronounced similarly in Caribbean English. Biblical Ruth, too, is a root, but not an arborous one; instead, she bears the potential for referential, rhizomatic roots—an open lineage in which the othered female is more than welcome: she is crucial for Hebraic persistence for generations to come.

[65] In Glissant's "L'Expanse et l'entendue" in *Poétique de la relation*, he explains that especially in the conception of the West, myth, epic, and religion are used to generate a filiation that fixes time to a linear template. Drawing on the example of Christ, he emphasizes that time is linearized in the before and after of Christ's existence, delineating a genealogy from G-d to David to Christ, the *son of G-d*. This creates a "History" of humanity, along with a "Knowledge" relies upon generalizations. Furthermore, Glissant explains that the paternal emphasis in this chain of filiation allows for a maternal role in the spiritual and in language. However, he explains that maternal filiations are not mutually exclusive with a lack of female oppression; rather, female oppression can sometimes worsen in matrilineal societies that still bear the rigid linearities of filiation (47-62). If we take into consideration that Ruth's genealogy leads to David, which leads to Christ, Glissant's analysis is strengthened: to generalize the filiation of Christ as one from a wholly Judaic, masculine line would be an erasure of Ruth's crucial link in the chain of Christ's genealogy.

such as the Bible that are used to teach morality and other components of subjectivity are much more complex than some of their teachers purport.

But a mere thirty pages after asking Ruth for this endless turning over of time, the text throws readers a curveball and says in a font that looks like handwriting, "*do not/ read this ruth/ it will destroy you"* (160). The new font makes it appear frantic and rushed. Subsequently, we must ask: will reading this destroy Ruth altogether, or will it destroy her as she was seen? Will (non)reading *Zong!* open Ruth up to new ways of being understood as well as the events onboard the Zong? As the text cannot be fully read, one cannot come to any sort of fixed conclusion regarding these topics; however, we can engage with the various potentials which the text highlights and subsequently opens up: if we highlight the potential for fixed time, reason, and law to silence people, we can look for places with the potential for the voices silenced to be heard. Subsequently, what emerges is a potential to step away from restrictive patterns which generate silence. Furthermore, if we utilize connections between events incurred by various races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, and genders to induce elaborative encoding, these memories can be highlighted—despite how painful this may be—to foster communities of rememberers. These remembers, however, must engage with the understanding that the play of time within memory is one which reaches out to others, in search of an always-unfinished engagement with experience. As a part of this practice, therefore, it is imperative to note that reading Ruth is only one of the multifaceted ways *Zong!* can be read. To read Ruth as such and as a finite reading would destroy her as well. For this reason, I have marked this text with the moments in time when I read Ruth, through her emergence in my performative reading. She may appear differently to others, and she may not be apparent to all; furthermore, she may take on new configurations in my own future readings.

In Philip and Camus' texts, a linearity in language, narration, discourse, and time is posed as violent, something to be broken up. For Camus, the orphans of Algeria will never have access to the linearity imposed by the Mère-Patrie of the French nation. At this realization, time falls apart and he forges his own lineage by pursuing his own education. This education, instead of generating a new type of linear time, fosters the growth of his alienation: as he gains access to French education and the narrative of the nation, he becomes distanced from his family's lifestyle of impoverished memory. For this reason, readers such as Algerian novelist Assïa Djebar revisit Camus' work after this posthumous publication, going so far as to underscore how his text manifests a wound that is characteristic of the Algerian context.[66] Philip and her coauthors Boateng, the legal text, the poem, and its readers also trace one of the many wounds of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Her emphasis on the violence of grammar in an era in which grammar is used as a means of understanding language generates a violent reading experience. While this mirrors the violence of the event, it also calls upon readers to return to the text and forge meaning for themselves. This performative reading experience collapses the boundary between author and reader and unravels the notion of discourse itself. Of course, her text is limited by the fact that she must explain this in linear form in the "Nontanda," as her context in the twenty-first century bridges the gap between a narration-dependent era and a relational era to come.

For both authors, the use of the Bible serves various purposes. On the one hand, the stories of Adam and Ruth serve as a trope through which they can read their own contexts (or for Philip, the context of Slave Trade that she wishes to investigate). Furthermore, considering

[66] See Djebar's "Albert Camus, the First Man, the Last Book" (1995) and *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1995).

partial readings of the Bible and underscoring how these readings erase its inherent complexity exposes the fraudulence inherent in a “Western,” imperial, and eventually colonial lineage. For Philip, the allusions to ancient texts can also provide a foundation of elaborative encoding, generating the ever-emergence of the indeterminate memory of this event in the readers. While this memory building can aid readers to reach toward comprehension, because of memory’s own indeterminacy, *Zong!* still retains its opacity by the performance of each reader and the return of those who decide to re-read the poems. By entering each of these texts through their impossibility and wrestling with brief moments of transparency that ultimately are rendered opaque by the performance between reader and author, we can notice the limitations inherent in unidirectional time. For these authors, breaking time is not intended as a violent practice in which meaning is never possible. Instead, time falls apart in these texts as a means of exposing the functionality of time, language, narrative, and discourse: to both bring people together and, all too often, to violently leave others out of these acts of storytelling. If, instead, we engage in a complex, performative understanding of time, meaning is made through a relation that is always aware of the potentially dangerous work that narrative can bear. While here, I have posited both the violence of limited representations of the Bible and the difficulty of representing violent events, the next chapter will assess a moment in which Camus’ own narration generates violence. Furthermore, it will assess the question of responding to violence with violence, considering the moments in which violence can be used for liberation, along with the danger of what I call the “responsive trap.”

Chapter 3

Haroun and Moussa: Temporal Assault and the Responsive Trap in Albert Camus, Kamel Daoud, and Frantz Fanon

In Albert Camus' first novel *L'Étranger [The Stranger]* (1942), a Frenchman in Algiers kills an Arab man on the beach. Responses to his novel have been ripe with contestation, leading many critics to assert that the novel voices colonial values, fostering a generalized reading of the Arab body as dangerous. Writing just a year before the posthumous publication of *Le Premier homme [The First Man]*,[67] postcolonial critic Edward Said emphasizes that the Arab who dies in *L'Étranger* is "not named and seems to be without a history" ("Camus and the French Imperial Experience" 175). Said asserts that the novel and other writings by Camus voice "an extraordinarily belated, in some ways incapacitated colonial sensibility, which enacts an imperial gesture within and by means of a form, the realistic novel, well past its greatest achievements in Europe" (176). While the implications of this novel and its writing are potentially dangerous, I would like to emphasize that aside from being a belated articulation of colonial sentiments, the novel could also be an early articulation of injustices on the part of the colonizer and the use of religious morality within the justice system. Linear time remains greatly intact in *L'Étranger*, as opposed to in *Le Premier homme*: Meursault, its narrator and murderer, is oriented temporally in a linear fashion. For him, time is short and unidirectional. However, the removal of freedom by imprisonment presents itself as a rupture that fosters a greater meditation on freedom and privilege in a French national context. In this chapter, I will read this uncomplicated temporal orientation in conversation with the absurd narrative that Meursault forwards to critique French systems of privilege. By doing so, this chapter will investigate whether the characters of the

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[67] Many scholars began to focus on Camus as an Algerian sympathizer after the publication of *Le Premier homme* because of its assertion of a common brotherhood of Algerian orphans (See Chapter 2).

Frenchman Meursault and the unnamed Arab trace symptoms of colonial sentiments, rather than what Said calls a reflection of Camus' own "sensibility." Crucial to this assessment is the critique of the justice system that the novel underscores. By describing the absurdity of Meursault's trial, the novel illuminates that religion proves to be a moral informant to the court, and that this characteristically religious version of the law is inherently tied to the concept of the supposedly secular nation. These approaches to moral judgment can each be read as violent within the novel, as they provide varying scales of exoneration through the justice system's assessment of Meursault's (lack of) morality and national duty as a means of determining his punishment. Critically, this moral scale eclipses the death that takes place. The templates for both religious morality and national duty both come from patriarchal models that use a Manichean model of good versus evil to label Meursault as both a murderer of this Arab and a facilitator of national patricide.

To investigate this topic in a contemporary context, this chapter must involve a consideration of Algerian responses to Camus' novel. Writing a companion text to *L'Étranger*, Kamel Daoud's novel *Meursault, contre-enquête [Meursault, Counter Investigation]* (2013) tells the same story from the perspective of the brother of Meursault's victim.[68] Some components of

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[68] Along with Brozgal and Kaplan, I would like to connect this type of "postcolonial remake" to Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), in which the novel is told from the perspective of Antoinette (who is later renamed as Bertha), the wife of Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* ("The Critical Pulse of the *Contre-enquête*"; "Making *L'Étranger* Contemporary"). *Wide Sargasso Sea* inserts itself in Bronte's novel to show that Antoinette is momentarily happy with their marriage, but Rochester's tendency to see her as a stranger, along with her stepbrother's letter to Rochester warning of Antoinette's family's history of involvement with slave trade, quickly estranges them. Antoinette finds herself trapped, since English law leaves the money in a marriage to the man, even when the money began as property of the woman. The final section is told from Antoinette's perspective, in which she is kept away in a room in the attic of their home in England (the only way in which she is seen—but not heard—in Bronte's novel). She dreams of burning the place down, and as she awakes, leaves Rhys' novel on the same path she took in the dream, doing "what [she] was brought here and what [she has] to do", suggesting that she will make her dream a reality (which is in fact the case in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre) (190). Rhys' novel is both an homage and a critique of Bronte's novel, in that it critiques the flat character that is labeled as Other and gives her a full story but remains dedicated to Bronte's original plot. Both remakes complete the story of their original in a way that gives

his novel take arms against Camus' novel, while others dedicate themselves to it. Daoud's narrator, Haroun, critiques Meursault and the author (the two become collapsed at times in Daoud's interpretation) for killing and never naming his brother. However, Daoud's novel adopts the exact same language as Meursault's narration at crucial moments—moments which also forward my assessment of *L'Étranger* as an evaluation of the legal misuse of religious morality and national duty. This analysis will hinge on the names given to the narrator and his brother: Haroun and Moussa,[69] respectively. These names echo Aaron and Moses of the Old Testament, as it is Haroun who must tell Moussa's story.[70] Furthermore, the novel also alludes to the biblical story of Cain and Abel, but eventually uses this reference to confuse the notion of murderer and victim rather than solidify them. This use of the Bible extends Camus' critique of religious morality rather than contesting it.

However, Daoud's novel continues to push back against *L'Étranger,* or what it represents, when it comes to the racialization of the Arab body. Discussing his brother's story with a French student-journalist,[71] Haroun explains, "*Arabe*, je ne me suis jamais senti arabe, tu sais. C'est comme la négritude qui n'existe que par le regard du Blanc" (Cullen 70 ; emphasis in original) ["*Arab*. I never felt Arab, you know. Arab-ness is like Negro-ness, which only exists in the white man's eyes" (60)]. This comparison of Black and Arab racialization suggests that the representation of the white man as a transcendental norm is what creates race altogether, a notion posited in Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs*

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voice to those labeled "Other," while simultaneously underscoring the means by which the law operates in support of a patronizing system.

[69] The English translation changes the spelling of these names to Harun and Musa.
[70] In Exodus, because Moses has a speech impediment, it is deemed that Aaron will be Moses' mouth (4:16).
[71] The novel suggests he could be either or both occupations, naming him each at various points in the novel. This collapse of occupations, along with the collapse between Meursault and Camus as the author-narrator, will be discussed in depth below.

[Black Skin, White Masks] (1952). Although Fanon outlines the position of the Black man in a predominantly Antillean context, his book touches on European racism towards Black Africans as well. Fanon's approach to race is also useful when considering Camus and Daoud's writing because of his arrival in Algeria to practice psychiatry and his eventual affiliation with the FLN during the Algerian War of Independence. Fanon's final book, *Les Damnés de la terre [Wretched of the Earth]* (1961), which will be discussed briefly, assesses the need for violence in revolution but also warns against simply rerouting corruption into new facets of a post-revolutionary society. Therefore, while *Peau noire, masques blancs* will be considered as a means of assessing race, moral and national duty, *Les Damnés de la terre* will help forward an assessment of the double-edged liberation and trap of violence in *Meursault, Contre-enquêtte.* This trap involves simultaneously the need for violence as a means to liberation and its irreversible mark on both the perpetrator and its victim. In doing so, this chapter forges a conversation between Camus and Fanon, two figures who were often opposed but enmeshed in the same contexts—lives overlapping in space, time, and thematic interest, but split by their responses to the colonial injustices they saw before them.

Time, Privilege, and the Other in *L'Etranger*

In "The Place of the Other," literary critic David Carroll confronts critical contestations of the violence against the Arab man in *L'Étranger*. By reading the critiques of many scholars like Connor Cruise O'Brien, Carroll emphasizes that many of these critics saw Camus' novel as a "*literary failure*" that underscored his "*political fault*" (20; emphasis in original). Algerian historian Pierre Nora claims that the novel "liberat[ed] latent aggressiveness" on the part of the colonizers. Responding to Nora, Carroll stresses the need to question whether the way Camus

has outlined the anonymity of his Arab character(s) echoes his biographical "sympathies and prejudices" (21). Carroll continues with a warning that "[h]astily drawn conclusions and sweeping generalizations about a novel taken out of context risk distorting or simply missing the most important political implications of the work itself—perhaps even in some cases sufficiently distorting the work to make it representative of a political position it in fact opposes" (21). By considering Carroll's assessment and challenging Nora's claims that the novel "liberat[es] latent aggressiveness," I argue that the novel exposes a latent aggressiveness in the colonizers, before it has been acknowledged, challenged, and overthrown by revolution, and that readers have little way of knowing if and to what extent Camus aligns with this aggressiveness. My goal is to extend Carroll's emphasis that Meursault is "condemned to death in the novel not for the murder of an anonymous Arab but for occupying the place of the Other" and he can be seen as a "subject for [colonial] conversion" or "assimilation" (26, 33). To consider Carroll's emphasis that Meursault occupies "the place of the Other," this section will investigate Meursault's refusal of patriarchal duty with respect to both religion and the nation. While his murderous shots echo colonial aggression towards native Algerians, the trial's emphasis on Meursault's lack of morality eclipses the same aggression and turns its focus on remediation for *pied-noirs* who do not support a filial, religio-national morality.

The novel begins with the death of Meursault's mother, his attendance and silence at her funeral, his subsequent affair with a former co-worker Marie, his return to work, and his new companionship with his neighbor Raymond Sintès.[72] Throughout these scenes, readers receive Meursault's emotionally depleted descriptions of his life, in which he exhibits complicity in the mistreatment of the woman that Raymond is sexually involved with. These early scenes subtly

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[72] Sintès was Camus' mother's maiden name. For that reason, there is a slight chance that Raymond could be modeled on Camus' uncle, Étienne, who appears in *Le Premier homme*.

set the platform for a white (French) norm of masculinity that quickly becomes violent. When Meursault becomes friends with Raymond, they discuss becoming pals and Raymond notes that he values Meursault's advice because he is a man (29). In the same scene, Raymond describes a scuffle he had with the brother of the woman he had been "entreten[ir]" (157) ["keeping]" (29)]. From his description of her as one to be kept, clearly Raymond sees this woman as an object. He explains that he believes the woman had been cheating on him, which he (possibly fallaciously) infers because she asks for more money, despite the money he gives for her rent and living expenses (157; 30). Although Meursault does not explicitly adopt Raymond's opinions, he does not contest them either, and he helps Raymond write a letter to the woman to get back at her one final time (159; 32). Meursault's only justification is that "je n'avais pas de raison de ne pas le contenter [Raymond]" (159) ["I didn't have any reason not to please him [Raymond]" (32)]. As Édouard Glissant points out in "Transparence et opacité" ["Transparency and Opacity"], this novel, which is often given to French language learners because of its apparent simplicity, "faisait l'impasse sur le drame situationnel que les événements d'Algérie avaient noué en Camus et qui retentissait sur la structure serrée, fiévreuse, retentue du style qu'il avait adopté, pour se confier tout en se retirant" (130) ["skip[s] right over the situational crisis that events in Algeria had formed in Camus and the echoes of this in the tight, feverish, and restrained structure of the style he had adopted to both confide and withdraw at the same time" (116)]. Thus instead of using this scene to merely assume that an analysis of Meursault pairs with an analysis of Camus himself, we might read between the lines to note that Camus is both confiding in and withdrawing from an analysis of what it means to enter a white, male companionship in Algiers in the 1940s.

Importantly, the woman in this scene is described as Moorish (Mauresque), and it never becomes clear to what extent this component of her description adds to her objectification (159). Like Meursault's victim, she lacks a name and is only identified by her ethnicity of Arab or Berber. This furthers her position as an object of an Orientalist desire.[73] This masculine support is what makes Raymond accept him as a pal, and they end the scene meditating on how quickly time passes, shaking hands while Raymond states that "entre hommes on se comprenait toujours" (160) ["men always understand each other" (33)]. For them, time is simple—here, it proceeds ordinarily—and their masculine brotherhood can ride on the backs of the women they objectify. In a later scene, Meursault hears Raymond beating up the woman and does not intervene (161-2; 36-7). This opening presents Meursault as a man with a simple direction, one who does not challenge those around him and subsequently becomes complicit in the violence against women. Thus Meursault's lifestyle follows Said's concept of latent Orientalism—which he calls "almost unconscious" and "certainly untouchable"—which forwards "a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world" (206-7). Said asserts that, "especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists," "women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy" (207). According to Said, "[b]eing a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. It made a specific style possible" (227). Raymond and Meursault's friendship relies upon the definition of what it means to be a (white) man as a place to find common ground. Each of these rely upon the myth of the (Moorish) woman, ultimately rendering her voice to be of lesser importance. This relies upon the

[73] In colonial North Africa, the tendency to read all Berber or Arabic women through a singular identity led to objectifying assumptions. For instance, it was assumed that a beautiful woman would be found beneath a veil, and photographs of unveiled women were often traded (Macey 405). A literary example of trading photographs can be found in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*. See Chapter 2 for a further account of Orientalism and its use of narrative pressure.

fact that "entre hommes" could mean between humans or between men, specifically. In each case, the Moorish woman is excluded from Meursault and Raymond's mutual understanding, suggesting that she is either excluded based on her position as woman or as a Moorish woman. While it is not fully clear whether their perspective on women hinges also on the race of the woman Raymond beats, the later murder scene on the beach underscores that their discussion of men understanding each other refers explicitly to either white or French men.

On the day of the murder, this complicity with violence becomes more explicitly defined by their position as white men, or as Frenchmen, different from the Arabs who know the unnamed woman Raymond is involved with. Shortly before Mersault kills the Arab man, his narration suggests that he may read all Arabic bodies as dangerous. A group of Arabs, which includes the brother of the woman Raymond is involved with, is seen before they get on the bus. Meursault explains that "[i]ls nous regardaient en silence, mais à leur manière, ni plus ni moins que si nous étions des pierres ou des arbres morts" (169) ["[t]hey were staring at us in silence, but in that way of theirs, as if we were nothing but stones or dead trees" (48)]. This moment generalizes the category of "Arab," unless it refers explicitly to this group that has been following them. In the former case, "à leur manière" suggests that Meursault may believe that all Arabs stare at Frenchmen in this way. Meursault's description that they look towards him and Raymond as if they are "pierres ou des arbres morts" could be a recognition of their stances as *pied-noirs*. This might mean that the Arab men reciprocate the French men with a homogenous reading which suggests that they are not men. Furthermore, it could be in conversation with critical race theorist and philosopher George Yancy's assertion of whiteness as a mythical or transcendental norm (*Look, a White!* 7). In this articulation of race, white identity is depleted or hollow because it relies upon its other—blackness or in this case Arab-ness—to generate its own

identity (Yancy 5). Thus Meursault and Raymond's identities are reliant upon the mythical difference of the Arabs before them, a myth that erases the nuances of each individual within the group.

