

Collective Memory, Colonial Violence, and the Right to Know In Maissa Bey's *Entendez-Vous Dans Les Montagnes...*(2011)

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Received: 11may2022

Accepted:01 June 2022

Abstract:

This article deals with fictional narratives as a substitute for colonial concealed archives to reconstitute the hidden past of French colonial atrocities towards the Algerian people and heal collective trauma in Maissa Bey 's novella *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...*(2011) . Through her work, Maissa Bey engages in a fictional rebuilding of the past, and the inventing of a new narrative about silenced events in the collective memory, mainly torture and mass executions as a means of rethinking and reshaping the present and future.

Keywords: French colonialism, archives, torture, trauma, collective memory, Maissa Bey

ملخص:

تتناول هذه المقالة الروايات الخيالية كبديل للأرشيف الاستعماري المخفي لإعادة تشكيل الماضي للفظائع الاستعمارية الفرنسية تجاه الشعب الجزائري وعلاج الصدمة الجماعية في رواية ميسا باي هل تسمعوا في الجبال ... (2011).

من خلال عملها ، تشارك ميسا باي في إعادة بناء خيالية للماضي ، واختراع رواية جديدة حول الأحداث التي تم إسكانها في الذاكرة الجماعية ، وخاصة التعذيب والإعدام الجماعي كوسيلة لإعادة تشكيل الحاضر والمستقبل.

كلمات مفتاحية: الاستعمار الفرنسي ، الأرشيف ، التعذيب ، الصدمة ، الذاكرة الجماعية ، ميسا باي

Résumé:

Cet article traite des récits fictifs comme substituts aux archives coloniales relatives à la guerre d'Algérie pour reconstituer le passé et dénoncer les représailles coloniales françaises contre le peuple algérien et guérir le traumatisme collectif dans la nouvelle de Maïssa Bey, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...* (2011). À travers son œuvre, Maïssa Bey s'engage dans une reconstruction fictive du passé et invente un nouveau récit sur des atrocités coloniales réduites au silence dans la mémoire collective Algérienne, notamment la torture et les exécutions de masse, comme moyen de repenser et de remodeler le présent et l'avenir.

Mots clés: Colonialisme français, archives, torture, traumatisme, mémoire collective, Maïssa Bey

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"To secure remembrance, one must first
be able to tell what happened,"
Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (26).

Introduction

The fifth of July 2022 is an important date in the history of Algeria. It marks the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the country, and at the same time , it marks the end of the requisite sixty years wait period for classified documents related to the Algerian War of independence to be released by the French government. The consultation of these archives will certainly help reconstruct Algerian collective memory and answer thorny questions about mass killings, deportations, and the practice of torture by the French colonizers on the Algerian people during the War of Independence. In fact, the issue of displaced, obscured and/ or retrieved archives has been a matter of debate by governments , politicians, and historians of the two countries for long decades since the independence of the country in 1962. For the Algerian people , these displaced or erased archives have been meant to obscure and undermine responsibility in the practice of imprisonment, torture, and summary executions of innocent civilians. The use of the archives of collective memory as an alternative source of knowledge to reconstruct Algerian people's past has become, as a consequence, a necessary process for collective healing and reconciliation with the past.

In *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...*(2011) Maissa Bey works through the fragmented memories of her main characters , an Algerian woman , daughter of a killed freedom fighter , and a French ex-soldier in the French Army in order to extract images of the war and, at the same time, bear witness of what really happened. She engages in a fictional rebuilding of the past and the inventing of a new narrative about silenced events in the collective memory as a means of rethinking and reshaping the present and future. This article deals , accordingly , with the analysis of

Maïssa Bey's fictional work, *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...* and shows the way the Algerian writer has subverted her narrative and used it as a substitute for colonial concealed archives in order to reconstitute the hidden facts about French colonial atrocities towards the Algerian people and heal collective trauma.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHIVES AND THE RIGHT TO KNOW

