

Critical Melancholy: Women and the National II

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When speaking of the nation, it has now become commonplace to begin with Ernest Renan's speculations on the nation--his 1882 essay, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" has become a staple of any postcolonial theorist's diet. But I want to return to him once again nevertheless, as the larger project that brings me to my hypothesis, that there is trauma concealed in the very heart of the theory of European nation-State formation, is one based on Algeria, a state that finds its origins as a nation-State in French colonial policy. In 1882, Ernest Renan speculated that the nation-state's relation to the past was one in which we *remember to forget*. He was talking about historical events that could divide a nation--like, in France, the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. The French, created as a "We" have to be reminded, according to him, that this was an event successfully assimilated into a national history. Thus, the Breton will become a Frenchman, and Protestants and Catholics will eventually live side by side in spite of past differences and traumatic violent encounters. For Renan, the nation had to be willed into existence through *daily plebiscite*. Pierre Nora, in his edited volumes of ethnographic historiographical essays on the French nation, provides an update on this daily activity of citizens: "the new history," he writes, "is purely transferential history." That is, the individualization of memory and the individual's responsibility to *remember* historical events for the sake of group cohesion or conflict (in this case national) enables "successive generations to mediate their cultural myths by inculcating them with their desires." Renan's concept of the modern nation-state is taken up by Ben Anderson in his theory of nation as imagined community. While his argument is persuasive, what distinguishes the nation from the nation-state is not adequately theorized. In fact the power of policy seems to be given

up entirely in order to stress the community as imagined or willed--surely something that is not exclusive to the modern-nation state, and could to some degree be said of most communities, even if the form and means of that imagining is quite different. Anderson's most significant contribution is to consider *print capitalism* as a significant marker of change in how we conceive time and community in modernity. Following this, and indeed through the concept of cultural form as *symptom of as well as contributor to nation-formation*, the use of the group identifications through virtuality by the state, and as intrinsic to the state, can more easily be discerned. National history as developed in cultural formations does not so much provide a direct link between cultural enunciation and historical and political reality, so much as it allows us to see the artefact or the text as enunciation, indeed as an *acting out* of national identities.

If the modern nation-state in Algeria and in France developed at the time not only of French colonial acquisition, but also of French imperial power, it did so partly through the privatization of national history where that history was conceived individually as one's own even as it was shared with the rest of what Freud calls the *artificial group*.

Constraints in policy and rules exist therefore alongside individualized, and individuated identification. And, I would want to claim, an inability to identify. In the context of the difficult relationship between France and Algeria from the conquest of Algiers in 1830 to the present, this relation is a complex one, for at the moment in which France imagined itself as distinct from its colonies, and as a center around which they hovered, Algeria was technically a part of France: three *départements*, a factor which exposes more than most the intrinsic role of colonialism in the formation of national identity. French colonial policy in the post-revolutionary first phase of colonialism and in its second phase of colonialism, battled with the policy of assimilation of its colonial subjects and land. An active code of assimilation of the colonized people had been instituted, leading to formal incorporation of Algeria into

France in 1847, and was full integration in 1848, having passed through a difficult period during the Napoleonic years. What this meant on the level of policy was that the colonies were to be an integral part of French territory, and in the case of Algeria, there was an exact imitation of mainland administrative models--dividing the country into three *départements* and then into *arrondissements*. Commenting on the after effects of the 1848 French Revolution for the colonies, Renan stated:

We wish to establish everywhere the government which is suitable to us and to which we have a right. We believe we are doing something marvelous by establishing a constitutional regime among the savages of Oceania, and soon we will send diplomatic notes to the Grand Turk requesting him to convoke his parliament.

Shifts in assimilationist colonial policy were deeply effected by scientific and sociological evolutionary spirits, but in principle, evolutionary theories could go either way in justifying assimilation or in promoting what became the overt policy--association, which, in principle was designed to maintain local institutions which were overlooked by the French Office of Colonial Affairs. Historians, however, have suggested that: "Even though association became the official policy immediately after the war, the ghost of assimilation lingered on." This ghost refers to a breakdown in the ideal of the nation as something that could create a desire and an ability for its subjects to assimilate. But what does it mean to be a part of a country and yet to live under separate laws from most of its citizens? The ideal of assimilation that is central to sentiments of national cohesion seems to hold within it a lie; that is that some people are not allowed to assimilate, and are designated as unassimilable: this seems like a given of colonialism, and yet a secret of nationalism; after all, Renan could speak of the nation-State as assimilating people of disparate regional identifications into being French and therefore growing as a nation, but could simultaneously speak of part of that nation--that we know as Algeria--as a colony that should not be assimilated, and in that sense was evidence of the failure, or lost cause of the *mission*