Eventually, the same group is seen on the beach again. After encountering them while walking, Raymond says something to the man he is at odds with, and a brief scuffle ensues. Raymond makes the first blow, as a reaction to the man's movement towards him. The man pulls out a knife and takes a stab at Raymond's arm (172; 53). This brawl ends, and they return to the house. After seeing the doctor, Raymond wants to walk on the beach alone, but Meursault follows him. Meursault makes careful suggestions to Raymond not to instigate violence but only to respond if provoked, and he takes the gun from Raymond (174; 56). In this case, Meursault seeks to prevent the death to come, even though he will eventually cause it. When they draw near, Meursault realizes "qu'on pouvait tirer ou ne pas tirer " (174) ["that you could either shoot or not shoot" (56)]. What does Meursault mean by the options of shooting or not? It seems that he and Raymond's actions were already somewhat decisive, since Raymond had brought the gun in the first place. In that sense, those were the only two options Meursault had been given by Raymond (or himself) when Raymond placed the gun in his pocket. But is this categorical ultimatum representative of a larger sociopolitical picture? The polar opposites of actional choices are limited like the racial categories outlined in the novel. They include the opportunity to respond or react to violence with more violence (if they are attacked). On the other hand, as the novel later forwards, the options might not be simply responsive.

The racially collapsed category of "Arab" is furthered when the victim's actions are removed from the scene of the murder. Later in the day, Meursault returns to the beach on his own and encounters the man in question by himself. As Meursault approaches the man, light

reflects off the steel blade of the knife, "et c'était comme une longue lame étincelante qui qui m'atteignait au front" (175) ["and it was like a long flashing blade cutting at my forehead" (59)]. In this moment, the Arab's body becomes disassociated from the weapon, and the sun takes over to act in his place. Shortly thereafter, the blade and the sun become unbearable, leading Meursault to fire the fatal shots:

> Cette épée brûlante rongeait mes cils et fouillait mes yeux douloureux. C'est alors que tout a vacillé. La mer a charrié un souffle épais et ardent. Il m'a semblé que le ciel s'ouvrait sur toute son étendue pour laisser pleuvoir du feu. Tout mon être s'est tendu et j'ai crispé ma main sur le revolver. La gâchette a cédé, j'ai touché le ventre poli de la crosse et c'est là, dans le bruit à la fois sec et assourdissant, que tout a commencé. (175-6)
>
> The scorching blade slashed at my eyelashes and stabbed at my stinging eyes. That's when everything began to reel. The sea carried up a thick, fiery breath. It seemed to me as if the sky split open from one end to the other to rain down fire. My whole being tensed and I squeezed my hand around the revolver. The trigger gave; I felt the smooth underside of the butt; and there, in that noise, sharp and deafening at the same time, is where it all started. (59)

The sentence structure involving the blade as the subject, and not the man, renders unclear whether the man moves towards him or whether Meursault perceives a false threat. An example of Bhabha's metonymy of presence,[74] the knife becomes metonymic for the Arab man altogether, suggesting that the man's identity is easily erased in the eyes of Meursault. This moment also corresponds to the psychological phenomenon of "weapon focusing," in which the

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[74] See Chapter 2 for an account of Homi Bhabha's essay, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse."

victim of an attack can distinctly remember the weapon but not the attacker or other peripheral details. Cognitive psychologist Daniel Schacter explains that "the weapon focusing effect is most pronounced in people who report feeling anxious when they see the weapon" (*Searching for Memory* 210). For Meursault, this causes a visceral reaction and loss of composite awareness in which "tout a vacillé" and "[t]out [son] être s'est tendu." It is unclear whether the reeling takes place at a strictly physical level, an ontological level, or both. This moment is a *beginning*, but what type of beginning does it signal?

A first hint of the type of beginning emerges in the moments just after the murder. These same moments also underscore how the Arab body has been read as dangerous. The sun, which had been named as the catalyst for violence, is shaken off by Meursault, but his assault continues:

> J'ai secoué la sueur et le soleil. J'ai compris que j'avais détruit l'équilibre du jour, le silence exceptionnel d'une plage où j'avais été heureux. Alors, j'ai tiré encore quatre fois sur un corps inerte où les balles s'enfonçaient sans qu'il y parût. Et c'était comme quatre coups brefs que je frappais sur la porte du malheur. (176)
>
> I shook off the sweat and sun. I knew that I had shattered the harmony of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach where I'd been happy. Then I fired four more times at the motionless body where the bullets lodged without leaving a trace. And it was like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness. (59)

Although he shakes off the *perceived* instigator—the sun—and this leads to his understanding of how he destroyed the day's harmony, Meursault keeps firing when the man has fallen and is clearly not attacking him. There is a marked conceptual difference between the first shot and the last four. After the first shot, everything "started," but after the next four, he recognizes that he

has opened a pathway to unhappiness. While this realization suggests that Meursault is aware of his aggression beyond (potential) self-defense, the possibility that his actions emerge strictly from self-defense is subtracted by the fact that the first shot breaks a *generalized* harmony and the second shot catalyzes *his own* unhappiness.[75] In other words, this beginning might be an unhappiness catalyzed by his belated awareness of aggression, but it could also be a selfish concern for his own position as guilty rather than remorseful. Regardless, none of these considerations are posed in relation to the body, the life that has just been taken. As American philosopher Judith Butler points out in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), although one might be recognized as living, a contextual frame is needed to recognize a life "as a life" and subsequently mourn its death (4-9). Reliant upon such frames to designate when a life matters, she asserts that "[o]nly under the conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of life appear" (14). When that loss does not matter, "'there is a life that will never have been lived,' sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost" (15). Meursault works under a French colonial framework that does not recognize Arabs as full lives which bear names, give testimony, and are mourned for.

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[75] The difference between the two series of shots takes valence in a 21st century American context, in which there have been many cases where Black men and women have been gunned down by both citizens and police. The cases in which these victims are unarmed or running away, along with cases in which the body is still harmed after it has fallen, suggest that the shooters read the Black body as dangerous. This phenomenon is nothing new: as literary and Black Studies scholar Christina Sharpe writes in *In the Wake* (2016), the "afterlives" sees Black people as the "*carriers* of terror." She continues to discuss cases of the killing of "Black people in the United States who can 'weaponize sidewalks' (Trayvon Martin) and shoot themselves while handcuffed (Victor White III, Chavis Carter, Jesus Huerta, and more)" (15). Sharpe also gives the account of the murder of two of her family members: her schizophrenic cousin Robert, who was carrying a toy gun and was shot in the back; and her nephew Caleb who was shot from the "adjoining apartment" as he left his home (6-7). Despite the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, as I write this chapter in May of 2020, video footage surfaces of the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia. Pursued and gunned down by a father and son, Greg and Travis McMichael, Arbery was shot while he was jogging, unarmed. The video shows Arbery struggling with McMichael, after McMichael has charged at him with a shotgun, holding it to Arbery's chest. The father and son thought Arbery was a suspect in local robberies, but video footage shows that he was merely trespassing, looking around at a house that was under construction. Two months after his murder, the shooters had not been arrested until the footage of the murder was leaked to the press and the jurisdiction was passed on to a fourth prosecutor in a different county, since the previous prosecutors had ties to Greg McMichael (CNN).

Despite Meursault's lack of consideration for the body, Carroll points out that he is an honest narrator, which could influence our understanding of whether the case is premeditated or manslaughter. Carroll explains that Meursault's emotionally devoid descriptions are the same for the murder as they are for the other events, such as his mother's death (30). As a result, we cannot assume that Meursault is contriving his description of the knife attacking him (as opposed to the man), nor can we fully reject his assertion that the sun was the instigator. Carroll adds that, in a colonial context, it would likely be the case that a Frenchman killing an Arab would typically have been described as manslaughter rather than premeditated murder (30-1). One could subsequently read Meursault's narration as a symptom of the violent context at hand, rather than an ideal forwarded by Camus himself. Pointing out that the purpose of the murder serves to forward a plot that is more focused on the absurdity of Meursault's case, Carroll concludes that the fate of Meursault and this man "are inextricably intertwined from the moment Meursault wanders back to the spot on the beach where the original fight took place and fires the gun, killing a man whose fault is to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Meursault's fault (and guilt) will turn out to be the same as his victim's, as will be his fate" (31). Therefore, this problematic absence of the agency of the Arab man is at the same time a means of describing the context of colonial Algeria and a means of shifting the plot to ultimately become more focused on the trial.

The lack of consideration for the Arab man's life continues throughout the investigation and trial. Despite this continuation of violence towards the victim of the murder through its silence in the trial and investigation, a new critique of the legal system's orientation toward a religious morality, one which patronizes its subjects, emerges during the proceedings. Furthermore, those who ascribe to this religio-national morality are more likely to be (at least

partially) exonerated for their crimes; it is this system that allows for the violent label of "manslaughter" rather than "murder" that Carroll refers to. The novel's critique of this system highlights a secondary and extended form of the same violence that Meursault engaged in: a continued erasure of the victim because of the potential for exoneration—so long as the defendant ascribes to a French morality. In this logic, the murder of the Arab man makes no difference: it is rendered almost fully irrelevant to the trial altogether. By not tapping into this system, Meursault—although likely inadvertently—confronts and exposes the nation and legal system's violence towards Arabs. However, this exposure of the problem of national morality refrains from characterizing Meursault as a hero, as he does not feel remorse for his murderous actions.

During the investigation, Meursault's position as different to the religio-national morality takes the shape of the magistrate's interest in him as a sort of special case, along with his lawyer's revulsion towards him. In both cases, Meursault surprises them because he is not willing to engage with the fraudulent games of contrived morality that the legal system supports. The investigation begins with Meursault almost shaking hands with the magistrate but then remembering that he has just committed a murder (177-8; 64). While he clearly lacks remorse in this moment, Meursault also neglects typical body language cues of the investigation process in which the guilty should not act with impunity. This may be because, at this moment, he still sees himself as a free man (a topic that will be discussed in more detail below), but it may also be because he does not see the need to change his communication style for the new environment of the legal proceedings. After the questions turn towards his mother's funeral, Meursault says to the magistrate that his mother's funeral had "pas de rapport avec [son] affaire" ["nothing to do with the case"], and the magistrate responds by saying that "il était visible que je n'avais jamais

eu de rapports avec la justice" (178-9) ["it was obvious I had never had any dealings with the law" (65)]. At this moment, the law itself is put under examination. After this, Meursault wants the magistrate's sympathy, "non pour être mieux défendu, mais, si je puis dire, naturellement. Surtout, je voyais que le mettais mal à l'aise. Il ne me comprenait pas et il m'en voulait un peu" (179) ["not so that he'd defend me better, but if I can put it this way, good in a natural way. Mostly, I could tell, I made him feel uncomfortable. He didn't understand me, and he was sort of holding it against me" (66)]. Here, Meursault only wants to be on good terms for the sake of having good relationships (as opposed to creating an air of innocence), but his disinterest in acting to appease the legal system (by contriving his responses to fit the mold of "not or less guilty") confuses the magistrate and makes him read Meursault as Other. As Carroll points out, the purpose of the Arab's death being largely ignored in the legal case is to initiate this critique of the legal system and make Meursault appear as a greater threat to French society by not lying during his case. Carroll makes a point to emphasize that this *both* highlights the injustices of colonial Algeria *and* a broader legal French paradox (27-9). However, both Meursault's emphasis on the latter and the national tendency to prescribe this book as a first read for French language learners is telling: aside from reviews that point starkly to the colonial injustices upon Arab and Berber people (evoked more readily by postcolonial scholars like Said), the unnamed Arab's death and especially the violence against women are often overlooked.

Meursault's refusal to adopt a contrived moral air continues later in the same scene when he is assigned a lawyer for his case who is equally surprised by his responses. He explains that he is interested in Meursault, and that he would try to assist him "avec l'aide de D[']" (179) ["with G[-]d's help" (67)]. At this moment, the legal counsel that Meursault receives becomes reliant upon G-d's support. However, the lawyer recognizes the violence in the murder case by

asking why Meursault fires more than one shot. When Meursault does not know how to respond, the lawyer continues to evoke G-d and claims that despite his guilt, he could be forgiven if he "repentir devînt comme un enfant dont l'âme est vide et prête à tout accueillir" (180) ["repent and in so doing become like a child whose heart is open and ready to embrace all" (68)]. Here, religion is exonerating, as opposed to simply the law. Throughout Meursault's case, the two forms of moral assessment work together and become patronizing. To be exonerated, Meursault would have to surrender himself to religion and become its childlike subject. To do this would be a configuration similar to slavery itself, albeit at a drastically varying scale. Furthermore, to be successful (read: exonerated) in this assessment relies upon the condition that a man becomes a child in order to open his heart.

Becoming child-like through religion (and under the eyes of the law) entails removing the ambiguity of being open to a free moral system to instead be guided by a master—an adult, a deity, or a patronizing national system. In *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* [*The Ethics of Ambiguity*] (1947), French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir articulates an existentialist ethics in which unidirectional orientations can become unethical because of their limitations. This ethics is reliant upon the ambiguity between one's present situation (facticity) and emergence of consciousness, or the "surgissement du pour-soi qui est immédiatement donné pour autrui" (13) ["surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others" (10)]. It relies upon failure and uprooting: by being open to freedom (a consciousness that transcends one's facticity), all its possibilities and difficulties, one can engage in projects which do not rely upon specific ends (25). Remarking that this ethics is developed in the unfolding of time, she uses the example of a child who does not have morals until he or she is capable of "se reconnaître dans le passé, de se prévoir dans l'avenir" (37-8) ["recognizing himself in the past or seeing himself in the future"

(27)]. While this recognition of time can orient one morally, the ambiguity of the possible ends of this orientation must remain intact, leaving one to be directed toward an open future (82). De Beauvoir's example of children involves a lack of temporal orientation because of their early stage of development, but when the same infantilization is applied to those who have crossed the threshold of this development (or are refused the ability to be considered for this development), the potential for ambiguity is violently removed. She explains that, "dans la mesure où ils respectaient le monde des blancs, la situation des esclaves noirs était exactement une situation infantile. Dans beaucoup des civilisations, cette situation est aussi celle des femmes" (54) ["[t]o the extent that they respected the world of the whites the situation of the black slaves was exactly an infantile situation. This is also the situation of women in many civilizations" (37)]. The irony of Meursault's case is that, while he is complicit in Raymond's infantilization of the Moorish woman, after he commits murder, religion becomes an equally infantilizing force: religion purifies the immoral soul only after the individual refutes his or her autonomy. As philosophy of communication scholars Ramsey Eric Ramsey and Jessica N. Sturgess articulate in "Speaking Freely: Thinking with Camus and Beauvoir toward a Philosophy of Communication," an ethical transcendence "is without absolute foundation, yet it must be grounded communicatively in the creation of projects and engagements that give meaning to existence" (130-1). When religion comes into a national legal context, it is used as an absolute foundation because it must arrive at a specific code that is deemed moral but has specific ends. This definitive moral code patronizes Meursault in the same unambiguous manner by which slaves and women are patronized when other people infantilize them.

Unwilling to succumb to the infantilizing moral games of the legal system, Meursault explains that he "avai[t] très mal suivi dans son raisonnement" (180) ["found it very hard to

follow his lawyer's reasoning" (68)]. When Meursault says that he does not believe in G-d, his lawyer "dit que c'était impossible, que tous les hommes croyaient en D['], même ceux qui se détournaient de son visage. C'était là sa conviction et, s'il devait jamais en douter, sa vie n'aurait plus de sens" (181) ["said it was impossible; all men believed in G[-]d, even those who turn their backs on him. That was his belief, and if he were ever to doubt it, his life would become meaningless" (69)]. In this case, the lawyer relies upon a transcendental religious belief to derive meaning, all the while playing into the legal game of contriving details to absolve his clients of guilt. Despite his belief in non-believers, after being exposed to Meursault's refusal to tap into this system, the lawyer proclaims, "Je n'ai jamais vu d'âme aussi endurcie que la vôtre" (181) ["I have never seen a soul as hardened as yours" (69)]. This shock continues during Meursault's imprisonment and trial, making him the stranger to a religiously informed legal system.

After his imprisonment, a change occurs in which Meursault becomes aware of freedom and privilege and how they operate. When he is first imprisoned, he explains that "ce qui a été le plus dur, c'est que j'avais des pensées d'homme libre" (185) ["the hardest thing was that my thoughts were still those of a free man" (76)]. This stresses that prison involves the removal of freedom and privilege. As de Beauvoir asserts, "[l]a claustration à vie est la plus horrible des peines, parce qu'elle conserve l'existence dans sa pure facticité, mais qu'elle lui interdit tout légitimation. Une liberté ne peut se vouloir sans se vouloir comme mouvement indéfini" (43-4) ["[l]ive imprisonment is the most horrible of punishments because it preserves existence in its pure facticity but forbids it all legitimation. A freedom cannot will itself without willing itself as an indefinite movement" (31)]. During a conversation with a guard, Meursault is reminded why he is in prison: "'On vous prive de la liberté.' Je n'avais jamais pensé à cela. Je l'ai approuvé: 'C'est vrai, lui ai-je dit, où serait la punition ?—Oui, vous comprenez les choses, vous. Les

autres non. Mais ils finissent par se soulager eux-mêmes' » (186) ["'They've taken away your freedom.' I'd never thought about that. I agreed. 'It's true,' I said. 'Otherwise, what would be the punishment?' 'Right. You see, you understand these things. The rest of them don't but they just end up doing it by themselves'" (78)].[76] Meursault recognizes his facticity is constricted before the other inmates, who eventually "relieve themselves" (my translation). Corollary to this removal of freedom is a desire to kill time. Revisiting memory becomes his sole refuge from boredom and a lack of freedom (186-7; 78-9); in his memories, he can return to a legitimized existence. Meursault already had heard that "on finissait par perdre la notion du temps en prison" ["eventually you lose track of time in prison"], but after experiencing it, he realizes that this is because days can be "à la fois longs et courts. Longs à vivre sans doute, mais tellement distendus qu'ils finissaient part déborder les uns sur les autres. Ils y perdaient leur nom. Les mots hier ou demain étaient les seuls qui gardaient un sens pour moi" (187) ["both long and short at the same time: long to live through, maybe, but so drawn out that they ended up flowing into one another. They lost their names. Only the words 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' still had any meaning for me" (80)]. [77] If we read his shift in consideration of time in conjunction with his meditation on freedom, a measurable and linear version of time with distinct days becomes a matter of privilege.

During the trial, Meursault is shocked by the tendency for the prosecutors to consider his morals rather than the scene of violence. After he is sentenced to death, privilege remains a

[76] Here, the translation falls short, as "se soulanger eux-mêmes" translates idiomatically to "relieving themselves," importing a euphemism for urination or masturbation.