When writing historical narratives, consulting archival documents becomes a necessity, especially for those nations whose identity has been blurred and their history erased in the process of colonization of their territories and subjugation of their people by colonial powers. However, these archives are, most of the time, out of reach of the indigenous populations. They are either displaced, hidden, or destroyed by the colonizing powers. Moreover, the preserved ones never remain neutral or impartial when in the hands of the powerful. The latter filter them, and subvert them for their own interest. In their article, *"Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,"* Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook state that, "archives are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society. Through archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalized." (1) Records are central to memory and identity formation. They are historical witnesses that support and back collective memory, especially in times of violence and war. They are held historically accountable and help elucidate events and explain unanswered questions hanging in the heads of victims of collective trauma. They also add that, "This represents enormous power over memory and identity, over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are and have been, where it has come from, and where it is going." (Schwartz and Cook 1) The Algerian people have sought to reconstitute these records since they are directly connected to the writing of their colonial history and support their quest for justice. "The engagement with the archive is not only inspired by a desire to excavate the

hidden or hibernating stories, but also to exorcize – metaphorically speaking – the archival demons in order to ‘repair’ the past. These ‘demons’ can be regarded as the haunting presence of the unresolved past that must be released in order to allow new stories and images to become visible" (cf. Gordon and Radway 2008) However, the unauthorized access to these colonial records, considered by France as classified documents, has left a wide gap in the reconstitution of the history of French colonialism in Algeria despite the efforts made by the Algerian government to restitute them.

2. Collective Memory as a Substitute for Archives

In her seminal work, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (2006), Jay Winter contends that "history is not simply memory with footnotes; and memory is not simply history without footnotes. In virtually all acts of remembrance, history and memory are braided together in the public domain, jointly informing our shifting and contested understandings of the past." (6) Algerian collective memory has played a crucial role in filling some of the undocumented and under documented spaces of Algerian War history. War narratives , based on the fragmentary memories of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators of war atrocities are considered as an act of collective remembrance that helps elucidate many of the intentionally obscured events. They also help in the processes of healing collective trauma and offer alternative knowledge of past events.

Accordingly, narratives of war have replaced part of the classified French historical record. The killings, deportations, and tortures fuel the collective memory of Algerian people . These testimonies document the atrocities perpetuated against the Algerian people and offer new points of departure for the survivors who seek to heal their wounds and get justice for their dead , especially those detained, tortured, and killed.

3. TORTURE AS A TOOL OF SUBJUGATION

Torture is generally known as the act of causing physical and psychological harm to a defenseless person with the aim of getting information. One of the recurring aspects of Algerian collective trauma is torture of civilians by the French colonizers. Algerian collective memory is haunted by the large scale human rights violations, mainly detention and psychological and physical torture. Indeed, when the war started in Algeria, the French colonizers legitimized the use of violence and torture as necessary tools to protect the French colonial project in the country. Torture was intentionally used during interrogation sessions to extract information from the Algerian freedom fighters. "If colonization facilitated the emergence of torture as a form of control, the Algerian War reinforced and increased the practice exponentially" (Lazreg 5) Torture was practiced in violation of human right laws. Several testimonies and accounts of the French army's use of torture in Algeria were made public, on behalf of captured Algerian freedom fighters, like a report by François Mauriac that was published in 1957 in *l'Express* newspaper and the 'Müller Dossier' published in *Témoignage Chrétien*. Others were published by victims of French torture such as Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958) and a *La Gangrène* (1959) by a group of Algerian students residing in France. *By publishing such testimonies, the authors of these accounts aimed at putting pressure on French governmental authorities to assume responsibility for their implication in the condoning of torture and other abusive war practices in Algeria.*

Following these records and testimonies, the French government went to great lengths to justify its use in colonial Algeria. French official discourses of the time normalized and excused its use against civilian and military detainees as an essential and necessary instrument of law enforcement. They also justified the practices of massive rounds up of suspects who were arrested without charges and interned indefinitely without trial as acts of defense of French interests in the country. General Jacques Massu, who was a leading figure in the battle of Algiers, responded

to a question about the use of torture in Algeria during the colonial period , in a famous interview published in *Le Monde* on June 22, 2000 by stating that,