civilisatrice. The almost unspeakable horror and violence of the Algerian war of independence, surely bears the trace of this haunting--the killing of one's own that one failed to assimilate, and failed to desire to assimilate. This haunting could be understood as repeated trauma that makes visible what Abraham and Torok call phantom possession, that is, a shameful secret from a past generation that possesses someone else's unconscious.

While in France this may manifest itself in terms of guilt, in Algeria this has manifested itself quite differently. In the socially tormented time of the late 1980's-90's with unemployment extremely high and a young population that has tripled since independence, we see an assimilative ghost reappear, this time in the shape of an Arabization that seems to be about policy more than it is about individual will. Currently, the breakdown in the Algerian nation-state seems shows that it is unclear what the dominant force is, and therefore what the assimilative force is. And this has caused a war in which it is perpetually unclear who is fighting whom, for what cause, and to what end other than a claim of increased democracy. I would not want to say simply that the current situation in Algeria is merely a return of the repressed so much as to say that a specter, or a phantom bears down on each moment that finds a beginning, if not an origin, in colonial assimilation policy.

How do we make sense of a trauma when it seems to be concealed at the very heart of nation-State formation. Trauma is a term usually associated with individuals rather than groups, and is usually described in relation to an event, but what does it mean, and indeed does it mean anything, to use the term in relation to a prolonged oppression that leads to psychological damage over time? When analyzing something like colonialism or nationalism (or indeed less temporally and historically specific phenomena like racism, economic exploitation and sexism), do we have to conceive of them as a series of traumatic events, or can we think of a more sustained and continuous model? A continuous model could in principle be theorized in terms of a series of deferred actions (*Nachträglichkeit*) as theorized by Freud, and following

Lacan we can understand language and the literary as effects of this belatedness. Like the ghost, language always comes back, as Derrida points out, even when it appears for the first time. But here we are still in the realm of events. Can we speak of existing within a traumatic condition--like colonialism--that effects our very relation to community, or indeed psychic assimilation?

If we understand the relation of individualized imagining and group formation through the terms of history and memory, we can propose how the passing of a historical moment is introduced into the imagination of the citizens or subjects of an *artificial group* like the nation-state. If we analyze this in psychoanalytic terms, we can see that early models of the French nation-State required that the national subject was in a relationship of mourning to the history of the state in which a series of events are worked through and remembered *as forgotten*, to return to Renan, and successfully introjected into the national self.

Citation /Introjection/Incorporation

Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors.

Edward Said, Orientalism

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Said's famous phrase suggests how certain narratives repeated, and ultimately reified a false image of the colonized. While Said's text has been evaluated *ad nauseam* by the field of postcolonial criticism, his analysis of citation has not been adequately framed in terms of the psychoanalytical possibilities inherent in the insistent citationality of orientalism. Some discussions of citationality suggest that images can be re-cited differently in the postcolonial context by "sending back;" however, a simplistic dualism is accordingly set up, one that opposes all citation during the colonial period with its postcolonial respondent. Mieke Bal has suggested that citation repeats, unwittingly, the power structure under critique. I would add that this oppositional logic of action and reaction that we see in the moment of resistance fetishizes the moment of political independence to a discontinuous extreme.

Repetition, which is intrinsic to citation, is inevitably never exact and always nuanced by its context; while it references its other context and brings that context to the fore, it is simultaneously included into the language of its present existence. While repetition of an action, an utterance or an image installs a moment of stasis into a text when the inorganic past, or that which is lost, is brought into the present, this drive toward stasis (that we know as the death drive) holds within it an attempt to assimilate its meaning to another context. Citation, when it is recognizable, enacts the very difficulty of assimilation.