[77] As I write, COVID-19 has led to social distancing measures in much of the world. Although I live in a place where I am still allowed to walk outdoors, the inability to see friends and family and the closure of public venues has an eerily confining quality to it. After a few weeks, my roommate begins counting the days on the whiteboard in our kitchen, writing notes of affliction in different voices—some are funny; some are depressing. At some point, the days are still chronological, but they skip ahead in arbitrary quantities. Eventually, the day's number is listed as 10Z and the note says that he's ready to break out of this prison. I draw a cartoon figure of a man running, his hair streaming behind him.

matter of consideration. Furthermore, it becomes characterized through national legacies. He explains that the verdict "avait été prise par des hommes qui changent de linge, qu'elle avait portée au crédit d'une notion aussi imprécise que le peuple français (ou allemande, ou chinois), il me semblait bien que tout cela enlevait beaucoup de sérieux à telle décision" (205) ["had been decided by men who change their underwear, the fact that it had been handed down in the name of some vague notion called the French (or German, or Chinese) people—all of it seemed to detract from the seriousness of the decision" (109)]. That they change their underwear is a reminder that they have the privilege of changing it, that they are free and that their minds remain free like Meursault's was before he was in prison. Furthermore, the verdict has been handed down, as if it has been passed down a lineage. Importantly, this lineage begins as strictly French but then is rendered broadly nationalistic by the addition of Germany and China. It is complicated and problematic to consider what he means when he says that this national lineage detracts from the decision's seriousness, especially considering that he does not feel much remorse, even after he realizes he is guilty (101). However, this analytical work is important because it considers the violence of a nation's imposition of morality.

This analysis hinges on the fact that the trial emphasizes his narrative of morality more than the scene of murder. Although he first realizes that he is guilty after they discuss his emotionally devoid response to his mother's death, Meursault is shocked by the fact that this same detail is ultimately used to condemn him to death, rather than the facts from the day of the murder. In "Réflexions sur la guillotine" (1957), Camus, remarking on the potential for chance and details to affect the sentencing in a murder case, lists the accused's manner as a means by which he or she might be judged. The aside after "son attitude" explains it "ne lui est favorable que si elle est conventionnelle, c'est-à-dire comédienne, la plupart du temps" (154) ["is in his

favor only if it is conventional—in other words, play-acting most of the time" (214)]. Paradoxically, Meursault's desire not to play a false role grafts him onto a scale of immorality. In the closing statement, the prosecutor explains that "le vide du cœur tel qu'on le découvre chez cet homme devient un gouffre où la société peut succomber" (200) ["the emptiness of a man's heart becomes, as we find it has in this man, an abyss threatening to swallow up society" (101)]. Readers must ask themselves whether the prosecutor's reference to society refers to the crime or to Meursault's characteristics that suggest his broader moral positioning. The latter corresponds to my assessment of national morality and suggests that those out of line with the national narrative require remediation or worse: death.

In the final statements, the prosecutor connects Meursault's case to the following one to be heard in the courtroom—a case of patricide—claiming that Meursault could also be found guilty of that crime. He then explains that Meursault "n'avai[t] rien à faire avec un société dont [il] méconnaissai[t] les règles le plus essentielles et que [il] ne pouvai[t] pas en appeler à ce cœur humain dont [il] ignorai[t] les réactions élémentaires" (200-1) ["had no place in society whose most fundamental rules [he] ignored and that [he] could not appeal to the same human heart whose elementary response [he] knew nothing of" (102)]. The emphasis on fundamental rules suggests that the prosecutor does refer to his morality rather than the facts of the case. Additionally, the connection of Meursault's case to another generates a narrative between legal cases that itself becomes violent, allowing for the remediation by death that I have already noted. Furthermore, because this societal remediation neglects the murder at hand, the legal system—and subsequently the French nation determining colonial law—does additional violence to the deceased Arab man by deleting his murder from the picture of preferred morality. Thus when the prosecutor evokes "un commandement impérieux [pour des peines capitales] et sacré et par

l'horreur que je ressens devant un visage d'homme où je ne lis rien que de monstrueux" (201) ["a sacred imperative [for the death penalty] and by the horror I feel when I look into a man's face and all I see is a monster"], he places Meursault in the place of the Other, but one that is ultimately disconnected from the racialized type of Other that the Arab represents in the novel (102). There are therefore *two* intertwined problems in the novel: racialized othering and nationalistic othering. When these two are combined, the violence is compounded.

Furthermore, this national morality carries a theological weight to its supposed secularism which acts at once both to condemn Meursault and to erase the victim of the murder. For Meursault, the trouble with the death penalty is that it is recommended as a matter of homogeneity, and that no citizen has a shot against it unless they generate a (possibly fraudulent) narrative that fits within its scope. He explains that "je constatais que ce que était défectueux avec le couperet, c'est qu'il n'y avait aucun chance, absolument aucune" (205-6) ["I could see that the trouble with the guillotine was that you had no chance at all, absolutely none" (111)]. Importantly, he continues by stressing that "tout le secret d'une bonne organisation était là. En somme, le condamné était obligé de collaboration moralement. C'était son intérêt que tout marchât sans accroc" (206) ["that was the whole secret of good organization. In other words, the condemned man was forced into a kind of moral collaboration. It was in his interest that everything go off without a hitch" (111)], that the guillotine works the first time. The man who decided not to construct a fraudulent narrative ends up wishing he dies smoothly. In "Réflexions sur la guillotine," Camus points out that capital punishment was originally inflected as a religious penalty, in which a case cannot be ultimately judged, so final judgment is left to the supreme being. Subsequently, even an atheist judge "se place sur le trône de D['], sans en avoir les pouvoirs et d'ailleurs sans y croire" (160-1) ["takes his place on the throne of G[-]d, without

having the same powers and even without believing in G[-]d" (224-5)]. Discussing the cases of sexual inequality and hostility towards Islam, Butler discusses the means by which France evokes the notion of *laïcité* (secularity) to invoke an approach to national culture that all too frequently "functions in alliance with theological norms of kinship" (*Frames of War* 116-7). In her account, the symbolic order that ties anti-homosexual to anti-Islamic sentiments is "pervasively paternal and nationalistic" (114-5). Still addressing the violent inflection of national culture against its outsiders, Butler pivots to the torture of Arabs in Abu Grhaib and Guantámo by U.S. personnel, asserting that "the torture was also a way to coercively produce the Arab subject and the Arab mind" (126). Ironically, the violent acts that Meursault commits function under the same systematic umbrella as the one which condemns him. Thus the comparison of Meursault's case to that of patricide is no accident: his rejection of the constructive narrative of morality encompasses what the court perceives as a broader rejection of national filiation. Whether this is (on the part of Camus) intentionally to disavow the same logic that erases the Arab life is yet a matter that remains unanswered.

This critique becomes much more explicit in his last encounter with the chaplain who visits him before his execution. When addressing the idea of other people who have had help from G-d before death, Meursault "reconnu que c'était leur droit. Cela prouvait aussi qu'ils en avaient le temps. Quant à moi, je ne voulais pas qu'on m'aidât et justement le temps me manquait pour m'intéresser à ce qui ne m'intéressait pas » (209) ["acknowledged that that was their right. It also meant that they must have had the time for it. As for me, I didn't want anybody's help, and I just didn't have the time to interest myself in what didn't matter to me" (117)]. Here, the notion of time as privileged reemerges: Meursault does not have time to adopt a devotion to a deity he has yet to become interested in because his privilege has been stripped and

he confronts the ultimate end of death. Importantly, although not directly acknowledged, he has been stripped by a legal system that has adopted a religious take on morality. For that reason, when the chaplain claims that "la justice des hommes n'était rien et la justice de D['] tout" ["justice was nothing and divine justice was everything"], Meursault is quick to underscore "que c'était première qui m'avait condamné. Il m'a répondu qu'elle n'avait pas, pour autant, lavé mon péché. On m'avait seulement appris que j'étais un coupable" (210) ["that it was the former that had condemned me. His response was that it hadn't washed away my sin for all that. I told him I didn't know what a sin was. All they told me was that I was guilty" (118)]. What is important here is that the legal justice condemns him, but the adoption of religion could absolve him of his sin. There is a break in the communicative chain in which Meursault received no explicit clarification that religious morality could be exonerating. In this type of exoneration, religion itself would permit the murder of the Arab man so long as the killer accept G-d into his heart. Therefore, this use of religion is just as violent as the act of murder, along with the court's neglect of the murder.

When the chaplain persists in suggesting religion as a means of preparing for death, Meursault's contestations continue the novel's earlier assertions that one becomes a child in the face of G-d, along with Meursault's rejection of this idea. In his final rejection of the Chaplain's words, Meursault details how he "avancé vers lui et j'ai tenté de lui expliquer un dernière foi qu'il me restait peu de temps. Je ne voulais pas le perdre avec D[']. Il a essayé de changer de sujet en me demandant pourquoi je l'appelais 'monsieur' et non pas 'mon père.' Cela m'a énervé et je lui ai repondu qu'il n'était pas mon père: il était avec les autres" (211) ["went up to him and made one last attempt to explain to him that I had only a little time left and I didn't want to waste it on G-d. He tried to change the subject by asking me why I was calling him 'monsieur' and not

'father.' That got me mad, and I told him he wasn't my father; he wasn't even on my side" (120)]. On the one hand, Meursault's words could easily be read as violent because being "avec les autres" could refer to a desire for exoneration. However, if we read it only in conversation with national religious morality, to not be on his side means that the chaplain, too, is a proponent of the "moral collaboration" which corners Meursault. Meursault sees the infantilization or/and the legacy generated by the religious system as the operating factor in this moral collaboration by contesting the term "father." This makes him burst and he attacks the chaplain (211; 120). While Meursault's first moment of violence is directed towards the Arab man who is depleted of a nuanced and unique identity, his second moment of violence is directed towards the chaplain who becomes metonymic for the institution of patriarchal religious and national morality.

As the novel closes and Meursault draws nearer to death, his response to the chaplain returns to the notion of privileged time. Declaring that nothing matters and all is absurd, Meursault explains that "[d]u fond de mon avenir, pendant tout cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi à travers des années qui n'étaient pas encore venues et ce souffle égalisant sur son passage tout ce qu'on me proposait alors dans les années pas plus réelles que je vivais" (212) ["[t]hroughout the whole absurd life I'd lived, a dark wind had been rising toward me from somewhere deep in my future, across years that were still to come, and as it passed, this wind leveled whatever was offered to me at the time, in years no more real than the ones I was living" (121)]. Here, time functions backwards, as his future has been affecting his present for an entire life. Furthermore, neither the years presented by this backward temporal affect nor the years perceived as normal are real.

He then connects false time to the idea of national morality by returning to the absurdity of considering G-d or the love of a mother, explaining that "puisqu'un seul destin devait m'élire

moi-même et avec moi des milliards de privilégiés qui, comme lui, se disaient mes frères. Comprenait-il, comprenait-il donc? Tout le monde était privilégié. Il n'y avait que des privilégiés. Les autres aussi, on les condamnerait un jour" (212) ["we're all elected by the same fate, me and billions of privileged people like him who also called themselves my brothers? Couldn't he see, couldn't he see that? Everybody was privileged. There were only privileged people. The others would all be condemned one day. And he would be condemned, too" (121)]. Ultimately, the use of morality like so is what forges privilege and projects it onto others. The "others" could refer to his other friends and acquaintances, who he names shortly thereafter in the same vein. However, if we consider Memory Studies scholar Michael Rothberg's account of the limitations of the terms "victim" and "perpetrator," "others" could also refer to all people or those who are implicated in systems of privilege.[78] Importantly, those around him who tap into this privilege take themselves to be his brothers. The fact that they refer to themselves as brothers suggests that it is a forged, fraudulent relationship devoid of nuanced meaning. The connection of brothers in a nation, along with the connection of fathers under a secularity that imports the religious father of G-d, thus generates violent community, one that eradicates those who are perceived as a threat to its structures of narration. Furthermore, within this corrective approach, a body read as Other, one who has been violently murdered, is erased, and the violence against him is forgotten. Therefore, although the unnuanced category of "Arab" that Meursault narrates is violent, the means by which the legal system uses a patronizing religo-national morality to cast Meursault into the category of "immoral" is also violent because it elides the original murder altogether. In Meursault's case, he cannot be deemed explicitly a perpetrator nor

[78] In *The Implicated Subject: Cultural Memory in the Present* (2019), Rothberg explains that "[a]n implicated subject is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator, and yet in which most people do not occupy such clear-cut roles" (Kindle Location 123).

a victim: concurrent with his obvious perpetration of murder and his complicity with violence against women, he is also victimized by the same paternalistic, religiously-infused French national system through which he is implicated in violence towards Algerian Arabs.[79]

Mirroring *L'Étranger*: Haroun, Moussa, and the Responsive Trap

In one sense, Kamel Daoud's *Meursault, contre-enquête*, presents itself as an attack on both Camus' novel and Daoud's own contemporary Algerian context.[80] While there are some explicit moments that seem to attack *L'Étranger*, I assert that an attack against the novel's details is not necessarily an attack against the author (although, admittedly, this becomes a bit confused as Daoud's narrator conflates the character and the writer of the novel). Secondly, I would like to stress how much Daoud's novel mirrors Camus' as a means of both consuming it for attack and extending some of the novel's critiques of national religious morality. While it confronts the colonial racism in *L'Étranger*, the novel both suggests and warns against violence as a response or reaction to it. Although some critics like Lia Brozgal underscore how Daoud's novel secularizes *L'Étranger* ("The Critical Pulse of the *Contre-enquête*" 43), this section will emphasize that, to conduct the assessments of colonial racism and national morality, the novel also evokes the biblical and Qur'anic allusions of Cain and Abel, along with Moses and Aaron. The reference to Cain and

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[79] According to Rothberg, using the vocabulary of implication as opposed to complicity can be beneficial because it allows both a diachronic (through history) and synchronic (in the present moment) approach to discussing violence (Kindle Location 256-272). Furthermore, the term "complicity" can fall short because of its tendency to fall within legal discourse, along with its position as "a term linked to unfolding processes and completed actions (such as the perpetration of a crime), but it works less well for describing the relationship of the past to the present" (Kindle Location 345-366).

[80] In "Lost in reading: The predicament of postcolonial writing in Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*", Arabic literature scholar Sami Alkyam explains that Daoud and other post-independence Algerian authors "trace the scars of French colonization on the Algerian body politic but refuse to absolve the post-independence leadership of their responsibility for deepening the wounds, especially since Algeria has been under military rule since independence" (467-8). Alkyam explains the unfounded denunciations of the novel, spearheaded by self-appointed muhtasib, Abdelfatah Hamadache, who had not read the book in full (460-2).

Abel not only induces (re)considerations of (post)colonial murder, it also opens a reconsideration of origin myths more broadly. This blurs the distinctions between victim and murderer while considering forged brotherhood in the spaces affected by settler colonialism. The reference to Moses and Aaron continues these considerations and draws on the idea of slavery and mastery. These figures help postulate the idea of a father figure and a homeland, all the while considering how memory and narration contribute to the notion of homeland. Through these allusions, considerations of the Algerian (post)colonial context, along with narrative, writing, and time, are up for grabs. They are each placed under threat as a response to their potential for violence, but eventually, the threat itself is placed under reconsideration.

Before responding to Camus' novel, *Meursault, contre-enquête* opens with an epigraph that underscores the emphasis on time and history in the novel, declaring, in the words of Romanian philosopher E.M. Cioran, that "L'heure du crime ne sonne pas en même temps pour tous les peuples. Ainsi s'explique la permanence de l'histoire" ["*The hour of crime*[81] does not strike at the same time for every people. This explains the permanence of history"]. In this quote, the differentiation of crime's occurrences is paradoxically opposed to the "permanence de l'histoire," while the two also work in conjunction with one another. This quote does not clarify whether the moment of crime is considered with regards to its victims, its perpetrators, both, or whether those distinctions are even reliable. Considering the perpetuity of history, it could be read that history's permanent narration of events is itself criminal in its elimination of the differentiation of its hours from one people to the next. I use "perpetuity" to represent permanence ironically, in tandem with the limited distinctions of perpetrator and victims. The word "perpetuity" comes from the Latin roots "perpetuitāt" or "perpetuitās," a "continuity in time and space," and first appears in

[81] The emphasis in Daoud's epigraph only appears in the English text.

English in 1400 (OED “perpetuity”). “Perpetrate” comes the root “perpetrāt,” to “carry through, execute, perform,” and appears in English in legal language in 1535 (OED “perpetrate”). The roots are only slightly different, and the definition to “carry through” for perpetration bears a temporality much like “perpetuity” in which an action is carried into some part of the future. We might use this to consider how the distinction of perpetrator is given a perpetual label. Additionally, the perpetuity of history gives any perpetration within it a compound sense of violence—fixing its victims within its story. The emphasis on narration, rather than perpetrators and victims, opens more room for Rothberg’s “‘multidirectionality’ of memory [which] can also facilitate awareness of implication in the present as well as the past” (Kindle Location 500). For Daoud’s narrator, the first crime took place within Camus’ novel, *L’Étranger*, in which a man without a name was brutally murdered and his life was not considered significant to the trial. Haroun, Daoud’s narrator and also the brother of the murdered man in Camus’ novel, names Camus’ victim to restore him to the status of a unique human being. Importantly, the murdered man’s name is Moussa. The names Haroun and Moussa are Arabic for Aaron and Moses, respectively. Beyond the first crime of racialized murder, many more are underscored throughout Daoud’s novel which include but are not limited to the first murder case of Cain and Abel, Camus’ writing itself, Haroun’s own (potential) writing, and Haroun’s murder of a Frenchman. By broadening the crimes beyond the individual murder, Haroun implicates many more—including history itself—in the killing of his brother. Furthermore, by mirroring Camus’ novel, Daoud’s novel commits at once a literary crime and a dedication, making the entire novel a simultaneous support and critique of the idea of responding to crime with crime.

Telling his brother's story to a university-investigator,[82] Haroun takes up this assessment of crime by generating an affront on writing itself. The novel opens with a direct attack on Camus' writing by inverting the opening lines: while Camus' novel famously opens with his mother's death, Daoud's opens by noting that his mother is still alive. These moments of literary consumption continue throughout the novel. Haroun underscores the violence of Camus' novel when he asserts that "le premier savait raconteur, au point qu'il a réussi à faire oublier son crime" (11) ["the original guy was such a good storyteller, he managed to make people forget his crime" (1)]. The novel also names the narrator Albert Meursault,[83] and calls him "l'écrivain tueur" (64) ["the writer-killer" (54)]. These moments (and many more) conflate Camus the author with his narrator, Meursault. Importantly, this extends the critiques of Camus' novel from scholars like Said, who read Camus' politics through the novel. However, by considering this conflation of author-narrator alongside the mirroring of Camus' novel, we must consider Daoud's novel to be both an affront on *L'Étranger* and a tribute to it. Such a tribute might even suggest that Daoud critiques scholars who read Camus' politics through the novel.[84]

This simultaneous contestation and dedication manifests in a written reversal that becomes both an opening and a closure, a disconnection and a reconnection. Introducing the story of his brother's death, Haroun explains that "[c]'est une histoire prise par la fin et qui remonte vers son début" (12) ["[i]t's a story that begins at the end and goes back to the beginning" (2)]. This

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[82] Throughout the novel, he calls the person he talks to "monsieur l'enquêteur" ["Mr. Investigator"] who later is called "monsieur 'l'inspecteur universitaire'" [Mr. Student Detective"] (27, 30 French; 17, 20 English). Here, I have chosen to combine the two by calling the listener a university-investigator. This allows for an ambiguity in which we cannot tell whether the investigator is affiliated with the university as a student, a professor, or another university personnel.