La torture n'est pas indispensable en temps de guerre, on pourrait très bien s'en passer. Quand je repense à l'Algérie, cela me désole, car cela faisait partie, je vous le répète, d'une certaine ambiance. On aurait pu faire les choses différemment. [...] Quand je suis arrivé en Algérie, en 1955, je me souviens de l'avoir vu [le général Bigeard] en train d'interroger un malheureux, avec la gégène. Cela se passait dans l'Edough, un massif situé dans le nord du Constantinois. Je lui ai dit : "Mais qu'est-ce que vous faites là ?" Il m'a répondu: "On faisait déjà cela en Indochine, on ne va pas s'arrêter ici!" Et quand je lui ai demandé si l'autorité dont il dépendait était au courant et d'accord, il m'a répondu que oui, tout à fait. (Massu in Beaugé)

Although torture was practiced by the French people from the first year they set foot in Algeria in 1830, (Vidal-Naquet 21, Lecour-Grandmaison 152-156).)Torture became normalized in Algeria in 1957 when interrogation centers were installed by the French in different locations (Manceron and Remaoun 177-179, Maran 2). Different torture techniques were used such as water boarding, sleep deprivation, exposure of naked bodies, starvation, and sexual abuse. For the French colonizers, torture was an efficient means to extract information, humiliate the tortured detainees, and break the resistance of the Algerian people. Although all three reasons were true, politicians and historians contend that the ultimate goal of torture was not to gain information, but rather to break the freedom fighters' will and dehumanize them in the process (Suedfeld 1, Crelinsten 42, Branche "Torture" 390-91). The psychological consequences of torture were terrible.

The first French high rank officer who admitted the use of torture on Algerian people was the retired French general, Paul Aussaresses. The

latter confessed to having tortured numerous Algerians and described the methods he used in a detached manner, feeling no guilt and expressing no regrets. Men and women alike were tortured at the hands of the French army. In his analysis of the practice of torture in Algeria, , Richard Keller contends that French psychiatrists backed the colonizers in their use of violent methods in Algeria. They even provided scientific justifications for the implementation of violence against the native Algerians pretending that the French presence in Algeria required tighter control than anywhere else because Algerian people displayed a psychological predisposition to violence. Antoine Porot and Don Come Arrii attested that , “it is above all through...sanctions that we teach these thwarted and overly instinctive beings that human life must be respected...a thankless but necessary task in the general work of civilization.” (Keller, 208) These assumptions justified the use of force and torture and as the ultimate solution for protecting colonies and preserving French interests in the country. Torture became institutionalized despite its recrimination during the Nazi regime.

4.Torture in Algerian Literature

Torture was one of the colonial practices criticized and confronted by the anti-colonial movements. Although widely practiced by the French colonizers on both Algerian military and civilians, documents and testimonies proving such acts have been hidden by their perpetrators , leaving an entire society torn, and unable to reconcile itself with its past. In *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson argues that art's form can function as a symbolic expression of, or "solution" to, repressed and "unresolvable" collective trauma.(Jameson ,79) Accordingly, a whole generation of young Algerian writers became involved in the movement of developing the discourse of ‘littérature de combat’ to denounce the colonizer’s policy of subjugation and violence. They attempted to subvert existent discourses and rewrite history from an insider perspective. They displayed an acute sense of history expressed as a succession of traumatic events that marked their personal and collective lives . In their works, they

openly condemned French colonization and denounced torture practices against their countrymen.

Kateb Yacine was among the first Algerian writers to denounce the use of torture in his novel *Nedjma* (1956). Having participated, as a young school boy, with his classmate, in the pacific demonstrations of 8 May 1945 in Setif, he was directly confronted with the French repressive methods and experienced first-hand violence. Arrested and imprisoned, and subsequently tortured, Kateb decided, after his release from jail, to “bears witness to a people” (Kateb, viii) of the multiple traumas his friends and himself had suffered at the hands of the French police, giving every possible detail about the Algerians who were summarily killed, jailed or tortured. “Il veut être témoin et dire ce qu’il voit et ce qu’il sent.” (Bonn, 60) Accordingly, *Nedjma became the window through which the world could see the torture and rape used by the French army soldiers and police officers as a retaliation policy. The people detained during the demonstrations were charged without trial. They were also brutally interrogated and tortured by the French police. Being himself a victim, Kateb Yacine provided, in his novel, a detailed explanation of how the repressive mechanism worked.*

The inspector hung his crop back on his belt. He picked up a wet rope that was lying on the edge of the sink. The other two inspectors stopped kicking him. Lakhdar kept his head buried in his arms, on the floor.