Citation as a psychoanalytical process resembles that of mourning and melancholia. Both mourning and melancholia involve the ingestion of a lost object. As I explained in my earlier talk, Abraham and Torok, in their rereading of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" in light of Sandor Ferenczi's distinction between introjection and incorporation, draw on Ferenczi's account of introjection as a normal part of psychic growth through assimilation; mourning, then, can be understood as a function of growth. Through citation, the subject reiterates that signifier of loss, reciting it in a way which is inflected with one's tongue. In the case of mourning, this can lead, through repetition, to assimilation of that object into oneself. As Abraham and Torok suggest,

The passage from food to language in the mouth presupposes the successful replacement of the object's presence with the self's cognizance of its absence. Since language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape* to presence, it can only be *comprehended* or *shared* in a "community of empty mouths." (Abraham and Torok, 128)

This ingestion (taking in) then takes on the traits of what Abraham and Torok call "introjection," a kind of psychic assimilation. In melancholia, on the other hand, what takes place is "incorporation," that is, the blocking of introjection and consequently unsuccessful assimilation. Here, narcissism is pathological. The lost object becomes a constant point of reference, but the relationship to it as a separate entity is always

fraught with identification. While the process of melancholia for Freud is very similar to that of mourning, its incompleteness leaves a residue, or for our purposes, the regurgitated, unassimilated object that we recognize as citation. For Abraham and Torok, melancholia is quite different. It does not involve regurgitation, but rather a buried shared secret that, I would suggest, concerns the failure of the nation to assimilate its subjects in spite of its overt policy.

Incorporation results from those losses that for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such. The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed--everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved.

Inexpressible mourning erects a tomb inside the subject. (Abraham and Torok, 130)

The process of mourning as a remembering of that which is forgotten through its recitation and eventual assimilation returns us to Renan's theory of emergent national identity. The "essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (Renan, 11). So all that has been forgotten, he tells us, needs to be remembered *as forgotten*, as a difference within the body politic that has been transcended. Effectively, it is the "will" of the nation that becomes important--both a willingness to forget differences and create cohesion, and also to recite that which is lost through the construction of a nationalist history. The "will" of our forefathers, that is, that which is willed to us, documents the ways in which our present can be renegotiated. And nationalist history has to be bad history in order that cohesion be maintained, that details get lost. Group identification leading to assimilation needs to be achieved in order that what is mourned gets renegotiated, and thus assimilated, remembered as forgotten.

Artists and writers such as Delacroix, Picasso, Djébar and Dehane use citation to represent their own complex relation to the psychogeme of nation. In their case, the nation in question is Algeria, or, more properly, France's vexed relation with that

“imagined community” that it both brought into existence, cannot adequately mourn, and that it wishes to forget. The politics of assimilation makes a manifest claim to a narrative of mourning and introjection. However, against this manifest narrative of nationalist mourning, whether France’s or Algeria’s, I will analyze the presence of latent melancholia and reveal its significance in terms of an inability to mourn adequately; this leads me to suggest that there is trauma at the heart of nation-State formation.

Delacroix

Delacroix’s journal entry for October 17, 1853 reads

I began to make something tolerable of my African journey only when I had forgotten the trivial details and remembered nothing but the striking and poetic side of the subject. Up to that time, I had been haunted by this passion for accuracy that most people mistake for truth.

While Delacroix had previously been fascinated by the “oriental theme,” and had done some hyperbolic paintings that could be understood as *orientalist*, he made a distinction between what he thought of as his imaginative paintings, and those which accurately document scenes taken from “real life.” The hyperbolic painting The Death of Sardanapalus, inspired by Byron’s play, had been painted in 1827, and a painting of an odalisque had also appeared in 1828. But in 1832, Delacroix embarked on a six-month journey on a diplomatic trip to Morocco with the Comte de Mornay, Ambassador to the Sultan, that was to change dramatically his sense of the “Orient.” There were a few different purposes for this diplomatic trip: three French brigs had been captured in Algeria, and were now in Moroccan territory; some commercial problems needed to be clarified and sorted out, and the border between French colonial land and Muslim land needed to be defined, so as to be sure that Algerians would not have the support of their neighbor. (Arama, “The Journey” 56; Wilson-Smith, 94).