[83] As Alice Kaplan points out, the Barzakh edition adds the name "Albert" and mentions *L'Étranger* directly, but the Actes Sud edition only says "Meursault" and renames the novel to *L'Autre* for copyright purposes ("Making *L'Étranger* Contemporary" 343).

[84] Although remarking on contemporary Algeria, Daoud says in an interview that "[i]f we were to judge people on the basis of characters in their books, we will be facing dark times in Algeria" (MEMRI TV, "Islamist Politician Demands Execution of Algerian Author Kamel Daoud for Blasphemy in His Book").

beginning refers to the facts of the murder found in *L'Étranger*, along with the broader context of Algerian colonization. As Mary Poteau-Traile explains in "Fictionalizing Fiction through the Metaphor of (De)Construction in Kamel Daoud's *Meursault*, *contre-enquête,*" the binary opposition created between the two books as beginning and end leads the reader into "the trap of forgetting that both narratives are a fiction. Daoud forces the reader to face the conundrum that a deconstructed and reconstructed narrative 'house' sits upon a foundation (Camus') that was never itself stable in the first place" (4). Furthermore, Daoud's use of biblical and Qur'anic allusions extends this "beginning" to all of Judeo-Christian and Islamic history, rendering the "house" of a Western worldview unstable. If Haroun's beginning refers to Genesis, where the story of Cain and Abel resides, since scholars note that the story of creation occurs at least three times, this beginning remains unstable.[85] If the beginning refers to Moses and Aaron, as the characters' names and allusions suggest, it would be the beginning of narration, as the Pentateuch (Old Testament) was once said to be narrated by Moses; however, this beginning remains unstable as scholars have widely refuted this account of the Bible's composition, instead proclaiming that it has undergone various revisions by numerous authors.[86]

As a possible affront to writing in French, more specifically, Haroun recommends that the story be "réécrite, dans la même langue, mais de droite à gauche" (16) ["rewritten, in the same language, but from right to left" (7)]. The change in direction suggests that Haroun seeks to infuse the French language with the structure and sentiment of Arabic. Although quoting a different

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[85] A foundational account of the various biblical creation stories can be found in Bible scholar Richard Elliot Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987). He explains that, after scholars noticed "doublets"—many cases in which the same story is told twice—the theory emerged that two authors wrote the bible; however, later, theories emerged with up to four authors (22-3). Accounting for the "doublets" in Genesis, he remarks that the first creation story orders the creation of man, plants, animals, and women differently than the second and that there are two accounts of the story of Noah's ark (which is also often considered a creation story) (50-1).
[86] Along with Friedman, see John J. Collins' *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, in which he explains that, although Moses is said to have narrated the books of the Torah, the text has at least four different authors, editors, or styles. Here, Collins also notes that scholars disagree on the time in which Exodus took place (33-44).

moment from the novel where Haroun reflects on the way that French language reflects the world and his desire to translate for his mother, Kaplan notes that "his proposal is not to choose one language or another, but to claim the benefits of translation, to go back and forth between French and Arabic. This is neither a neo-colonialism, nor nostalgia, for it is only as a native speaker of Arabic that Daoud makes his audacious claim for French" ("Making *L'Étranger* Contemporary" 345) [87]. Furthermore, even though Arabic writing—including calendars—is read from right to left, timelines are still perceived from left to right. Therefore, the reversal of ends and beginnings could be read in tandem with the call to read the novel from right to left. Because we cannot place our fingers on an exact beginning to which Haroun refers, and because he switches the direction of reading, we could extend this reversal to a perceptual reversal of time. This corresponds to Rothberg's assertion that an account of implication requires an account of both the past and the contemporary moment in question.

Along with language and time, this change in direction could also refer to the shift to Haroun as a new narrator, a native Arabic Algerian who is the brother of the victim, rather than Meursault, a French colonist murderer. This reversal points to Meursault as "*el-roumi*, l'étranger" (44) ["*el-roumi*, the foreigner, the stranger" (34)].[88] Kaplan notes that Daoud engages in "code

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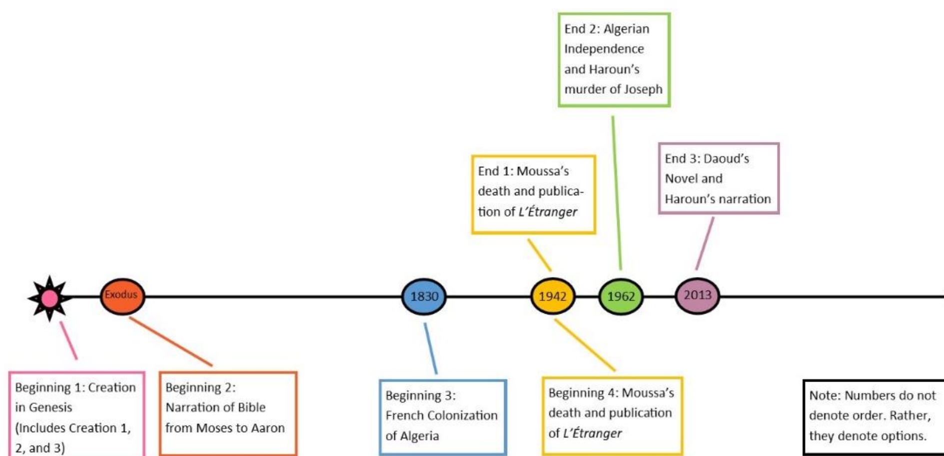
[87] Kaplan's account sounds much like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of a minor literature, in which the use of a more recognized, "major," language enacts "the deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). However, their account relies upon an Oedipal triangle (albeit creating an escape from said triangle) which would not correspond to Haroun's situation since his father has been absent since he was young and because it perpetuates the paternal nature of the French nation state. Furthermore, their assertion that "talent isn't abundant in a minor literature" and that this scarcity is "beneficial and allows the conception of something other than a literature of masters" is both helpful and problematic (17). On the one hand, it follows the violent assumption that talent is less available in minor linguistic communities; however, it corresponds to Alkyam's emphasis that it is "necessary to highlight Musa's illiteracy in order to establish his own ability to challenge Meursault's disconcerting account of Musa's death" ("Lost in Reading" 465).

[88] Importantly, in Algeria, "Roumi" takes on an additional significance. In colonial Algeria, French anthropologists referred to Islam "as a culture rather than as a religion, and as the 'dark' side of the West rather than as a monotheism that might be compared with both Judaism and Christianity." Therefore, "[t]he Algerian population reacted to this religious-cultural stereotyping with stereotypes of its own referring to the French as 'Christians' and *Roumi*, a word derived from *Roumain* ('Roman'), and not used with friendly intent" (Macey 220). This additional

switching" a number of times: the switch from his native Arabic to French; the switch from the old 1942 story of *L'Étranger* to an extended version of the same story that lasts well past independence; from the murder of the Arab man in *L'Étranger* to the murder of the Frenchman in *Meursault, contre-enquête*; and from the Barzak publication of Daoud's novel to the Actes Sud version (the latter of which has been used for its translations) (336-7). Kaplan's description of "switching" adopts a playful approach within the discussion of beginnings and ends, subsequently underscoring the means by which Daoud's novel both considers and blurs the distinctions between beginnings and ends.



By considering these biblical allusions, we must add more to Kaplan's list. To go from the end to the beginning—the ultimate beginning—could refer to a biblical creation story, forging a connection between all people, including native Algerians and Frenchmen. Within Genesis, where the biblical creation story lies, also exists the first story of murder, of Cain and Abel, which Haroun refers to frequently. This allusion to the first murder story encompasses an open and ambiguous

religious component is especially interesting when we consider Meursault's and Camus' ambivalent relationships with religion.

reversal in which beginnings and ends, along with victims and perpetrators, become at the same time opposed, aligned, and even confused. By the end of the novel, the function of this allusion, along with the reference to Exodus—and its echoes throughout the Qur'an—through the characters' names, contends with the warning in *L'Étranger* that a religious-national morality can become dangerous, especially when read through Haroun's assessment of modern-day Algeria.

Within and outside of these allusions, the space of writing becomes both an access point and a barrier. After Moussa's death, Haroun and his mother have searched extensively for the facts of the case. Their desperate search renders no closure—until a female university student appears on their doorstep. While talking to her, Haroun is shocked to find out that the entire murder is told within *L'Étranger*. Haroun and his mother's inability to read the French language barricaded them from learning about the murder. Subsequently (and without his mother's knowledge), Haroun embarks upon learning to read French and explains that

> [p]our moi, tout a été clair dès que j'ai appris à lire et à écrire: j'avais ma mère alors que Meursault avait perdu la sienne. Il a tué alors que je savais qu'il s'agissait de son propre suicide. Mais ça, il est vrai, c'était avait que la scène ne tourne sur le moyeu et n'échange les rôles. Avant que je ne réalise à quel point nous étions, lui et moi, les compagnons d'une même cellule dans un huis clos où les corps ne sont que costumes. (20)
>
> [As soon as I learned to read and write, everything became clear to me: I had my mother, why Meursault had lost his. He killed, but I knew it was really a way of committing suicide. Now, it's true that I reached those conclusions before the scenery got shifted and the roles reversed, before I realized how alike we were, he and I, imprisoned in the same cell, shut up out of sight in a place where bodies were nothing but costumes. (10)]

Although Haroun had already reached the same conclusions, his newfound ability to read the book both reinforces his thoughts and draws a line between him and Meursault. The line serves both as a barrier and a connection. Alluding to Camus' *Le Mythe de Sisyphe [The Myth of Sisyphus]*[89] (1942), Haroun's remarks that Meursault killed so that he could "il s'agi[r] de son propre suicide" suggest that he may have wanted to commit suicide, but it could also mean that he is concerned with the topic of suicide. In this sense, the death of the Arab serves as a mere catalyst to aid Meursault/Camus play out his own philosophy. Despite the consideration of Moussa as a mere plaything to be used to tease out Camus' notions of the absurd, Haroun also recognizes that he and Meursault are both victim to the same structures in which "bodies" are mere "costumes," underscoring that they are both prisoners to the system, including the way their bodies are read. If we read this through *L'Étranger*, to be a prisoner involves a recognition of the privilege of others. Thus Haroun's access to the book through reading makes him aware of the system they are both forced to cooperate with. However, it also draws a distinction between the varying scales of privilege they each do or do not have access to—one French and one Arab.

Before reading the book, Moussa is aware of his absurd stance through his brother's death, but reading provides an additional layer of understanding. When he is young, by visiting Moussa's empty grave, Haroun can mourn the death of his brother, opening him to a realization of both the absurdity of the case and his right to life and freedom:

> C'est dans cet endroit que je me suis éveillé à la vie, crois-moi. C'est là que j'ais pris conscience que j'avais droit au feu de ma présence au monde—oui, que j'y avais droit !—malgré l'absurdité de ma condition qui consistait à pousser un cadavre vers le sommet du

[89] See chapter 1 for a detailed account of the myth and its use in Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus.* It is important to note here that *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and *L'Étranger* were published in the same year.

> mont avant qu'il ne dégringole à nouveau, et cela sans fin. Ces jours-là, ces jours passés au cimetière, furent mes premiers jours de prière tournée vers le monde. (57)
>
> That cemetery was the place where I awakened to life, believe me. It was where I became aware that I had a right to the fire of my presence in the world—yes, I had a right to it!—despite the absurdity of my condition, which consisted in pushing a corpse to the top of a hill before it rolled back down, endlessly. Those days, the cemetery days, were the first days when I turned to pray, not toward Mecca[90] but toward the world. (47)

Haroun and his mother had been confined to rolling through leads, attempting to uncover the details of the murder unsuccessfully—a modern-day Sisyphus. However, he recognizes his right to his "présence au monde," a presence that includes absurdity. This absurdity is incurred as a result of *L'Étranger* because his brother was killed within the novel, catalyzing his endless search. However, this moment—and other critiques of the moral steering wheel of Islam in contemporary Algeria that Haroun forwards—suggests that the transparent religiosity[91] of his contemporary moment can be violent in a manner similar to that of *L'Étranger*. By praying openly toward the world, Haroun takes on no religious restrictions. Instead, he assumes an open care in his act of prayer. Despite the awareness that this scene generates, it still amounts to nothing for Haroun and his mother, so he explains that "il aurait faullu tout reprendre depuis le début et par un autre chemin, celui des livres, par exemple, d'un livre plus précisément, celui que tu prends avec toi [l'inspecteur universitaire] chaque jour dancs ce bar," ["we would have to start out from the beginning and go a different way—the way of books, for example, and more specifically of one

[90] Importantly, the addition of "not towards Mecca" is only used as a distinctive specific direction in the English text.

[91] By "transparent religiosity," I mean one that takes itself as a total and totalizing system that is not up for interpretation. See Chapter 2 for an in-depth account of the term "transparency" and its uses in partial or limited religious approaches.

book, the one you [the university-investigator] bring with you every day to this bar,"] referring to *L'Étranger* (58; 48). In this case, the grave represents mourning symbolically but cannot amount to a practical closure because of the absence of Moussa's body and the details of the case; instead, the book must fill in the gaps. Thus writing becomes both violently silencing and openly expressive. While this suggests that the beginning to which he refers is the moment of Moussa's death, his emphasis on going "un autre chemin, celui des livres" still extends this beginning beyond Mousa, to an account of writing more broadly.

Haroun articulates writing to be murderous and illegitimate, but this applies to both Camus' and Haroun's own (possible) writing. This murderous narrative functions in tandem with the novel's evocation of the narrations of Genesis and Exodus more broadly. Haroun explains that "moi qui pourtant ne me suis jamais soucié d'écrire un livre, je rêve d'en commettre un" (108) ["I never bothered myself to write a book, and yet I dream of committing one" (98)]. Although the English word for "commit" refers both to acting and dedicating, the French "commettre" does not mean to dedicate (which would be "consacre"). Instead, it means to perpetrate, to commit the crime; however, it also means to write something without merit, to "scribble," so to speak. In this sense, writing becomes a crime or an illegitimate act. Attacking Camus' use of the word "Arab" rather than the name "Moussa," Haroun claims that "[s]'il appelle mon frère l'Arabe, c'est pour le tuer comme on tue le temps, en se promenant sans but" ["[i]f he calls my brother 'the Arab' it's so he can kill him the way one kills time, by strolling around aimlessly"]. This makes it "[i]mpossible de trouver et de confirmer un lien entre Moussa et Moussa lui-même! Comment dire ça à l'humanité quand tu ne sais pas écrire de livres ?" (23) ["[i]mpossible to find a connection between Musa and Musa, between Musa and himself! How can you tell humanity [translation modified] about that when you don't know how to write books?" (13)]. In this case, defining a character

through the broad category of race, rather than using an individual name, makes Camus' writing violent. His emphasis that "on tue le temps" suggests that those who are privileged can do away with the value and elusivity of time, being provoked by mere boredom to kill a random Arab man. Importantly, this approach to time is only adopted by Meursault before he is sent to prison: as noted above, once he is sentenced, he claims that he has little time. The killing of Moussa, like one kills time, brutally separates Moussa from himself, but his story can only be told through books. Thus the response to this cruel narration could be to write back, to "commettre un [livre]."[92]

Just as each can kill through writing, the Bible's original murder story of Cain and Abel is revisited throughout the novel. As a trope, it assists the student investigator in understanding Haroun's story, simultaneously telling the story of settler colonialism (in Algeria) more broadly. Haroun first evokes the story when he tells the student investigator

> Tu saisiras mieux ma version si tu acceptes l'idée que cette histoire ressemble à un récit des origines : Caïn est venu ici pour construire des villes et des routes, domestiquer gens, sols et racines. Zoudj était le parent pauvre, allongé au soleil dans la pose paresseuse qu'on lui suppose, il ne possédait rien, même pas un troupeau de moutons qui puisse susciter la convoitise ou motiver le meurtre. D'une certaine manière, *ton* Caïn a tué *mon* frère pour…rien ! Pas même pour lui voler son bétail. (67)
>
> [You'll get a better grasp on my version of the facts if you accept the idea that this story is like an origin myth: Cain comes here to build cities and roads, and to domesticate people and soil and plants. Zujj is the poor relative, loafing in the sunshine, and his whole attitude is so lazy it's evident he owns nothing, not even a flock of sheep, that could arouse envy

[92] See *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, by Bill Ashcroft et al. Poteau-Traile also connects the consumption of the Algerians after liberation to Haroun's extradiegetic narration, emphasizing the need to construct Algeria's story by "fictionalizing fiction," since the nation's story has not been expressly written in history or fiction alone ("Fictionalizing Fiction" 5).

> or motivate murder. In a certain way, *your* Cain killed *my* brother for…nothing! Not even for his livestock. (57)]

Haroun's comparison of Moussa's story to an origin myth refers to at least three stories: Moussa's own story, the story of French colonization of Algeria, and the story of Cain and Abel, which appears in the book of Genesis shortly after creation. In the Bible, Cain tills the ground while Abel herds sheep (4:2). When they each offer the turnover of their occupations to G-d, Cain's fruit is not held in esteem like Abel's sheep (4:4-5). This could suggest a preference towards nomadism or towards meat. This biblical myth, and Haroun's subtle changes to it, correspond to Glissant's assertion in "L'Errance, l'exil" ["Errantry, Exile"] that myth "fonde la légitimité de la possession d'un territoire, en s'appuyant le plus souvent sur les rigueurs non interrompues d'une filiation" (25) ["establishes the legitimacy of the possession of a territory based usually on the uninterrupted rigors of filiation" (13)]. In Glissant's thought, the Western notion of civilization encompasses "la volonté de civiliser. Cette idée est liée à la passion d'en imposer à l'Autre" (26) ["a will to civilize. This idea is linked to the passion to impose civilization on the other" (13)]. In Haroun's version of the myth, Cain's stance as a tiller of the ground is extended to modern settlements by adding the construction of cities and roads. Importantly, agriculture is read as a domestication of the earth and its roots. Especially since "sols et racines" appears after "gens," "sols" could be read as both soil and mother land, and "racines" could refer to both plant roots and familial lineages. This means that Cain could be read as the first French colonizers of Algeria. However, it could also mean that Meursault, along with other colonists, take the place of Cain. Abel is replaced with Zujj—a nickname for Moussa—but he does not own sheep like Abel in the Bible. By reading Haroun's account, a multifaceted critique emerges: a critique of the priority of settled civilization over nomadism, a critique of the initial conquest of Algeria, and a critique of the long-endured violence

towards native Algerians throughout colonization (in both historical and in literary contexts). As Glissant asserts, "en Occident, que le movement se fige et que les nations se pronocent, en attendant qu'elles répercutent sur le monde" (26) ["[t]he West, therefore, is where this movement [nomadism] becomes fixed and nations declare themselves in preparation for their repercussions in the world" (14). Ultimately, reading "racines" as lineages suggests that embedded within the "origin story" of French-Algeria is the problematic imposition of a Western conception of national lineages upon native Algerians.[93]

While this use of the story of Cain and Abel ties colonial critiques to a broader Judeo-Christian and Islamic worldview, Daoud throws readers a curveball much like M. NourbeSe Philip's.[94] After considering the violence of the disappearance of Moussa's body in the novel and the way the disappeared body has disturbed his own life, Haroun declares that *he* might be Cain and he may have killed his brother (57 French; 47 English). This is because he has wanted to do away with his brother's body for ages, since it has preoccupied his and his mother's minds for many years. Instead of killing Moussa, Haroun does away with Moussa's body and memory by returning the violence to a Frenchman named Joseph. In the wake of liberation, when a man they know enters the yard of the house they've been squatting in, his mother asks him to return the favor. At the moment of murder, Moussa explains that his mother and he "[ont] basculé . . . dans une sorte de folie . . . C'était l'occasion d'en finir avec [Moussa], de l'enterrer dignement" (94) ["tipped over, both of us, into a kind of madness. . . . This was our opportunity to be done with him [Musa], to give him a worthy burial" (84)]. This moment serves to balance the scales and close off a period of restlessness in their lives. Haroun explains that afterwards, he "pouvai[t] enfin

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[93] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of creation myths in conversation with Homi Bhabha's concept of "double-time" which emphasizes the instability of national origin myths.