[...] He couldn't feel his head any more. The rest of his body was apparently unhurt; second by second, a remote, flashing pain localized itself in the small of his back, his knees, sternum and jaw.

Lakhdar let them tie his hands and feet. Then the inspectors ran a long rod through the two bindings, which immobilized the prisoner whom they grabbed around the waist and threw into the tub...

He felt something cold pressed against his lips. From the taste, he realized that they were sticking a big stone down his gullet to keep him from closing his mouth. Then another object was pressed to Lakhdar's lips, and he could tell what this was too: it was the metal tip of a drain pipe.

The water was turned on.

Lakhdar couldn't.

He couldn't not drink.

At first it felt as if all his nerves were twisting, and that an icy current was filling his guts.

The water flowed

The officer increased the flow little by little.

Lakhdar struggled harder. (Kateb, 79-80)

A climate of pervasive violence, terror, and pain is portrayed in this passage. It details water-boarding, one of the most brutal practices adopted by the French police against Algerian people, by attaching the prisoners to a stick, with legs and wrists tied together, and submerging the head in water. Another routinely method employed by the French torturers in Algerian jails and police stations was torture with electricity. The prisoners were attached with wires to their legs, faces, chests, and intimate parts of their body. That illustrates the willingness of the French colonizers to deploy violence without regard for the suffering of innocents. Despite their young age, the protesters, in Kateb's novel, are not spared from being brutalized. By fictionalizing the tortured body, Kateb makes the "unnarratability" of pain not only possible, but also transforms it into a tool of personal and collective agency" (Livescu219) to make the French accountable for their acts.

In his essay "A Question of Narration," Joseph Slaughter makes a case for the difference between the 'unspeakability' and 'unnarratability' of trauma. In his view, while '(un)speakability' may cause a potentially-testifying witness to re-live a dehumanizing experience which he or she would prefer to avoid, the 'narratability' of pain may have a deeply humanizing effect. Kateb tries, through his novel, to subvert the repressive

tools of the colonizer and use them to denounce their inhuman acts of violence. The fragmented narratives of the main characters and the permeating violence in the novel, as Seth Graebner points out, is due to the "violent intervention of history." (Graebner,139)

Assia Djébar also wrote about mass killings and torture in her literary works, starting with *Les Enfants du Nouveau monde* (1962) and *L'Amour , la fantasia* (1980). Djébar's reinterpretation of significant events in Algerian history begins with the study of archives, letters, and travel narratives of colonial soldiers, officers, and travelers. The historical chapters of *L'Amour , la fantasia* provide a good illustration of this process. She considered it imperative to represent painful collective pasts so as to alleviate agony and acknowledge the right of victims and perpetrators to bear witness. In the chapter entitled "*Women, Children, Oxen Dying in Caves*" Djébar used the accounts of Pélissier and Saint-Arnaud, to reconstruct the inhumanity of the French colonizers while confronted to the resistance of The Ouled Riah tribe. The latter, having no alternative to escape from French despotism, they found refuge in caves where "since the time of the Turkish rulers tribes have taken refuge with their women and children, flocks and munitions in these subterranean depths which run for more than 600 feet and open out on to almost inaccessible gorges. " (Djébar 66). Unable to get them out of the caves, Pélissier followed Bugeaud's orders to light fires at the entrances to the caves to fumigate its inhabitants. "'If the scoundrels retreat into their caves,' [Field-Marshal] Bugeaud orders, 'do what Cavaignac did to the Sbeah, smoke them out mercilessly, like foxes!'" (Djébar 65). As a result, the entire tribe was exterminated. Djébar subverted Pélissier's report of the macabre event to bear witness of the atrocities perpetuated. She was conscious of the importance of these records left by French soldiers and officers and intended to use them at full length. "[Pélissier] hands me his report and I accept this palimpsest on which I now inscribe the charred passion of my ancestors" (Djébar 79).