On the way back to Paris, Delacroix spent three days in Algiers. There he made sketches of Algerian women, interiors, clothing, fabric and shoes that later, he uses as studies for his 1834 painting, Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement. Delacroix commented on the differences between his imaginative painting, which depicts scenes of citation from other works, and that which accurately documents scenes taken from real life. This is also reflected in his letters, highly detailed notebooks, and scanty journal entries of this period which catalogue details of scenes. In the painting, it is evident in the detail of the tile, the ornate mirror, the detail on fabric, the foregrounded hookah, jewelry, scarves, carpets and slippers. The interior is sketched in the notebooks without the women, along with details of the slippers, or **babouches**, and Delacroix carried fabrics with him from the Maghreb presumably to copy its patterns. He also consulted Persian miniatures, and Etruscan and Iranian paintings so as to cite that which appears to be authentically "Oriental." (Sérullaz, 1-20; Dumur, 27). His apparent accuracy and authenticity lead M. Georges Marçais to use the painting as an ethnographically accurate image in *Le Musée ethnographique du Bardo d'Alger*. (Lambert, 5).

While Delacroix seems to present detail as a signifier of authenticity, it could equally be read as phantasm, where a scene is imagined and the author of these imaginings situates him- or herself in that scene as its protagonist. Whether the scene is accurately portrayed or not is less important than the story of the painting as testimony, as told by art historians. When Delacroix went to Algiers, the story goes, he was taken to the house of a privateer working under the direction of one Monsieur Poirel who invited Delacroix into his house, and allowed him to see the women's quarters. When Delacroix saw the "seraglio" scene, he commented: "...It is straight out of Homer! The woman in her women's quarters busy with her children, spinning wool or embroidering splendid fabrics. That is woman as I think she should be" (Cournault, cited in Sérullaz, 13-14). The traveling Delacroix sees these women through phantasm. As Odysseus, he perceives these women as Penelopes--who stay at

home, pining away yet uncannily self-contained, weaving and unweaving to keep off suitors. The analogy simulates contact with these Algerian women, who seem familiar yet unfamiliar. They are Penelopes in a different setting, self-contained, and yet inviting; they are home away from home.

The 1834 painting foregrounds the women, creating a line which leads back to the two seated women, and running forward from the ajar cupboard place the viewer very much within the scene, as does the line in the rug, the beam of sunlight throwing a half shadow on the reclining woman's face, placing the viewer just next to the black woman. Even this sub-Saharan woman, who is shown from the back with her head in profile, is lit up sharply against a light wall. And, indeed, the boundary between the seated women and their background is accentuated by the shadows that surround them. There is very little sense of boundary between the painter and his subject matter. In addition, the promise of a window, the open cupboard, the almost concealed curtain, suggest that both the artist and the women can move in and out of the room freely. We certainly view an interior, but not an area of confinement.

The 1849 painting is quite different. The angle is much wider, the women are set further apart, there is no sense of a window, and the cupboard door is closed off. As Djebbar points out, this painting is "a stolen glance" (137). A scene is presented to us of a stage in which three women are placed. There are very little detail or facial expression, and no contact between the seated women, who appear in the earlier version as if they might be conversing. In the 1849 painting, the color of the seated women's flesh merges with the background and they become characterless, undifferentiated, and interchangeable. The standing woman is foregrounded. Her features are now almost concealed by her own hand, and her sex is less certain. Her contours begin to merge with the curtain, and she potentially blocks off the viewer. As a trace of the colonial endeavor, she appears to hold back the curtain. Like a character in a Brecht play, she could draw it across the scene at any time, creating a proscenium between us and them. She is not on the stage, but rather standing to its

side and holding the curtain to it. She has become a device to threaten our vision in this more voyeuristic composition. The curtain as threat becomes all important in the scene, a fetish substituting for a psychoanalytical presence or absence.

All that Delacroix says about the later version of the painting in his Journal is that it was a pleasure to work with *vernis*, as this would preserve the painting. In the earlier version, we see that the paint seems to be decaying, thus increasing the desire in Delacroix to document the process of losing the memory. (Lambert 115). This brief note suggests a grasping of the memory. The lack of detail here suggests that the motivation to paint the same theme fifteen years later demonstrates both a different painting style, a romanticist one, and also a different relationship to the “other.”