[94] See Chapter 2's discussion on *Zong!* and the allusion to Ruth, in which she is eventually told not to read it since it will destroy her.

respirer" ["could finally breathe"] and his mother was finally able to age naturally (88; 78). This serves as a reverse murder in which "[i]l était là, coincé entre deux histoires et quelques murs, avec pour seul issue mon histoire à moi qui ne lui laissait aucune chance" (93-4) ["[t]he man was there, wedged between two stories and some walls, and his only way out was my story, which left him no chance" (84)]. Because he is stuck between stories, it becomes apparent that this responsive murder is at the same time a reply to the death of Moussa and Meursault's violent narration, along with a broader response to Algerian colonization. Importantly, the commentary of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* explains that the name Cain comes from the same root for the word "create" (4:1). In this new murder, Haroun can create his own narrative. However, as his reference to "folie" might suggest, the response to murder with murder becomes limited—a trap.

Shortly after killing a Frenchman, it becomes clearer how Haroun's relief comes with a toll. His murder locks time outside of his house and makes Haroun realize that he is "piégé dans un plus grand rêve, un déni plus gigantesque, celui d'un autre être qui fermait toujours ses yeux et qui ne voulait rien voir, comme [lui]" (97) ["trapped in a bigger dream, a more gigantic denial, that of another being who always kept his eyes closed and didn't want to see anything, like [him]" (86)]. It's not clear what type of denial occurs here, or who the other being might be, but there is a sort of visual closure. This becomes more pronounced when he explains that "au moment où j'ai commis ce crime, j'ai senti une porte qui, quelque part, se refermait définitivement sur moi" (97) ["[a]t the moment when I committed my crime, I felt a door somewhere was definitively closing on me" (87)]. Eventually, this closure becomes a final reversal of the story of Cain and Abel, in which Haroun says "je rêve d'un procès, mais tous sont morts avant, et j'ai été le dernier à tuer. L'histoire de Caïn et Abel, mais à la fin de l'humanité, pas à ses débuts. Tu comprends mieux maintenant, n'est-ce pas? Ce n'est pas une banale histoire de pardon ou de vengeance, c'est une

malédiction, un piège" (99) ["I'm dreaming about a trial, but they're all dead already, and I was the last to kill. The story of Cain and Abel, but at the end of mankind, not at the start. You understand better now, don't you? This isn't a trite story of forgiveness or revenge, it's a curse, it's a trap" (89)]. While he refers to Camus yet again, it is not a simple critique. The participants of the trial, on the one hand, might be dead because much time has passed since *L'Étranger*'s publication. On the other hand, the deaths may refer to the deaths of many Frenchmen in the Algerian War of Independence. Haroun's act of murder thus appears belated, echoing the biblical story at the end rather than the beginning. This belatedness also relies upon the fact that Haroun kills Joseph after liberation (98-9 French; 108-9 English). Since this becomes a point of contention for the investigator (it would not have been a problem had he murdered just days earlier), Haroun's action parallels his earlier claim of how Meursault "il s'agi[r] de son propre suicide." Importantly, Joseph, too, is a biblical allusion. A short while after he murders Joseph, Haroun explains that he would frequently think of his next victims, and that "[c]ette pensée devint donc familière, après que j'ai tué Joseph, et que je l'ai jeté dans un puits—manière de parler bien sûr, puisque je l'ai enterré" (101) ["[s]uch thoughts become commonplace with me after I killed Joseph and threw his body down a well—a figure of speech, of course, because, as I've said, I buried him" (91)]. Referring to the story in Genesis in which Joseph's brothers become jealous of their father's love for him and throw him down a well, Haroun's remark about burrying him changes the story to ensure his death.[95] This allusion suggests that Haroun's act of murder also constitutes fratricide, which may also be why he calls himself Cain. Ultimately, although one might expect a revenge

[95] In Genesis, his brothers feel remorse after throwing him down a well and decide to sell him to Ishmaelites, but upon returning to the well, Joseph has already disappeared. They rub his coat with blood and fallaciously tell their father that Joseph has died (37:1-37). Joseph ends up being condemned to prison in Egypt but eventually gains the confidence and support of the Pharaoh. When his family needs food during a famine, they ask Joseph for support, not knowing it is him. Eventually, the family ties are rekindled, and Joseph remains in Egypt (38-50). However, as explained in Exodus, when a new Pharaoh takes over who does not know Joseph, he sees the strength of the Hebrew people and decides to subject them to forced labor (1:1-14).

story, Haroun's reflection on the trap of murder suggests that he critiques reactions to systemic oppression which combat it with a revengeful reversal of victim and perpetrator. Just after this, he says "[c]e que je veux, c'est me souvenir" (99) ["What I want is to remember" (89)].

Eventually, this trap aligns with Meursault's critique of the justice system and takes it one step further, expressing that the concept of the Other is developed through privilege and implication in an oppressive system. Reflecting further, Haroun explains, "ce n'est pas l'innocence qui, par la suite, m'a le plus manqué, mais cette frontière qui existait jusque-là entre la vie et le crime. C'est un tracé difficile à rétablir ensuite. L'Autre est une mesure que l'on perd quand on tue" (100) ["it wasn't my innocence I missed the most, it was the border that had existed until then between my life and crime. That's a line that's hard to redraw later. The Other is a unit of measurement you lose when you kill" (90)]. A barrier or frontier—an unknown territory—between crime and his life is corrupted, leading him to no longer perceive otherness. This suggests that otherness itself relies upon two things: the act of killing (which Haroun equates to killing humanity[96] (101; 91)) and the loss of privilege. The former connects to Moussa's later assertion that "le crime compromet pour toujours l'amour et la possibilité d'aimer. J'ai tué et, depuis, la vie n'est plus sacrée à mes yeux" (101) ["[t]he crime forever compromises both love and the possibility of loving. I killed a man, and since then, life is no longer sacred in my eyes" (91)]. The loss of privilege, if we remember that Haroun claims that he might be Cain, suggests that Joseph the Frenchman, as any man would be, is his brother. However, when put into conversation with *L'Étranger*, the killing of mankind could also suggest that a loss of privilege through the justice

[96] The translation changes "humanité" to "mankind," which carries a limiting gender distinction. Additionally, this is the one line of the Qur'an that Haroun says resonates with him, which will be particularly relevant to my discussion of Moses and Khadir below.

and prison system is advanced through or generates (causality cannot necessarily be determined) a filial national system of morality.

This critique of the filial national morality is stark when considering the parallels to Camus' novel that appear once Haroun arrives in prison. Calling the two novels a "contrapuntal diptych," Poteau-Traile asserts that Daoud's novel enacts deconstruction by mirroring the novel's exact words (7, 4). Although Poteau-Traile does not assess Daoud's prison scenes in depth to expose how they, too, mirror Camus' novel, my comparison of these scenes follows her evaluation that "Daoud forces the reader to face the conundrum that a deconstructed and reconstructed narrative 'house' sits upon a foundation (Camus's) that was never itself stable in the first place" (4). After Haroun kills Joseph and is taken to prison, another inmate asks him in French why he is there: "J'ai répondu qu'on m'accusait d'avoir tué un Français, tous sont restés silencieux" (110) ["I answered that I was accused of having killed a Frenchman and they went all silent" (100)]. This is another exact reversal from *L'Étranger*, in which the Arabs in prison ask Meursault the same question and he replies with the identical inverse, flipping Arab and French (ethnicities and languages) in this equation. His confrontation with the imam in prison also uses the exact words from Camus' novel and echoes the same critique of the national religious morality. Although the imam wants to talk to him about G-d, Haroun explains that "*j'ai tenté de lui expliquer qu'il me restait si peu de temps que je ne voulais pas le perdre avec D[']*" (150; emphasis in original) "I had so little time left, I didn't want to waste it on G[-]d" (140). After the imam calls him "frère" ["son]," something "a cr[ève] en [lui]" ["inside [him] snap[s]"], and he starts yelling, grabbing him "par le col" ["by the collar" (141)]. Comparing him and the imam, Haroun explains, like Meursault, that "[c]'etait comme si j'avais toujours attendu cette minute et cette petite aube où je serais justifié. Rien, rien n'avait d'importance et je savais bien pourquoi.

Lui aussi savait pourquoi. Du fond de mon avenir, pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi" (151) ["[i]t was as if I had always been waiting for this moment and for the first light of this dawn to be vindicated. Nothing, nothing mattered, and I knew why. So did he. Throughout the whole absurd life I'd lived, a dark wind had been rising toward me from somewhere deep in my future" (141)]. Finally, this leads him to the meditation that "[t]out le monde était privilégié. Il n'y avait que des privilégiés. Les autres aussi, on le condamnerait, si le monde était vivant" (151) ["[t]here were only privileged people. The others would all be condemned one day. And he'll be condemned too, if the world's still alive" (141)]. Just as in Camus' text, the imposition of religiosity occurs simultaneously with a suggested filial relationship between Haroun and the imam. Furthermore, this religiosity falls short in the absurdity that privilege brings forth. Therefore, beyond simply destabilizing Camus' narrative "house," Daoud's mirror underscores that both the colonial and postcolonial systemic "houses" of Algeria are unstable. As Poteau-Traile contends, the deconstructive approach that Daoud engages with emphasizes that "[a] failed reconstruction occurred when one authoritative monolithic presence in modern Algeria replaced the colonial one" (12). Liberation, although helpful in its removal of the French colonizer, eventually led to a simple response that replaced one problematic filial national morality with a new one.

Concisely put in the abstract to Poteau-Traile's article, the reconstruction of Camus' text through Daoud's novel "valorizes plurality in the retrospective reconstruction of Algeria's past, and in an ever-deferred construction of its future." Importantly, the reference to Aaron and Moses extends her assessment to a broader past, including even more explorations of time and narration. Just as Poteau-Traile emphasizes that one authoritative presence replaced another, the story of Exodus in the Old Testament is one in which a shift in mastery occurs: as the *New*

Oxford Annotated Bible puts it, the Hebrew people are slaves to the Egyptian Pharaoh, and their escape is what ultimately returns them to G-d as their ruler ("Introduction to Exodus"). Early in the novel, Haroun explains that "[a]près sa disparition, le temps s'ordonna autrement pour moi. Je vécus une liberté, laquelle dura exactement quarante jours" (43) ["[a]fter [Moussa's] passing, the way my time was structured changed. I lived my life in absolute freedom, which lasted exactly forty days" (33)]. In Exodus, forty days is the amount of time that Moses is on Mount Sinai gathering the word of G-d (24:18; 34:1-28). For Haroun, time becomes free but is paradoxically limited to forty days. One way of thinking through this paradox would be to follow the biblical story, in which G-d tells the Hebrew people the commandments orally before Moses goes up the mountain. During that time, the people beg for a deity, and Aaron commits heresy by creating a golden calf for them to worship. This period is marked not only by Moses' absence, therefore, but in another way it also remains *unmarked*: the oral word of G-d has been spoken, but it has not yet been written on the tablets, which Moses will return with, constructing a divine author-ity. Thus this paradox might correspond to the overabundance of authority given to the written word.[97] Similar paradoxes continue throughout the references to Moses, moving thematically from time to narration.

In one of Haroun's first retellings of the murder, he explains that Camus' beautiful writing halted a search for the victim's name (14 French; 4 English). The stunning narration becomes violent, and Haroun wonders "Qui peut, aujourd'hui, me donner le vrai nom de Moussa? Qui sait quel fleuve l'a porté jusqu'à la mer qu'il devait traverser à pied, seul, sans peuple, sans bâton miraculeux ? Qui sait si Moussa avait un revolver, une philosophie ou une

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[97] Referencing the moment Haroun and his mother learned about *L'Étranger*, Brozgal notes that the exclamation that the book was written echoes the Arabic exclamation "Mektoub!", meaning "It was written [by G-d]!" However, Brozgal points out that Haroun "is quick to secularize the text" (43).

insolation ?" (15) ["Who knows Musa's name today? Who knows what river carried him to the sea, which he had to cross on foot, alone, without his people, without his magic staff? Who knows whether Musa had a gun, a philosophy, or a sunstroke?" (4)]. In the original French, asking who could give him Moussa's *true* name today, when read with the second question, suggests that the name Moussa extends well beyond the fictional character to Moses of the bible. This second question references two moments in Exodus: the first is when Moses was sent down the river as a newborn to protect his life, since Hebrew sons were killed to hinder their strength while they were slaves in Egypt; the second reference, to him crossing with his staff, refers to how Moses (with G-d's help) used his staff and hand to part the river to help the Hebrew people escape in time (1:16-22; 2:1-10; 14: 21-9). However, in Haroun's rendition, Moussa is alone without his people, separated by the beauty of Camus' prose and the absence of his name. The third question more readily connects to Camus' novel with its remarks on a weapon and sunstroke, but it extends to Camus the author more broadly—and possibly also the Bible—when mentioning a philosophy. Thus we might extend Poteau-Traile's claim, mentioned above, that the novel "valorizes plurality in the retrospective reconstruction of Algeria's past" and add to it a broader and a Judeo-Christian-Islamic past. While Camus' work emphasizes the instability of a Judeo-Christian foundation for nationality, Daoud adds Islam to the picture, suggesting that the three should be posed together.

In all cases, a singular narrative that imposes a genealogical basis for morality must be contested. Inverting the biblical story in which the Egyptian first-born sons die, Haroun explains that Meursault killed Moussa by "en l'enjambant" (15) ["passing over him" (5)]. Although "enjambant" could mean stepping over his body or overlooking him, it also evokes the final plague that was used to convince the Egyptian Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves. While

“depasser” (“to pass”) might correspond to this more closely, the root for “enjamber,” to “step over,” comes from the root “jambe,” which means “leg.” In the Jewish tradition of Passover, the lamb shank (leg) is used to symbolize this last plague. This plague required that the Hebrew families eat lamb and mark their doors with the blood of the lamb in order to have G-d “pass over” their houses when going to kill the first born son of every family, so that only Egyptian sons were killed (13:1-22). This would contend with the remark by commentators of the Oxford Annotated Bible, noted above, that Exodus greatly recounts a shift in mastery. Although this shift in mastery is typically perceived as a good one, a release from slavery, this reversal follows Haroun’s tendency to blur the distinction between victims and perpetrators. For one master (G-d) to replace the other (the Egyptian Pharaoh), the lineage of the perceived perpetrator had to be threatened. Just as the name Cain comes from the root for “create,” the divine Creator must kill to assist in liberating the Hebrew people. Despite the new master’s position as savior to the Hebrew people, violence was required, rendering the savior also a murderer of the Egyptian first-born sons. In this sense, the act of saving becomes paradoxically violent. This also contends with the Biblical and Qur’anic accounts of Moses killing an Egyptian, along with the Qur’anic story of Moses and Khadir.[98] These ancient narrations of heroic saviors are not as explicitly benevolent as they often appear; each story has a complex nature that comes with the consequence of collateral damage.

When, in Haroun’s musings, Camus’ book and the Bible become indistinguishable, they are each rendered potentially violent. Haroun contemplates (one or each of) them, remarking,

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[98] When he is no longer a child, Moses kills an Egyptian man who had been beating a Hebrew man (Exodus 2:11-5). This story is recounted in the Qur’an. Furthermore, the Qur’an tells another story about Moses, in which he follows the prophet Khadir to learn about his knowledge. Moses is appalled after Khadir kills a boy, damages a ship, and does many other deeds that seem unjust. Afterwards, Khadir explains that sometimes what seems unjust is in fact merciful: he continues to explain each of the horrible things that would have happened had he not completed these deeds. Furthermore, the actions Khadir takes correspond to events in Moses’ life, such as the killing of the Egyptian (*Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an* 82-3).

"Comment peut-on croire que D['] a parlé à un seul homme et que celui-ci s'est tu à jamais? Je feuillette parfois leur livre à eux, Le Livre, et j'y retrouve d'étranges redonances, des répétitions, des jérémiades, des menaces et des rêveries que me donnent l'impression d'écouter le soliloque d'un vieux gardien de nuit, une *assasse*" (80-1) ["How can you believe G-d has spoken to only one man, and that man has stopped talking forever? Sometimes I page through their book, *the* Book, and what I find there are strange redundancies, repetitions, lamentations, threats, and daydreams. I get the impression that I'm listening to a soliloquy spoken by some old night watchman, some *assas*" (70)]. Throughout the novel, Haroun refers to his endless re-reading of Camus' novel, but at this moment, the book (lower-case) becomes the Book (upper-case), suggesting that it is the Bible. Although G-d talks to various religious figures, depending on the tradition (Moses, Jesus, Mohammed), because the man who has been killed in Camus' and Daoud's novel is Moussa, we could infer that this quote refers to Moses. On the other hand, Haroun could be suggesting that Camus' novel has become so central to the French canon—often prescribed as the first novel to read for French language learners—that it functions as a French linguistic Bible of sorts. In both cases, the narration is limited because it is singular: it is hard to believe that only one man has been spoken to by G-d. Just as time is paradoxically free and limited to forty days, Moses carries the word of G-d, his narration, and the story of freedom; however, to consider it singular would be to place on it a similarly paradoxical limitation.

Brozgal readily points out that Moussa represents many men in Daoud's novel. She underscores that the waiter at the bar is named Moussa (which is possibly a nickname given by Haroun himself) and that, because many men become Moussa to Haroun, Moussa takes the place of an "Algerian 'John Doe'" ("The Critical Pulse of the *Contre-enquête*" 3-4). Similarly, what is perceived as Moses' narration, which composes the Torah, is also a multifaceted narration—a

compilation, rather. In the Bible, the first obvious layer to Moses' narrative is that Aaron is supposed to speak for Moses, because of Moses' speech impediment (Exodus 4:16). For this reason, any account of a Biblical narrative must be rendered dual at minimum. Furthermore, accounts of the Bible's various authors by scholars such as Collins and Friedman attest to the same various strains of composition as those of Genesis, in which there is a priestly account, an account that corresponds to the unspoken name of G-d, and an account that corresponds to sections that give the name of G-d as "Elohim." In this sense, the Mosaic narrative of the Bible is truly a mosaic. Although the word "Mosaic," to be of or relating to Moses, and the word "mosaic," a compilation of smaller pieces, have some variations in etymological origin (i.e. French "musayque" and "musaïque"), the Oxford English dictionary lists the French root "mosaïque" in each entry and dates them each between the years 1509 to 1529 ("Mosaic"; "mosaic"; "mosaic work"). Therefore, the use of the name Moussa suggests that the novel should be read with and against Camus' book, the Bible, and as a compilation of narratives that can never be rendered singular.