In *Les Enfants du Nouveau monde* (1962) violence is perpetuated in the form of torture. Saidi, youcef, and Salima, in the novel, stand for the

Algerian people's resisting French presence in the country. Neither their age nor their gender saves them from the torture cell.

[Salima] doesn't know what time or day it is. This morning they let her rest, at last. They even brought her a bed. It's been so long since she's been able to lie down. A bed! What a miracle after constantly sitting on a chair or standing up for the ten days of interrogation, or eleven, or twenty; she doesn't know anymore. On the cot, she stretches out her body, her back; the pain in her lower back won't stop. Not to move anymore, never to move! She would so much like to sleep, but she can't. She's cold. (*Children*, 56)

In these literary works, the use of violence is considered by the French colonizers as an efficient tactical method of gaining information about the Algerian leaders' names, hidden places, and future moves. Torture, as the most extreme form of violence, is used as a disciplinary practice of punishment and revenge aiming at humiliating and breaking the detainees, and as an efficient tool to destroy the community's cohesion. Its repercussions upon the life of the Algerians is often tragic.

5. Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...

In her novella, **Entendez-vous dans les montagnes...**(2011) Maïssa Bey denounces the position of France towards collective memory and the right of the Algerian people to know what really happened to thousands of people during the War of Independence. In her novel, she confronts France to its past through the depiction of two characters, one representing Algeria with its hurts and trauma, and the other representing France with its guilt and haunting past. In addition, Maïssa Bey fictionalizes the story of her father's kidnapping, torture, and killing in her literary work, to bear witness of what really happened. She uses a hybrid genre, reassembling events happening in her own life with fictional elements. Attempting to remedy the gap caused by the concealed archives, and contributing in the

construction of a communal history of what happened to Algerian people during colonialism, Maissa Bey manipulates her fragmented memories to build her textual narrative and give evidence .

The Algerian postcolonial literature is embedded in this atmosphere of historical trauma, the deconstruction of the colonial archives and the construction of a national collective memory has become the driving force in their production. Through their imagined literary works They have reactivated certain forgotten/ hidden areas of this collective archive. focuses on what is concealed while revisiting the colonial archive using the strategy of 'excavation' (Hossfeld and Vierke 2009)

As Foster puts it, the artist 'turns "excavation sites" into "construction sites"' (Foster 2004: 22) Maissa Bey also introduces some personal documents as an informal archive in the appendices of her book. By doing so, she gives a human face to the Algerian people's suffering . In addition, by providing authentic documents about her father's kidnapping, she aims at showing that the lines between fiction and reality are blurred. There is no clear -cut line between fact and fiction, between what people remember and what really happened.

Maissa Bey has also chosen to use allegory in her novella to describe the 'malaise' that surrounds the relationship between Algeria and France, especially in relation to classified archives and to the use of torture. While the young woman in the train stands for Algeria and its people, with their hurts, scars, and fragmented memories, the older man stands for France with its feeling of culpability and haunting memories. The narrative begins thirty years after the independence of the country; however, the principal events take place between 1956-1957 and often move forward and backward in time and place.

6.The Lasting Trauma

Fanon writes that “there is no need to be wounded by a bullet to suffer from the effects of war in the body and soul” (217). The scars of war are retained by the psyche and often resurface in bodily manifestations that transport the sufferer back to the time and place of torture. In *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes*...both the female and the male characters are lost in their own memories, trauma and scares. No one of the two characters dares to speak to the other despite being in the same compartment of the train. In fact, no one of them trusts the other enough to confess his pain to the other. The men , in the train , although a doctor, can relieve neither his pain nor that of the woman facing him. He prefers to isolate himself and remain silent instead of starting a conversation with her and proposing a remedy to her pain.

Il ne la regarde pas. Depuis qu'elle est là, dans ce pays, elle a encore du mal à s'habituer à ne pas exister dans le regard des autres. Un peu comme si elle était devenue transparente.
C'est comme s'il était seul dans le compartiment.
Elle détourne la tête. Saisit son reflet dans la vitre. (10)

However when the man's eyes meet the woman's , it is all his memories that come back to him. Her oriental look and her origins have triggered his hidden memories again and he becomes sleepless.