In the case of narration, as with time, the brilliance of a perceived singularity is greatly what engenders violence. Moussa explains that Camus/Meursault's "génie" ["genius"] lies in his ability to "déchirer la langue commune de tous de jours pour émerger dans l'envers du royaume, là où une langue plus bouleversante attend de raconteur le monde autrement" (109-10) ["to tear open the common, everyday language and emerge on the other side, where a more devastating language is waiting to narrate the world in another way" (99-100)]. During this meditation, he underscores that in doing so, Meursault/Camus "avait atteint le territoire d'une langue inconnue, plus puissante dans son étreinte, sans merci pour tailler la pierre des mots, nue comme la géométrie elucidienne" (110) ["reached a new territory, a language that was unknown and grew

more powerful in his embrace, the words, like pitilessly carved stones, a language as naked as Euclidian geometry" (100)]. In the transition from a "langue commune" to a "langue plus bouleversante," a formula emerges that is a logical, closed system, comparable to geometry. This warning against linguistic singularity is likely why Haroun aspires to "commettre un livre" (108). The act of narration would be illegitimate and murderous because it kills the possibility for a multifaceted approach to narration. Similarly, if we recall that Meursault kills an unnamed Arab like the way one kills time and subsequently makes Moussa indistinguishable from other Arabic Algerians and even himself (23), we might be able to unravel why Haroun proclaims when he arrives in prison that "[j]e ne voulais pas tuer le temps. Je n'aime pas cette expression. J'aime le regarder, le suivre des yeux, lui prendre ce que je peux" (115) ["I didn't want to kill time. I don't like that expression. I like to look at time, follow it with my eyes, take what I can" (105)]. If narration is reliant upon an account of time, we might use the same critique to assert that to know time would be to kill it. While Meursault and Raymond can make sweeping proclamations about time, Haroun grasps it, but not in a fully apprehending[99] way, since he also follows it as it moves.

Just as Glissant proclaims that Camus' novel is not a representation of transparency as French language courses make it out to be, Haroun emphasizes the importance of reading between the lines, as the student Meriem taught him to do (142; 132). This opacity runs almost paradoxical to the act of devouring books, which for Haroun, serves as a means by which he can confront violent narration with a responsive literary violence (100; 90). Fusing the literary and the historical, Poteau-Traille explains that

> [w]hen considered in combination, narratives about Algeria that are either historical or fictional, that combine the two within historical fiction, or in this case that represent

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[99] I intentionally use this word in both its definitions "to take" and "to learn." Note the "prendre" within the French "apprendre," and that Haroun claims he will only "prendre ce que je peux."

> fictionalized fiction, can provide a blueprint for a more adequate reconstruction of Algeria's complex truth. Haroun invites his interlocutor in the bar, identified as a student himself working on a story about the story, to continue this process in a sort of never-ending future deferring of a reckoning with truth. (5)

Throughout the novel, both the direct narration about Camus' novel from outside the fiction, along with the references to biblical narrations, compose a conceptual attack or play on narration. This "fictionalized fiction" allows for a new creation within the nexus of violence. While Haroun's narration against narration is most overtly directed towards Camus' novel, the references to the Bible and play on time suggest that his critique extends well beyond Camus to a broader Western emphasis of filial and religious morality. This, especially when imported to the concept of the nation, becomes dangerous when it suggests an irrefutable author-ity, in colonial and postcolonial situations alike.

Myth, Filiation, and the Temporal Architecture of Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs*

Haroun's declaration that " je ne me suis jamais senti arabe, tu sais. C'est comme la négritude qui n'existe que par le regard du Blanc" (70) ["I never felt Arab, you know. Arab-ness is like Negro-ness, which only exists in the white man's eyes" (60)] [100] contends with much of Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon's assessment of race in *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. In my use of Daoud's novel as an interlocutor between the two thinkers, Camus' and Fanon's respective considerations of history, narration, time, and paternal lineages become more closely aligned. Although it would be rightly contested to connect these texts

[100] The translation moves the capitalization from "Blanc" to "Negro."

because of *L'Étranger*'s use of a racial category rather than a dynamic character, this section will assess how Daoud addresses Camus' description of colonial racism and opens a space for Fanon to be put into conversation with Camus. By assessing Fanon's articulation of time and history in *Peau noire, masques blanc*, this section will underscore a critique of filial systems of narration and the sometimes-dangerous values they bring about. Between the two thinkers, the themes of alienation and disalienation take central importance. Furthermore, although Fanon is often cited as a voice to incite violence in the era of decolonization, my reading will underscore that sometimes necessary (responsive) violence must not close a door, like it does for Haroun. Fanon himself warns readers of the threat of continuing corruption after decolonization in *Damnés de la terre*, as a critique of filial morality and the writing of history persists throughout this later publication.

While Fanon lived at the same time as Albert Camus (they both died suddenly and tragically, one year apart), and although they each had strong ties to Algeria, they could have easily been viewed on opposite ends of the political spectrum. While Albert Camus was born in Algeria, Fanon was born in Martinique and first saw Algeria while serving for the French Army during World War II. Although Camus was already living in France during World War II, Fanon's biographer David Macey points out that both authors wrote about the harsh conditions brought on by famine in Algeria at this time (*Frantz Fanon* 95-6). During his time fighting for France, Fanon realized that "freedom was not indivisible" since he was "a black soldier in a white man's army" (101). Macey says that the disillusionment brought on by this time serving for the French army "opened up a festering wound that would not heal" (109). After Fanon completed school in France, he worked in a psychiatric hospital in Blida, implementing measures to enhance the social components of the hospital's approach to mental health (210, 225-38).

Witnessing much colonial racism in his practice, he became involved with the FLN during the Algerian War of Independence. His last book, *Damnés de la terre*, is often cited as an ode to violence and is considered fuel for many revolutions (2). Camus, however, opposed the FLN because of its use of violence in order to achieve liberation. Camus' essay "Algérie 1958" underscores that, instead of liberation, he supported a federation that equally represented all people in Algeria. Camus saw that Algeria might base its future identity on a connected Muslim identity ("Algérie 1958" 389), while Fanon does not mention it (Macey 385). Although Camus is never discussed in any of Fanon's known works, Fanon is extensively in conversation with Sartre throughout *Peau noire, masques blancs*; however, this would have been about the same time that Sartre and Camus had a falling out after the 1951 publication of *The Rebel* (Sharpe 105).

There is, however, some evidence that Fanon agreed that his and Camus' philosophical ideas sometimes aligned. In Jean Khalfa and Robert Young's recently edited publications of Fanon's *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté* (2015) *[Alienation and Freedom]*, the editors point out that Fanon would have been studying medicine in Lyon at the time that Camus' play *Caligula* was performed and likely saw it (15-6; Kindle Location 343). The book also notes that Fanon had a copy of *Les Justes* in his library (596; Kindle Location 13718). In his copy of Sartre's *Situations*, Fanon has written a marginal comment on page 116 reading, "Camus a raison, ce que Sartre ne voit pas, c'est que nous ne sommes pas fondement du fait que nous fondons le sens—l'absurde est là" (625) ["Camus is right; what Sartre does not see is that we are not foundation by virtue of our founding of meaning[101] – the absurd is there" (Kindle Locations 14495-14497)]. Both Fanon and Camus contest ideas of origins and the supposed foundations

[101] Another possible translation could be "we are not the foundation of the fact that we found (or founded) meaning."

that they provide, including the supposed foundation that consciousness would seem to provide. Importantly, Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blanc* asserts that its foundation is built upon time, leading to an extensive account of the writing and irruption of history. In this account, he attests to the fraudulent origins that the white world has imposed upon Black men. Only through his own violation of his narrative foundations can he disrupt this account in a way that extends beyond a response which, like Haroun's case, would provide momentary relief but ultimately be a trap.

The book's introduction opens a window onto questions of colonial accounts of racism in an Antillean context, describing how Black Antillean men often attempt to absorb French language and culture as a response. By the end of the book it becomes clear that even the Black man who assumes a white mask cannot skirt racism because he is "sur-déterminé de l'extérieur" (93) ["overdetermined from the outside" (95)]. Although the introduction—and the remainder of the book—draws greatly upon psychoanalysis, sociology, and philosophy, the introduction claims that the entire work is situated in temporality:

> L'architecture du présent travail se situe dans la temporalité. Tout problème humain demande à être considéré à partir du temps. L'idéal étant que toujours le présent serve à construire l'avenir.
>
> Et cet avenir n'est pas celui du cosmos, mais bien celui de mon siècle, de mon pays, de mon existence. En aucune façon je ne dois me proposer de préparer le monde que me suivra. J'appartiens irréductiblement à mon époque.
>
> Et c'est pour elle que je dois vivre. L'avenir doit être une construction soutenue de l'homme existant. Cette édification se rattache au présent, dans la mesure où je pose ce dernier comme chose à dépasser. (10)

> [The structure of the present work is grounded in temporality. Every human problem cries out to be considered on the basis of time, the ideal being that the present always serves to build the future.
>
> And this future is not that of the cosmos, but very much the future of my century, my country, and my existence. In no way is it up to me to prepare for the world coming after me. I am resolutely a man of my time.
>
> And that is my reason for living. The future must be a construction supported by man in the present. This future edifice is linked to the present insofar as I consider the present something to be overtaken. (xvi-xvii)]

The ideal is a forward-moving time in which the present sets up the future. In *Multidirectional Memory,* Rothberg underscores that "Fanon clearly employs ironic rhetoric . . . which cannot be read literally" (94). Although Rothberg ultimately uses this claim to assert that Fanon "proves ambivalent on the question of how to relate black and Jewish traumas" (93), his emphasis on Fanon's ironic rhetoric suggests that this temporal ideal, when read with the remainder of the book, is constructed by the white man. This permeates into the condition of Black men since the "Noir veut être Blanc" (7) ["black man wants to be white" (xiii)]. Importantly, this future is ongoingly negotiated through the present, and it is not a predetermined future outlined by the "cosmos" or some higher order. Although the translation says that the future is "supported by man in the present," the French "se rattache" could mean that it has roots in the present, belongs to the present, or is linked to the present. While the line Fanon draws here appears unidirectional, his emphasis that the future emerges from "mon siècle, de mon pays, de mon existence" suggests that each context, country, and individual can give way to a unique future. Thus Fanon assesses

the irony of the ideal temporal model, moving beyond simple linearity, into a Glissantian rhizomatic relation.[102]

To become relative, rather than prescriptive, Fanon, like Daoud, must recognize the potential dangers of writing and narration. In the introduction, he underscores the fundamental issue at hand, explaining, “Nous estimons qu’il y a, du fait de la mise en présence des races blanches et noire, prise en masse d’un complexus psycho-existentiel. En analysant, nous visons à sa destruction” (9) [“We believe that the juxtaposition of the black and white races has resulted in a massive psycho-existential complex. By analyzing it, we aim to destroy it” (xvi)]. Before fully explaining the nature of this juxtaposition, Fanon emphasizes that the act of analysis will be functional in its destruction. As an act of exposure, analysis provides a realization of the possible dangers of narration—including but not limited to presumptive origins, myths, and histories—which ultimately relies upon the foundation of time it is constructed upon. This emerges in Fanon’s declaration that the Black man has “pas de culture, pas de civilisation, pas ce ‘long passé d’histoire’” (27) [“no culture, no civilization, and no ‘long historical past’” (17)]. Similarly, the Arab of *L’Étranger* has none of these, and this is what Daoud takes arms against, making his novel at once an attack on, a consumption of, and an homage to Camus’ novel. Importantly, on the first page of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon sets the tone for the remainder of his text, claiming that he will neither explode nor cry, and that if he were to cry, it would not be Black. However, this foundational rule for his own writing he would later come to violate. Only through his own textual violation can his argument become relative, rather than responsive or prescriptive, which serves as a means of forestalling the narrative violence he so urgently protests.

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[102] See Chapter 1 for an account of Glissant’s rhizome, along with Trouillot’s assessment of the means by which history is always (re)read through the present.

Throughout the book, Fanon articulates how the lack of a past, or the past that has been written for him, can often remain uncontested by the Black man because of a desire to become white. This can lead to a hyper-focus on the past that does not fully account for freedom. Fanon explains that "il est important de dire au Noir que l'attitude de rupture n'a jamais sauvé personne; et s'il est vrai que je dois me libérer de celui qui m'étouffe parce que véritablement je ne puis pas respirer, il demeure entendu que sur la base physiologique: difficulté mécanique de respiration, il devient malsain de greffer un élément psychologique: impossibilité d'expansion" (22) ["[i]t is important, however, to tell the black man that an attitude of open rupture has never saved anybody; and although it is true that I must free myself from my strangler because I cannot breathe, nevertheless it is unhealthy to graft a psychological element (the impossibility of expanding) onto a physiological base (the physical difficulty of breathing)" (12)]. To strictly claim that the Black man cannot "expand" because of his race would be to neglect the fact, which he expounds upon later, that the white man has narrated his past. This supposed past is recognized by those around him through his skin. Thus, he warns the black man that a self-imposed condition of open rupture would be to improperly self-embed an issue that is generated by the white world. This would be both an over-emphasis on the past and a lack of recognition that this past itself is fraudulent.

This problematic adoption of white values is exaggerated in the case of the educated Black man. He warns that "[e]t c'est la rage au lèvres, le vertige au cœur, qu'il s'enfonce dans le grand trou noir. Nous verrons que cette attitude si absolument belle rejette l'actualité et l'avenir au nom d'un passé mystique » (11) ["And with feverish lips and frenzied heart he plunges into the great black hole. We shall see that this wonderfully generous attitude rejects the present and future in the name of a mystical past" (xviii)]. Importantly, a "trou noir" is both a black hole and

a lapse in memory, a blackout. The word "black" takes on a second or simultaneous meaning that encompasses race. Furthermore, a "trou" is also a grave, a gap, a window, or some other sort of opening or fissure. Therefore, to hyper-focus on a mythical past would be to dig one's own grave, to be sucked infinitely into a black hole of experience, imposed upon the Black man from the white writing of history. However, even in the interpretation of a "trou noir" as a blackout, memory cannot be recovered because the memory itself is fraudulently forged by the white man. As Fanon explains, however, the educated black man all too often falls into the trap of a mythic past, trying to become white in order to be recognized by a white world.

This dangerous "trou noir" occurs in Daoud's novel as well, albeit with a different racial valence. If we look back at the above discussion of the novel, just after Haroun kills a man and reverses the story of Cain and Abel, calling his act of murder a trap, he underscores that all he wants is to remember. In this moment, he is also a part of a greater denial, one whose details are not expressly stated. Similar to Fanon's educated man, Haroun searches endlessly for Moussa's past, which has been written for him by "Albert Meursault." However, he and his mother's hyper-focus on Moussa is also what leads to the murder of Joseph and the reversal of the biblical story in which Haroun becomes Cain. In this sense, the writing of a mythic origin causes a lapse in memory that can become a black hole, a gaping wound in which Haroun strives to reach Moussa but only falls deeper into some form of denial. Moreover, the search for memory through education manifests as troublesome for Haroun: when talking to the university-investigator, he explains that "c'est ta faute aussi, l'ami, ta curiosité me provoque. Cela fait des années que je t'attends et si je ne peux pas écrire mon livre, je peux au moins te le raconter, non ?" (16) ["it's your fault too, my friend; your curiosity provokes me. I've been waiting for you for years, and if I can't write my book, at least I can tell you the story, can't I?" (6)]. By

highlighting the student's investigation as provocative, Haroun underscores that the student, like Fanon's Black man, searches too much into the past, one that is ultimately fraudulent (especially because of the means by which Meursault's narration has eliminated Moussa's particularities).[103] Instead, for both Daoud and Fanon, the recognition of the narrative as fraudulent is necessary to break apart the systemic oppression embedded in the writing of history.

In fact, the crux of Fanon's argument lies precisely in the recognition of this fraudulent writing of his history. Within "L'Experience vécue du noir," any attempt to become white is bound to fail because of the color of his skin. At the start of the chapter, his desire—much like Haroun's story—is directed towards the "l'origine du monde" (88) [the origin of the world" (89)]. However, after "l'autre . . . me fixe" with his "regards" ["the other fixes me with his gaze" (89)], Fanon explodes, violating his claim in the introduction. Just as Haroun might "commettre" a book, Fanon's argument culminates in its own violation of its foundations. Crucially, this occurs because any desire to become white ascribes to a false notion of origins and falls apart through epidermalization. The purpose of the explosion thus serves as a violent response to a mythic history—one that has aligned a false savagery with the color of his skin.

After comparing the Jew to the Black man to think through the racial schema,[104] Fanon notes that the Jew has not practiced cannibalism and exclaims, "Quelle idée aussi de dévorer son

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[103] The academic world often runs the risk of being violently provocative, despite its reparative aims. As Macey writes, "[t]he wretched of the earth are still there, but not in the seminar rooms where the talk is of post-colonial theory" (28). In *Water Graves*, Loichot underscores that "critic who exposes such works [of unritual killing] yet another time also walks a fine line between reproducing the unritual and providing a critical aperture, a space to think, feel, mourn, and eventually act" (17). While presenting a part of my previous chapter to Emory students and faculty, recalling the anniversary of the Zong massacre, I felt like Philippe Petite scaling a tight-rope between the now-fallen World Trade Center towers—but without his skill or confidence. Who was I to evoke the past of slavery and link Philip's Ruth to my familial history? For days, the talk haunted me. For days, in response to these hauntings, I repeated to myself the words that I typically only say at Passover: "*Avadim hayinu*," "We were slaves."
[104] To discuss this, Fanon expounds upon Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* in order to assert that the Jew's difference is internalized, while the Black man's is externalized because of his skin. As Rothberg rightly points out, Fanon's "account amounts to a surprisingly unhistorical theory of Jewish visibility; it ignores the relative consistency of the image of the Jew over time, the frequent association of Jews with various 'anomalous' physical traits, including blackness (as demonstrated, for example, in the work of Sander Gilman), and the—at the time

père!" (93) ["What a strange idea, to eat one's father!" (95)]. Although this quote references a murderous origin myth, it does not refer to Cain and Abel. Instead, this refers to Freud's consideration that the Jews killed their father in *Moses and Monotheism*. Briefly stated, Freud claims that the Jews received monotheism from Moses, the Egyptian, and eventually killed him in a rebellion. They then followed the religion of a second Moses, repressed the murder of the original Moses, and have eventually come to maintain the religion of the first Moses. Freud's argument follows what is noted above as the difference between the priestly account and the account with the unspoken name of G-d (also known as the E account and the J account, respectively). To make his argument, Freud reflects upon his former text, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in which he describes totemism as the beginnings of the first religion where the primal horde kills and eats their father as an act of rebellion. Instead of overcoming the power of the father, this act honors the father by "ensur[ing] identification with him" (82). Freud thus posits the killing and repression of Moses as a memory trace, one which shows that man has always known that he killed the primeval father (101). In the last section of Freud's book, he uses the argument of Hebraic patricide to underscore that the shift to Christianity involved admitting guilt and becoming a son-driven, rather than father-driven, religion; ultimately, in Freud's assessment, an anti-Semite hates the patricidal origins of Christianity (136). In this sense, to invoke Moses in the case of anti-Semitism would trace a "trou noir," or a lapse of memory. For Fanon, the Jewish lapse of memory of Moses involves patricide, but it does not involve cannibalism. Therefore, in both cases, patricide is used to instill hate upon a people; however, in the case of the Black man, colonial projections of Black savagery add cannibalism to the picture.

Fanon and Césaire were writing—still recent production and mobilization of a visible, highly biologized, and even sexualized Jewish difference in the context of a genocidal project" (*Multidirectional Memory* 94). And this externalization persists today. It was, after all, only two years ago at a bar in Atlanta that a man came up to me and said, "You're Jewish, right?"

Before I expound upon the addition of cannibalism to the Black man, we might use Fanon's reference to Freud to re-read Moussa's death as patricide. When Haroun suggests that maybe he is Cain and he killed Abel, fratricide becomes patricide if we consider Moussa—a reference to Moses—to be the father of the Hebrew people. Importantly, this ties his case even more explicitly to Meursault's, which was compared to the patricide case to be heard the following day. This confuses perpetrator and victim even further than Haroun first suggests, since Meursault killed an unnamed man, but Haroun names him as Moussa. Thus the act of naming is both generative and patricidal. It gives him a nuanced identity beyond a racial category but suggests that both Meursault and Haroun have killed the father of the Hebrew people and the "most prominent pre-Islamic prophet in the Qur'an" (*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* 419-20). Importantly, Moses' stance as a father figure is bound up in his supposed authorship of the Bible. However, Freud's account of the death of the father relies upon the discrepancy between the J and the E accounts in the bible. Ultimately, Freud's theory emerges, like Haroun's, from a recognition of the mosaic nature of the Mosaic texts. Fanon's reference to Freud, therefore, connects Daoud and Camus' texts and simultaneously exposes the inability for historical and biblical narration to generate a perceptual whole.

Importantly, in Fanon's backhanded reference to Freud, Fanon explains that this cannibalism was inscribed upon him, claiming " [a]u début de l'histoire que les autres m'ont faite, on avait placé bien en évidence le socle de l'anthropophagie, pour que je m'en souvienne " (97) [" [a]t the start of my history that others have fabricated for me, the pedestal of cannibalism was given pride of place so that I wouldn't forget" (100)]. Here, Haroun's declaration that "Arab-ness" is much like "Negro-ness," which exists through the white man's perception, resounds thoroughly, linking all three texts. As Loichot explains in *The Tropics Bite Back:*

Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature (2013), "[i]n Fanon's analysis, then, the origin of the act of cannibalism is revealed as the colonial power itself. Cannibalism finds its source in visual and textual representations of black subjects as cannibals, in their assimilation in a fictional language" and the list goes on (xxi). In her book, Loichot clarifies that the response of "biting back" is the first phase in a literary coup, in which authors until the mid-twentieth century flip images of cannibalism onto the European colonizers; the next phase, of more contemporary authors, uses relation as a means of stepping beyond the colonizers as a primary referent (xi). In Réda Bensmaïa's *Experimental Nations, or, The Invention of the Maghreb* (2003), Algeria's literary response to colonialism takes on similar phases. While the first phase resounds the need for liberation before it has occurred, the second debunks the myth of origins, and is even labeled "Fanonian" (25). This analysis, however, corresponds thematically to the Fanon of *Peau noir, masques blancs* as much as it does to *Damnés de la terre*. This phase constructs the Algeria to come, but simultaneously questions myths and emphasizes that there is not necessarily an origin to trace to find a new definition of the nation. In the third phase, Bensmaïa underscores that "the myth (of the nation) was interrupted, and its very interruption gives voice to and exposes an unfinished community, *speaking in a mythical mode without being a mythical speech (parlant comme le mythe sans être en rien une parole mythique)*" (25; emphasis in original). To define myth in this context, Bensmaïa refers to French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's "'mything' thinking (*la pensée mythante*) [which] is none other than 'the elaboration of a foundational thought, or of a foundation through fiction'" (27). Fanon's reference to cannibalism in Antillean racism thus provides useful to an Algerian context in its ability to critique origin myths. Remarking on the Caribbean, Loichot asserts that "if cannibalism fails to eradicate the father—totemic or literary—it nonetheless troubles notions of origins and originality, since the eater and

the eaten lose themselves, lose their discrete selves, in the very act of ingestion" (xxix). Serving as an interlocutor between Martinique and Algeria, Fanon thus provides the movement between phase one and phase two of Loichot's consideration of a Caribbean response to colonialism and as the middle phase of Bensmaïa's articulation of Algerian national literature. In both cases, a myth is given and needs to be refuted to pave the way for a liberation beyond colonialism and its ideals.

Although Bensmaïa articulated these phases ten years before Daoud wrote this novel, he correctly anticipated the "mythic mode without being a mythical speech" of the *contre-enquêtte*. This mode must recognize the flaws of the fraudulent origin myth and ultimately warn of the dangers of its own narrative. Just as cannibalism has been inscribed on the racialized Caribbean body as a means of rendering it a hyperbolized, violent alterity, Daoud points to the means by which narratives like Meursault's have slapped the label "dangerous" onto the Arab body. Haroun takes arms against this (these) narrative(s), which replace(s) Moussa's body with a knife altogether. Outlining many assumptions about Algeria during the War of Independence, Fanon explains, in *Damnés de la terre,* the myth that "*L'Algérien tue sauvagement.* Et d'abord l'arm préféré est l couteau" (286; emphasis in original) ["*The Algerian is a savage killer*: And his weapon of choice is the knife" (222)]. Like the supposed Black cannibal, the Arab man is labeled a knife-wielding savage, removing the potential for an Algerian-generated history that bears the possibility for individual nuances. Ultimately, the act of narrating the past for the other is what generates the "schema historico-racial" (*Peau noir, masques blancs* 90) ["historical-racial schema" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 91)]. In both Fanon and Daoud, therefore, myth is to be reckoned with through an adoption of a "mythic mode" that exposes myth as myth.

This is because the two thinkers agree that narrative's violence lies in the myths that it generates, so to respond to a narrative's violence simply with a new narrative would be equally destructive. Instead, they must each violate narration in the act of narration. While Fanon wishes to destroy the myth of the Black man (94), the difficulty is that he is both overdetermined from the outside and that since he had come "trop tard et que tout était dit, il semble exister un nostalgie du passé" (97) ["too late and everything had already been said, there seems to be a nostalgia for the past" (100)]. In this reference to Freud's hypercathexis,[105] an important difference occurs: everything had already been *said* (and in the previous line "prévu, trouvé, prouvé, exploité" ["predicted, discovered, proved, and exploited"]). To be said, or narrated, replaces the event of Freud's trauma with the history written for the Black man by the white man. He explains that all types of exploitation "vont toutes chercher leur nécessité dans quelque décret d'ordre biblique. Toutes les formes d'exploitation sont identiques, car elles s'appliquent tout à un même « object » : l'homme » (71) ["seek to justify their existence by citing some biblical decree. All forms of exploitation are identical, since they apply to the same 'object': man" (69)]. This "biblical decree" is a recognition of the value of written accounts of Western definitions of man that can be violent.[106] Thus in order to destroy the myths of the Black man and Arab, Fanon and Daoud must recognize a problematic nostalgia, emphasizing "[c]ombien de ceux-là, fixes, semble-t-il, à l'utérus du monde, ont consacré leur vie à l'intellection des Oracles de Delphes ou se sont efforcés de retrouver le périple d'Ulysse!" (Fanon 97) ["[h]ow many of

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[105] Fanon also critiques Freud's theory of trauma found in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: Freud's theory of hypercathexis suggests that once a traumatic event occurs that the traumatized individual has an over-focus on the past, a desire too late to understand or be aware of the thing that is happening (9, 30). Ultimately, the goal of psychoanalysis is the reintegration of such memory, but in the case of the Black man, this would be dangerous: reintegration would ignore the fact that this history was written for him; rather, a new history needs to be written.

[106] We might remember that Haroun is most affected by the *textual* account of his brother's death, claiming that he only began to suffer when "j'appris à lire et que je compris le sort injuste reserve à mon frère, mort dans un livre" (43) ["I learned to read and realized what an unjust fate had befallen my brother, who died in a book" (33)].

those apparently focused on the womb of the world, have devoted their lives to the intellection of the Delphic oracle or have endeavored to rediscover the voyages of Ulysses!" (100)]. Both this biblical decree and devotion to the oracle are means of focusing on the past in which a definition of man can be rendered—one that easily excludes those deemed savage or uncivilized.

The realization that this white world and past cannot be fully destroyed causes Fanon to "pousser [son] cri nègre" (98) ["push out [his] black cry"] (my translation[107]) (98). This cry is at once a recognition of an impossibility and the creation of something new through a double-edged narrative sword: the recognition of narration in order to destroy it and the destruction of his own narrative foundations. His cry emerges from a place of extreme ontological violence: Fanon articulates both how his being has been written for him and that even if he tries to play the system by becoming educated, he is ultimately rejected by the white gaze upon his skin. However, this cry is also the first means by which he can irrupt and erupt the myth. Importantly, the word "crier" sounds quite similar to "creer," the verb "to create." In Antillean Creole, spoken in Fanon's place of birth, the word "cri" also takes on the meaning "to name." Thus while this cry is a recognition of pain, it also is the recognition of a potential for relation and creation. We might also remind ourselves, here, that the name Cain—the first murderer in the bible—comes from the Hebrew root "to create." In both Haroun and Fanon's accounts, therefore, violence is at once painful, necessary, regenerative, and potentially limited. It is limited if it does not retain the former three characteristics through an acknowledgment of the potential violence of narration.

Therefore, it carries particular weight that this moment is marked by a realization of the "Origine," rather than the "origines" (101; 104). The capitalized "O" suggests that it is typically

[107] While, for the most part, I rely upon the thorough translation of Richard Philcox, he translates "crier," and its various forms throughout Fanon's writing as "shout." This does not account for the nuances of the written and spoken word, which my argument relies upon heavily.

taken as more legitimate but is ultimately fraudulent. The uncapitalized version is also plural, suggesting a multiplicity of origins or/and individuals. The singular, capitalized version corresponds to a teleological myth of progress, in which the Black man is used as a "bouc émissaire pour la société blanche—basée sur les mythes: progrès, civilisation, libéralisme, éducation, lumière, finesse—sera précisément la force qui s'oppose à l'expansion, à la Victoire de ces mythes (157) ["scapegoat for white society, which is based on the myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education, enlightenment, and refinement, [which] will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and triumph of these myths. This oppositional brute force is provided by the black man" (170-1)]. Fanon's goal, to "mettre en mesure [l'homme noir] de *choisir* l'action (ou la passivité) à l'égard de la véritable source conflictuelle" (81) ["enable [the black man] to *choose* action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of conflict" (80)], then involves a recognition of the "deep-rooted myth" and the violence of the teleology it presents (157; 170-1). This violence rests within an erasure of the myth's complexities, the fact that any Origin erases the multiple origins it contains. Outlining what he calls an "immense paradoxe" ["immense paradox"], Glissant points out that "les livres fondateurs de communauté, l'Ancien Testament, l'*Iliade*, l'*Odyssée*, les Chansons de geste, les Sagas, l'*Enéide*, ou les épopées africaines, étaient des livres d'exil et souvent d'errance" (27) ["the great founding books of communities, the Old Testament, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Chansons de Geste*, the Islandic *Sagas*, the *Aeneid*, or the African epics, were all books about exile and often about errantry" (15)]. Strangely, these foundational texts have been used to fix a history of savagery on the Black man as an argument for settlement in conquered territories. In this vein, Fanon asserts that "le Noir, même sincère, est esclave du pasé. Cependant, je suis un homme, et en ce sens la guerre du Péloponèse est aussi mienne que la découverte de la boussole" (183) ["[t]he black man, however

sincere, is a slave to the past. But I am a man, and in this sense the Peloponnesian War is as much mine as the invention of the compass" (200)]. In Fanon's recognition of the myth of Origin, he can choose his action: to reclaim the numerous origins for the Black man, including those within the Western tradition that inscribed cannibalism upon his genes. This painful cry, consequently, can be used to reopen the past and write it anew, which subsequently generates a new future.

Although Fanon had said that taking a position of "open rupture" is not helpful, after exploding and crying, he is able to slightly adjust his claim. After citing a passage from Aime Césaire at length in which he kills the white man inside of him, Fanon explains that "[a]près s'être porté aux limites de l'auto-destruction, le nègre, méticuleusement ou éruptivement, va sauter dans le 'trou noir' d'où fusera 'd'une telle raideur le grand cri nègre que les assises du monde en seront ébranlées'" (161) ["[a]fter having driven himself to the limits of self-destruction, the black man, meticulously or impetuously, will jump into the 'black hole' from which it will gush forth 'the great black scream with such force that it will shake the foundations of the world'" (175)]. A crucial distinction occurs between the problematic "trou noir" and this one: the Black man has now brushed up against his "auto-destruction." This cry breaks the foundations of the world. Here, we might read the world to be the one created or written by the White man—the same one that Glissant calls a "non-monde."[108] Thus the violence of breaking himself apart responds to the violence of the white writing of history.

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[108] Writing about the pains of Atlantic slave trade, Glissant's "La Barque ouverte" also vocalizes a cry which functions similarly to Fanon's. Glissant, instead of naming the writing of history as the instigator here (although he takes up history as the concern elsewhere), looks to slavery as a break in which all those thrown into the "ventre de cette barque-ce" ["belly of the boat"] are born into a "non-monde où tu cries" (18) ["non-world from which you cry out" (6)]. "Ventre" also translates to "womb," which is important to add to this moment of paradoxical birth into a "non-monde." Instead of being born into a chain of filiation, the imagery of birth becomes abysmal—a "gouffre-matrice" (18) ["womb abyss" (6)]. The second component of the abyss is the sea, generating a "commencement, seulement rhythmé de ces boulets verdis" (18) ["beginning, whose time is marked by these balls and chains gone green" (6)]. Like both Fanon's discussion of a nostalgia for the past and Haroun's emphasis that this story goes back

Violence is also of central importance in *Damnés de la terre*, leading Fanon to ultimately be seen as an "apostle of violence, the prophet of a violent Third World Revolution that posed an even greater threat to the West than communism" (Macey 2). Despite the tendency for decolonial and revolutionary thought to place Fanon on a pedestal of violence, we must consider Macey's assertion that "[a]lthough this image of Fanon is by no means inaccurate, it is very partial" and that "there were other Frantz Fanons" (2). In fact, while voicing the need for violence, *Damnés de la terre* also stresses the danger of repeating this violence after decolonization. Furthermore, it continues a critique of the values imported by a fraudulent history and the Manicheanism catalyzed by an unnuanced use of religion. As Bhabha puts it in "Framing Fanon," since Fanon's violence emerges from a fraught colonial oppression, "[i]t does not offer a clear choice between life and death or slavery and freedom, because it confronts the colonial condition of life-in-death" (xxxvi). To choose simply one or the other would neglect the complexity of recognizing the injustices created by colonization—which includes the epistemological violence of a fraudulently written past. Furthermore, this creates a need for an open future; to choose a singular qualifier closes off the potential embedded in this future. Thus violence serves as a response to the physical and epistemological violence placed upon the colonized, but it cannot be an ultimate end either.

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to the beginning, Glissant notes that the chaotic rupture generated by slavery creates an emphasis on the past, marking time with the chains that tethered slaves to the hull, rotting at the bottom of the ocean. The dreadful thought about what is to come becomes more frightening, leading to the third "metamorphosis of the abyss" which "projects a reverse image of all that had been left behind" (6-7). Paradoxically, the abyss both creates oblivion and intensifies memory, and the shared memory generated by it creates a "projection of and perspective into the unknown," much like Fanon's consideration of the future (8). Just as Fanon's cry is both a manifestation of violence and a catalyst for creation, for Glissant, "Nous nous connaisons en foule, dans l'inconnu que ne terrifie pas. Nous crions le cri de poésie. Nos barques sont ouvertes, pour tous nous les navigations" (21) ["We know ourselves as part and crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone" (9)]. For each, a cry recognizes a violent past and the means by which it can create an over-emphasis on that past. However, the same poetic cry catalyzes the importance of the question—of the "unknown that does not terrify."

This involves generating a "new history of Man," along with "tak[ing] us back to the future (Bhabha xiv, xv). In *Damnés de la terre*, Fanon continues to emphasize that the colonizer creates the idea of the colonized subject, explaining,

> Dans les sociétés de type capitaliste, l'enseignement, religieux ou laïque, la formation de réflexes moraux transmissibles de père en fil, l'honnêteté exemplaire d'ouvriers décorés après cinquante années de bons et loyaux services, l'amour encourage de l'harmonie et de la sagesse, ces formes esthétiques du respect de l'ordre établi, créent autour de l'exploité une atmosphère de soumission et d'inhibition qui allège considérablement la tâche des forces de l'ordre. (42)
>
> [In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order. (3-4)]

Here, a filial chain creates an infantilization that leads to exploitation, much like de Beauvoir's assessment. Although not a colonized subject, Meursault, too confronts a supposedly secular moral reflex that also "eases the task of the agents of law and order," since he can be convicted on the grounds of his alienated moral disposition. However, this is compounded for the colonized subject, as Fanon compares Christianity to DDT, which roots out the supposed "depravity" created by the myths that are imposed upon them (45; 7). Crucially, this is not an attack on all of Christianity but the "Église de Blancs" ["white man's Church"] which "n'appelle pas l'homme colonisé dans la voie de D[�']mais bien la voie du Blanc, dans la voie du maître, dans la voie de l'oppresseur" (45)

[“does not call the colonized to the ways of G[-]d but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor” (7)]. Here, religion is used as a colonizing force, quite closely aligned with Bhabha’s discussion of religion in “Of Mimicry and Man” and “Signs Taken for Wonders”. [109] Therefore, the exploiting force that oppresses the colonized is fueled by the same forces that implicate Meursault and overlook Moussa’s death: a falsified history and the imposition of religious morals (often posed as secular) which imports the values of a white world.

This imposition is both physically and psychically violent, which, Fanon asserts, must be responded to with violence. For him, violence is a “méditation” which forges a community that welcomes those who had been “proscrit” (83) [“outlawed” (44)]. In some sense, his assertion of violence might appear as a response to former colonial violence; however, this approach to Fanon’s thinking glorifies a violence with no end, neglecting the importance of reading violence as a stage in a battle to construct a decolonized future. [110] It is, however, easy to see where many draw from Fanon to ennoble violence, as he asserts that the colonized respond to the Manicheanism of the colonizer with its reversal, and that, “[p]our le colonisé, la vie ne peut surgir que du cadavre en décomposition du colon” (89) [“[f]or the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist” (50)]. However, he adds a positive valence to this type of violence, claiming that it has “caractères positifs, formateurs” [“positive, formative features”] and that each individual adds up to generative body of violence to defeat the colonizer (89-90; 50). In the case of colonial liberation, this violence is “totalisante, nationale” [“totalizing and national”], eliminating distinctions of smaller group leaders like *kaids* (90; 51). So while violence is

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[109] See chapter 2 for an extensive explanation of Bhabha’s consideration of religion in the configuration of colonial ambivalence, along with a more thorough analysis of how religion is used in a partial form to assert colonial oppression.