C'est peut-être la fin d'un long assoupissement. Pourquoi, à cette heure, tandis qu'il regarde le visage de cette femme silencieuse, penchée sur la vitre et qui semble absente à tout ce qui se passe autour d'elle, pourquoi les voix de ces hommes reviennent-elles à ses oreilles, dans une effroyable stridence ?(12)

As the train is moving forward to its final destination , the reader moves backward with the old man to bear witness of his dreadful past as a soldier in the French army during the War of Independence. The reader

becomes the silent observer of the metamorphosis that takes place within the mind of the old man as fragments of memory come back to him.

Dans ces yeux sombres et dans ce regard qui se dérobe, dans ce visage tourné vers la nuit, s'esquisse soudain le reflet de nuits lointaines qui se bousculent dans un charivari de cris et de supplications.

Les mains tendues de ces hommes qui ne croient plus, qui n'espèrent plus en l'homme.

Thus, the respectable old and silent doctor reading a newspaper in the train is transformed into an executioner, a perpetuator of violence, who tortured and killed innocent people .

However, the old man has difficulties facing his own acts and taking responsibility for his deeds. Like the train he is travelling in, he tries to move forward, hiding his memories in the darkest side of his soul. But his past emerges again and again in the form of flash backs to remind him that no one can escape from his past, and that the train of his life will have to stop somewhere. His experience as a soldier in Algeria comes flooding back to him. Memories of his participation, as a doctor in charge of military cell responsible for the interrogation of 'fellagas' flood his mind. His participation in the torture and mass killing of the jailed people seems to haunt him . "Il se tait un instant. Puis il revient à la charge Par terre, les flaques de sang et d'urine et de merde mêlés aux éclaboussures de l'eau savonneuse qu'ils ne peuvent plus avaler. L'entonnoir se remplit et déborde sans pouvoir se vider à l'intérieur de leur ventre démesurément enflé. Odeur âcre de sang et de vomissure... parfois de chair brûlée."() The old man tries to voice his emotional state of mind and release his pain at being a participant in the trauma of others but fails. It is only through a confrontation with one of the victims of his acts that the process of healing can start.

The female character , for her part, spends her time either reading or trying to sleep. In the two cases, she tries to escape from a disturbing and traumatic past and an ambiguous present. Thus, in the different

descriptions of her before her final confrontation with her father's killer, she has either lowered or closed eyes. It is a way for her to protect herself from facing a harsh reality that can destroy her completely. “elle ferme les yeux” (13), “elle a les yeux fermés” [14], “ses paupières baissées” [13]. When time comes for her to know the truth, she is suddenly awakened from her drowsiness, “elle est brusquement tirée de sa somnolence” [21])

By the end of the novella, we learn that she has the same eyes and the same gaze as her father. That is also one of the reasons she does not make any eye contact with the older man. It is only when the old man finally confesses his deeds that she looks at him, and he is able to return the gaze to her. For the female character in the novella, the right to know what really happened to her father when he was arrested is imperative in order to alleviate the agony of ignorance she has been living in and be able to move forward. Through his flash backs and his final confession to the woman, we understand that the old man was involved in the torture of the woman's father.

Although in a different way, both characters have experienced trauma and are unable to recover from it since they refuse to face their past and relieve the burden of their memories. "Personne n'est sorti indemne de cette guerre ! Personne ! Vous entendez !" (44) The Algerians were victims to horrific forms of torture. However, torture, dehumanizes not only its victims but its perpetrators as well.

Le camp est entouré de murs surmontés de barbelés et de miradors. Les hommes qu'on y amène de jour ou de nuit, menottés ou déjà salement amochés, sont de redoutables terroristes. De toute façon, tous les terroristes sont redoutables... La zone est particulièrement dangereuse. Pas seulement à cause de la configuration du terrain... Le capitaine Fleury martèle : il faut le savoir, ici, il n'y a pas de suspects. Il n'y a que des coupables. Coupables de se taire, d'ouvrir leur porte aux fellagas, de leur fournir des provisions, de leur donner de l'argent, de gré

ou de force, peu importe, et de les renseigner. Ils savent les faire parler, eux... Vous entendez ? Tous... ils sont tous complices ! Vous devez les faire parler coûte que coûte ! Sinon c'est vous qu'on retrouvera au bord d'une route, balancé par ces salauds, les couilles arrachées ! Mettez-vous bien ça dans le crâne !