[110] As Macey asserts, “the theoretical model [Fanon] adopts necessarily implies that the group unity on which that victory is based cannot be sustained. In a sense, Fanon foresaw that the post-independence period would be difficult and dangerous” (482).

"cleansing" for the individual (90; 51), on a national level, violence involves some effacement of the nuances of the different groups of the nation in order to generate one coherent narrative. This can become dangerous after the stage of liberation if it carries into the new nation's consciousness. This might be why killing Joseph was temporarily liberating and eventually a trap for Haroun: this reversal occurs after liberation, and he had not fought in the War of Independence.

Much like Haroun's description of postcolonial Algeria, this cleansing yet dangerous nature of violence can take shape when a religious Manicheanism is renewed in a reversed form. Fanon explains that religion can be used as a simultaneously de- and re-colonial force when "[l]e colonisé réussit également, par l'intermédiaire de la religion, à ne pas tenir compte du colon. Par le fatalisme, tout initiative est enlevée à l'oppresseur, la cause des maux, de la misère, un destin revenant à D['] » (56) ["[t]he colonized subject also manages to lose sight of the colonist through religion. Fatalism relieves the oppressor of all responsibility since the cause of wrong-doing, poverty, and the inevitable can be attributed to G[-]d" (18)]. While the use of religion to overcome the oppression caused by the colonizer can feel liberating, it does not address the root of the problem—the men who created the situation. This manifests as a flipped renewal of Manicheanism to respond to that of the colonizer. However, noting that the creation of a national consciousness entails a homogenization of voices, anyone who adopted this reversed Manicheanism eventually notices that certain groups of the new nation are more inclined to voice their interests and assert their privileges (138; 93). This leads to the discovery that "le phénomène inique de l'exploitation peut présenter une apparence noire ou arabe" ["the iniquitous phenomenon of exploitation can assume a black or Arab face"] so "le peuple devra également abandonner le simplisme qui caractérisait sa perception du dominateur" (139) ["the people must learn to give up their simplistic perception of the oppressor" (94)]. The difficulty of creating a national narrative without

neglecting particular groups subsequently derails the fight against colonialism and "[c]ette lutte implacable que se livrent les ethnies et les tribus, ce souci agressif d'occuper les postes rendus libres par le départ de l'étranger vont également donner naissance à des compétitions religieuses. » (155) ["[t]his ruthless struggle waged by the ethnic groups and tribes, and this virulent obsession with filling vacancies left by the foreigner also engender religious rivalries" (106)]. Dangerously, this responsive religious rivalry can turn to racism (156; 108). This emerges from the need to create a unified culture to combat the white tendency to define itself by labeling all non-white cultures "non-cultures" (202; 150). Responding to this empty charge can become a hyper-focus on the past that—instead of integrating a false narrative imported by the colonizer—creates a stark opposition to the colonizer (202-3; 150-1). However, this stark opposition has its limitations in that it does not account fully for the original issue of the colonizers and can generate a reverse racism. At this moment, Fanon links negritude to the Arab world, explaining that "[l]a lute de libération nationale s'est accompagnée d'un phénomène culuturel connu sous le nom de réveil de l'Islam" (203) ["[t]he struggle for national liberation was linked to a cultural phenomenon commonly known as the awakening of Islam. The passion displayed by contemporary Arab authors in reminding their people of the great chapters of Arab history is in response to the lies of the occupier" (151)]. This might be what he means when he states that "[c]haque génération doit dans une relative opacité découvrir sa mission, la remplir ou la trahir" (197) "[e]ach generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity" (145): that to flip the script is too transparent. Doing so erases the responsibility of the colonizer by displacing the source of animosity onto divergent deities (without acknowledging their commonalities) and neglects inherently nuanced identities within the nation itself. This might be why Haroun detests the idea of going on a pilgrimage (149;

139); it might also be why he responds to the imam with the same exact words as Meursault (150; 140).

As Glissant articulates, this reply is limited in that it responds to a chain of filiation with a new one. He explains that "[l]a plupart des nations qui se sont libérées de la colonization ont tendu à se former autour de l'idée de puissance, pulsion totalitaire de la racine unique, et non pas dans un rapport fondateur à l'Autre" (26-7) ["[m]ost of the nations that gained freedom from colonization have tended to form around an idea of power—the totalitarian drive of a single, unique root—rather than around a fundamental relationship with the Other. Culture's self-conception was dualistic, pitting citizen against barbarian" (14)]. In both *Peau noir, masques blanc* and *Damnés de la terre*, Fanon warns against this adoption of a singular root. Although he explains that because of a European assertion of roots, often "le première action du Noir soit une *reaction*" (*Peau* 29) ["the first action is a *reaction*" (19)], instead asserting that we must "d'inviter l'homme total que l'Europe a été incapable de faire triompher" (*Damnés* 302) "endeavor to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving" (236)]. Therefore, the limitation of a response or a reaction, is the act of return without a gesture towards creation beyond the response. Similarly, Haroun's murder of Joseph enacts a response to the death of Moussa, but it may be labeled a trap because it did not necessarily engender a novel relation to humanity (although his narration against narration begins to do this work). The European force of colonization has distinctly defined man and its history through a filial root, pitting it directly against all those deemed "uncivilized." Naturally, to take down this root must begin with a reaction; however, after an initially necessary response with violence, the next stage should involve *invention*.

In this inventive journey from alienation to disalienation, a leap occurs. Although Camus critiques a leap that equates to transcendence in other thinkers in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, the "saut"

or leap that occurs in Fanon is much more aligned with Camus' absurdity because of its openness. Camus analyzes the potential for the absurd in both Chestov and Kierkegaard, but their accounts of being each lead to G-d. This is considered a leap which escapes the absurdity of this world for another (241-7; 32-44). A problematic leap occurs in Husserl's thought as well, in which reason becomes applicable to all processes—even when the process at question is itself untraceable (247-51; 44-6). For Fanon, having a singular definition of the Black man and equating anti-Semitism with Black racism are both considered "errors of analysis"; subsequently, he poses his book against such errors, outlining a "miroir à infra-structure progressive, où pourrait se retrouver le nègre en voie de désaliénation" (*Peau* 148) ["mirror with a progressive infastructure where the black man can find the path to disalienation" (161)]. Those who make this error incur an issue "situé dans la temporalité" ["located in temporality"] as he asserts that "[s]eront désaliénés Nègres et Blancs qui auront refuse de se laisser enfermer dans la Tour substantialisée du Passé. Pour beaucoup d'autres nègres, la désaliénation naîtra, par ailleurs, du refus de tenir l'actualité pour definitive" (183) ["[d]isalienation will be for those Whites and Blacks who have refused to let themselves be locked in the substantialized 'tower of the past.' For many other black men disalienation will come from refusing to consider their reality as definitive" (201)]. We must recall that this refutation of the past also involves placing a wary eye on broad biblical decrees and other origin myths. This includes being open to the future, similar to Camus' assertion that the absurd man bears no future but rather "[l]e présent et la succession des présents" (262) ["[t]he present and a succession of presents" (64)]. Fanon's conclusion echoes a racialized version of Camus' absurd:

> Je ne suis pas prisonnier de l'Histoire. Je ne dois pas y chercher le sens de ma destinée.
>
> Je dois me rappeler à tout instant que le véritable *saut* consiste à introduire l'invention dans l'existence.

Dans le monde où je m'achemine, je me crée interminablement. (186; emphasis in original)

I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction.

I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life.

In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself. (204)

Therefore, after reacting to the pangs of a racialized history by exploding it, one must cry in a way that is generative, inventing an ongoing and open future. The leap required for this is by no means transcendent—it only dedicates itself to not knowing and the ongoing process of invention. Violence might be necessary, but after this reactive violence, there is no telling what may come; only this leap towards invention can prevent a neocolonial force from emerging.

A political leap must also occur for Glissant as a precursor to the cry of poetry (21; 9). As he says later in "Errantry, Exile," "one who is errant . . . strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this—and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides" (21). Fanon thus articulates an errant thinking as a means of overcoming a violent history, even asserting that "je n'ai pas le droit de me laisser ancrer" (186) ["I have not the right to put down roots" (204)]. Just as Glissant notes that the cry of poetry leads all boats to an open navigation, *Peau noir, masques blanc*s' final lines assert that

À la fin de cet ouvrage, nous aimerions que l'on sente comme nous la dimension ouverte de tout conscience.

Mon ultime prière:

O mon corps, fais de moi toujours un homme qui interroge !

[At the end of this book we would like the reader to feel with us the open dimension of every consciousness.

My final prayer:

O my body, always make me a man who questions! (206)]

After exposing an imposed colonial, racial filial history of savagery, and by disrupting his own narrative with this explosion and its successive cry, Fanon can finally underscore the irony of a violently linear temporal narrative and pose its liberating alternative: an open future which relies upon a question.

Daoud's novel, by way of its question-provoking biblical allusions and mirroring of Meursault's violent narrative, also adopts an open question. Haroun, meditating on the state of contemporary Algiers, underscores that Fanon's warnings in *Damnés de la terre* were not taken seriously. He wishes to cry out that "je suis libre et que D['] est un question, pas un réponse, et que je veux le recontrer seul comme à ma naissance ou à ma mort" (149) "I'm free, and that G[-]d is a question, not an answer, and that I want to meet him alone, at my death as at my birth" (139)]. Cutting across all three texts, the imposition of a fixed religious morality obliterates a potential for questioning. This lack of open potential and its corollary Manicheanism is where the problem lies—not in religion itself. Within an open approach to religion, and subsequently the concept of humanity, lies a fundamental need to foster a relationship with the other. Furthermore, Glissant asserts,

On se retrouve parfois, abordant aux problèmes de l'Autre ; les histoires contemporaines en fournissent quelques exemples éclatants : ainsi du trajet de Frantz Fanon, de Martinique en Algérie. C'est bien là l'image du rhizome, qui porte à savoir que l'identité n'est plus

tout dans la racine, mais aussi dans la Relation. C'est que la pensée de l'errance est aussi bien pensée du relatif, qui est le relayé mais aussi le relaté. La pensée de l'errance est un poétique, et qui sous-entend qu'à un moment elle se dit. Le dit de l'errance est celui de la Relation. (31)

[Sometimes, by taking up the problems of the Other, it is possible to find oneself**.** Contemporary history provides several striking examples of this, among them Frantz Fanon, whose path led from Martinique to Algeria. That is very much the image of the rhizome, prompting the knowledge that the identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation. Because the thought of errantry is also the thought of what is relative, the thing relayed as well as the thing related. The thought of errantry is a poetics, which always infers that at some moment it is told. The tale of errantry is the tale of relation. (18)]

Just as Fanon's open question took him from Martinique to Algeria, the works of Camus and Daoud require "taking up the problems of the Other." By taking arms against Meursault/Camus and simultaneously dedicating his novel to Camus', Daoud traces the other, rubs up against him, and does not disavow him entirely. Although many critics would likely contest this statement, Camus also involves himself with the other by creating a narrator that exposes the religious morality behind the legal system. Despite the charge that he has been complicit in ongoing colonial racism by writing the Arab body as unnanced and dangerous, this too, might be a means by which Camus can catalyze a relationship with the other. In her autobiography, de Beauvoir recalls a New Year's Eve party in France, in which Camus points to a man (whose name is not given) and whispers "C'est lui . . . qui a servi de modèle à *L'Étranger*" (28) ["It's him, who served as the model for *The Stranger*"] (my translation). Whether or not readers choose to put Camus' biographical details in conversation with his fictions, reading him through Daoud's novel both

extends his critique of filial narratives and links it to Fanon's contestation of a white narration of history. These narrations against narration reconsider the foundational texts of religion and subtly expose their inner nuances, painting a mosaic which contends that any image of humanity includes various pieces of a composite picture.

Towards an Open Future

Just as Daoud felt the imperative to name Camus' victim, many Americans stress the importance of saying the names of those who have died because their racialized bodies were improperly read as dangerous by the police and white civilians. However, on June 1, 2020, peaceful protesters calling against racial injustice in Washington D.C.[111] were forcibly cleared from the area using tear gas for what seemed like "no apparent reason," only to find out that President Donald J. Trump wanted to take a photo at St. John's church (Gjelten). Although the church is so commonly frequented by U.S. presidents that it is known as the "Church of the Presidents," the procedure used to secure the area typically involves peacefully placing barricades around the area and stationing police at different locations to block the streets (Gerbasi). Reverend Gini Gerbasi of St. John's church called the president's actions ironic and a "sacrilege," explaining "[p]eople were protesting the fact that their government had been enslaving, incarcerating, overlooking and brutalizing them for generations — and the government brutalized them again. Religious people, who were literally wiping away the protesters' tears, were driven off the church property with brute force and fear" ("I'm a priest."). Although the speech Trump gave in the Rose Garden before the photo-op speaks of deploying the national guard to stop *violent* rioting, it does not highlight that violence was used to clear the crowd of *peaceful* protesters. Furthermore, his speech and photo-op omit Gerbasi's point that many people in the crowd that was cleared may have even shared the same religion. Instead, it poses the Bible as a bearer of safety and benevolence moments after his speech said he would keep peaceful protesters safe ("Law and Justice"). Therefore, while the discussion amongst these

[111] Here, we might pause to note that the nation's capital is named after George Washington and *Christopher Columbus.*

pages considers (post)colonial questions for long-seated Caribbean and Algerian racial and ethnic injustice, we might also read them to better investigate a contemporary American context.

In each context, allusive and elusive (creative) non-fiction, poetry, and fiction, trace the temporal wounds incurred. Danticat's engagement with Camus, along with both authors' consideration of creation and death, highlight the emergence of Greek myth and the Bible as potential tropes to confront the Duvalier regime, Nazi occupation of France, the Battle of Algiers, and the immigrant experience more broadly. While each author can better understand their contexts through a rhetoric of distance and closeness, their engagement with myth, along with my own assessment of the rhetoric of the Duvalier regime, underscores how myth can also be used violently to fit authoritarian narratives into national rhetoric. Together, Danticat and Camus raise questions of the knowledge structures that these myths sometimes foster.

Knowledge and transparency, therefore, must be confronted by opacity and impossibility, as exemplified by Philip's *Zong!* and Camus' *Le Premier homme*. The concept of time collapses—or must be broken—to render the conceptualization of the disastrous Zong massacre, along with colonial orphans and racialized violence in Algeria, opaque and always unfinished. And yet there is a need to read and tell these stories. In this case, the duality of the biblical references to Adam and Ruth have shown that, while colonial contexts often assert the significance of a homogenous, unidirectional male lineage, a gender-fluid, multicultural legacy upholds a biblical value of lovingkindness. The Bible's inherent complexities underscore that uses of the Bible to legitimize colonial endeavors are often what Bhabha considers "partial" readings. While heterogeneity may be harder to conceptualize, cloudy as difference may be, an imperative to engage with violent pasts we will never fully understand can foster an ethics of ongoing (re)reading and, subsequently, (re)writing our relationships to one another. Noting how

Pope Benedict XVI used gender roles in Genesis to speak against gay marriage, Butler points out that merely dismissing the Biblical creation as not truth would generate the same form of dismissal that he imports. Instead, Butler asserts, "[p]erhaps one needs to start with the story of Genesis itself and see what other readings are possible" (*Frames of War* 117). In my assessment, new readings are always possible, and reading is never finished.

However, as my analysis of *L'Étranger* suggests, naming a source of violence is not a simple task when many actors are implicated in broader systems of intolerance—even more so when this intolerance is shielded by an air of morality and justice. In the case of anti-Black and anti-Arab racism, history and narrative become tools for racist and ethnic oppression. Fanon and Daoud both "[c]rie[nt]" (cry) and "[h]urle[nt]" (wail) to expose it and explode it—a cry that, by opening a question, can begin to name and create (Daoud 149). Both authors note the violence within the writing of history and have therefore written narrations that attack and interrupt narration itself. Beyond eruptive writing which irrupts historical narrative with the force of a question, both authors have posited that a return of violence is sometimes necessary to break from systemic violence. On the other hand, both authors assert that this violence, if left unchecked, can risk repeating itself. Thus violence is at once a source for liberation and a trap. As Daoud's references to Moses, Aaron, Cain, and Abel point out, the liberating trap of violence cuts deep into a Judeo-Christian-Islamic worldview. Furthermore, the choice to name Meursault's victim Musa aligns Daoud's text to Camus by confronting the same limited use of religion as a source for national morality that elides the mosaic nature of the Mosaic texts.

This reduction of complexity allows for the dangerous legitimation of territorial possession and constitution of ideal, submissive behavior under the guise of ancient historical representations of collectivity. While often used to impose a civilizing mission, or even to define

civility in the first place, as Glissant points out, these supposedly founding texts often simultaneously import alternatives:

> Les livres collectifs du sacré ou de l'historicité portent en germe l'exact contraire de leurs turbulentes réclamations. La légitimité de la possession d'un territoire y est toujours nuancée, par relativisation de la notion elle-même de territoire. Livres de la naissance à la conscience collective, ils introduisent ainsi à la part de malaise et de suspens qui permet à l'individu de s'y trouver, chaque fois qu'il devient à lui-même problème. (28)
> [Within the collective books concerning the sacred and the notion of history lies the germ of the exact opposite of what they so loudly proclaim. When the very idea of territory becomes relative, nuances appear in the legitimacy of territorial possession. These are books about the birth of collective consciousness, but they also introduce the unrest and suspense that allow the individual to discover him there, whenever he becomes the issue. (15)]

Therefore, to notice the nuances within these texts leads to a relative engagement with collective memory and history that does not substantiate claims to territories. Neither does it clarify what is moral or ethical. Rather, to use these texts to enact moral systems, the texts would have to be ongoingly subjected to new readings which renegotiate the terms of the individual and the collective. This looks much like the *Coviviencia* that Young analyzes in "Postcolonial Remains." Discussing tenth-century Spain and the Mughal era in South Asia in which various religious groups lived side-by-side, Young explains, "If, in practice, tolerance must always be qualified, nevertheless, like forgiveness, tolerance only has meaning if it is imprescriptible, unconditional, and unqualified at the same time" (34). Using the Bible and myth for territorial legitimation and

moral qualifications, therefore, catalyzes intolerance, unless the “exact opposite” within them is always up for consideration.

Thus, by opening ourselves to the complexities of these ancient texts, we might also open our futures to the ethics of a question. This involves investigating how violence marks individuals and collectives physically, psychically, and historically, and how, sometimes, history and narrative are the conductors of violence. Therefore, time itself, as an informant to ontology and epistemology, must also become a question. Ancient allusions can splatter a contemporary text with the blood of the past; they can also illuminate the means by which contemporary moments echo old forms of physical and epistemological violence. Inevitably, the past and present cannot be unraveled clearly. Wounds do not disappear; rather, they leave scars—marks of the past on the body’s present. On the body of history, if progress were the only story told, it would not bear the mark of history’s more violent moments. How, then, might we mark bodies of history, bodies of writing, bodies of collective memory? By creating spaces to read history otherwise, through both innovative and disorienting acts of writing, by rupturing the present with old texts, old memories, old histories that evoke a need for complexity, by noticing myth at its best and worst, we can welcome all people—their traditions and novelties—equally, with arms held wide towards an open future.

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