For the perpetrators of torture, the conviction of torture's efficiency and necessity prevails even though these practices were widely acknowledged as morally unacceptable. The old man's memories of his superiors' orders show the perceived necessity of torture not only as a violent mode of interrogating suspects, but also as an efficient way to frighten, humiliate and subdue a population of innocent civilians. On the other hand, the officer's comments to the newly deported soldiers shows the total impunity of those who were allowed to exercise it.

In his article, "Des Arabes, j'en suis sûre!" Rompre le silence dans Entendez- vous dans les montagnes . . . de Maïssa Bey, Etienne Achille states that "L'absence et le silence caractérisent parfaitement le récit de Bey, que cela soit en raison de la mort du père, victime de la torture, ou de l'étouffement collectif des actes de guerre, de violence et de torture de la guerre d'Algérie" (260). To be able to break the silence that overwhelms and surrounds the characters in the novella, it is necessary for them to confront their past and fight back their obsessions. This process of breaking the silence becomes essential to the work of mourning.

7. RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

In order to ease the pain and free their voice, the two characters in the novella enter into a collaborative process of remembering what happened. This process of recollection is important to reconstruct their shattered selves. In the novella, it is the victim's daughter who helps the ex- army soldier free himself from the burden of guilt. She does not judge, nor hate. Knowing the truth is enough for her to relieve her from the burden she was carrying. Thus the young woman in the train embodies a troubled history. The surrealist meeting in the train becomes a trigger for the process of

remembrance, creating space and opportunity for dialogue and potential healing.

C'est peut-être à cause du crissement des roues sur les rails chaque fois que le train lancé à grande vitesse ralentit. Et dans le sillage de ce train qui traverse la nuit paisible, monte lentement le bruit de la gégène, la manivelle qu'il faut tourner à main d'homme, ou actionner avec la pédale, comme un téléphone de campagne – un bruit régulier, un grincement semblable au grincement de la poulie d'un puits. Couvert parfois par de longs hurlements qui s'achèvent en râles et résonnent longtemps dans la nuit.()

The process of reconstruction, although painful, is necessary for both parts to ease the pain that inhabits them and envision a better future.

C'est comme si on avait ouvert des vannes pour laisser couler la boue, toute la fange d'un passé qui s'avère soudain très proche et encore sensible. Comme si en passant le doigt ou en palpant une cicatrice ancienne dont les bords s'étaient refermés, croyait-on, on sentait un léger suintement, qui se transforme peu à peu en une purulence qui finit par s'écouler de plus en plus abondamment, sans qu'on puisse l'arrêter.

In the train, the woman tries to remember her father's features, but she cannot. She was too young to remember things about him except for his ring and his glasses. By interrogating the old man, she tries to fill the gaps her father's absence had left behind. The old man opens up little by little as the questions of the woman penetrate one by one his mind and transpire the walls of his memory. But with the arrival at the station, the old man pulls himself together and returns to the present by offering the young woman to help her lower her suitcase, which she accepts. The text invites us to see the old man's last words as a gift. He gives the young woman back her father's eyes, his gaze which are the same as her's: "you have the same eyes. . . the same look as . . . your father. You look a lot like him" (72).

CONCLUSION

when preserving the archives, the French colonizers were well-aware that the documents they preserved were critical ingredients in the memory making process. Efforts made to shift or white wash collective memory concerning the use of torture proved useless. The testimonies made by both a victim and a perpetrator of violence and torture during the Algerian war of independence in Maissa Bey's novella, although fictional, offer an alternative reading of the concealed archives by the French colonizers. They also offer ways to heal collective trauma and redefine power. Maissa bey's novel was prompted by her responsibility to contribute to the national memory of the dark period of french presenc in Algeria. it is an antidote against collective amnesia.

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