What is documented in the 1849 painting is a remnant, a trace. If the 1834 painting was one of an interior, the 1849 is one of interiority. The earlier painting is a memory, reconstructed to highlight detail accurately, the later is one about the process of forgetting in which Delacroix melancholically cites his earlier work, identifying it in the process of being forgotten. If, as Ernest Renan suggests in 1882, a memory of forgetting is necessary in the construction of national identity, here Delacroix remembers that he has forgotten. The iteration of the scene of the first memory is “worked through” in terms of loss and there is an attempt at assimilating it into the later context in which it could be mourned but is not. Delacroix’s process of forgetting documents the loss not just of an individual’s relationship to some Algerian women, but also of a kind of assimilation on Delacroix’s part into the newly developing French nation-State.

The 1849 version, with its whitewashed walls and the covered frame on the back wall, haunts the viewer. Is it a window frame, draped over to block out light, or is it a canvas, the 1834 canvas, covered over, incorporated into this later version, and yet not introjected? Does the phantom of the earlier painting survive into the later in spite of the attempt to erase it? Does the assimilation into a different aesthetic and a national model quite different from the earlier in terms of a relationship to Algeria

present us with an inevitable phantom, an inassimilable secret of the colonial endeavor? These questions are suggestive of the melancholic appeal of the painting. The documentation of loss seems like an introjection, and yet these phantoms suggest a space blocked off and a relationship denied that may be in evidence on that canvas now concealed beneath the drape. The attempt to mourn seems to leave behind a trace of the impossibility of mourning.

Delacroix's different relationship to Algeria, caused by the external change in policy, causes the disintegrating first painting to become encrypted, and yet the crypt is tenuously held together: "It should be remarked that as long as the crypt holds, there is no melancholia. It erupts when the walls are shaken, often as a result of some secondary object. . . ." (Abraham and Torok, 130)

1834 and 1849, the dates of the two different paintings are very different moments in the history of French rule in Algiers and the surrounding territories. 1834 was a year in which the French role in Algiers was unresolved. The 1830 conquest of Algiers took place under very inchoate official policies, and seems to have been a means of distracting the people from the chaos at home that culminated in the July Revolution when Charles X was ousted from the throne by Louis-Phillipe. When Louis-Phillipe took over, half the French army was in Algiers. In 1831, there was some display of a French desire to capture the whole regency, but this was never even vaguely formalized until mid-1834. Indeed, Charles-Robert Ageron suggests that the desire was articulated solely to distract the French from problems at home. Until 1840, there seem to have been a series of unclear contracts made between the local Emir, the Tunisians, the French and the Turks. By 1849, much had changed. Algeria was, by this time, an integral part of France following an ordinance of September 1847 which was backed by the Constitution of 1848. From 1840, there had been a conscious political desire to "assimilate" the natives, and from 1842, a French system of justice was instituted. According to Ageron, this desire for assimilation effectively meant: "the destruction of Muslim institutions," and the creation of a system of land

appropriation where only Europeans stood to gain (24). Further, he suggests that in France, the concept of assimilation was rationalized as a means “to draw the Arabs into French civilization . . . lead(ing) to the fusion of the two races in the country” (27). “This fundamental mistake,” he adds, “as to the true meaning of assimilation in the country lasted throughout the whole history of French Algeria.” (27) Interestingly, it is this very false introjection that causes the existence of a phantom.

While it may well be the case that “at home” the French perceived the races, at least two of them, merging, the paintings, as I have shown, seem to speak another story, perhaps one which establishes a difference between the French at home and the French abroad, as well as between the French, Arabs, black slaves and Berbers in Algeria. The earlier painting suggests sameness in spite of difference. Here are Penelopes waiting at home. The use of European models to supplement the sketches in the final version of the 1834 painting means that difference is marked by only the black woman, whom I have called the trace of the colonial endeavor, on the side lines. Black woman as device seems to hold a dual purpose here. She both looks forward to the moment of colonialism, and simultaneously looks back. She is, in a sense, a citation of a cliché, a marker of “luxe et volupté” fulfilling the fantasy of harem images in which the addition of the black figure as the pet becomes a sign of aristocracy. Looking back at her through the lens of colonialism, she becomes more Janus-faced, looking simultaneously in two directions, thereby re-citing an orientalist cliché through the power of the gaze. In Delacroix’s later 1849 painting, the black woman seems to speak through her barely evident and muted separation from the curtain into which she has become incorporated. These women too are inaccessible: they are veiled not only by their religion, but also by colonialism. The exotica/erotica of this voyeuristic scene, then, comes not only from a blurring of memory, but also through the dramatic political shift in French policy for the region. While the ostensible purpose of the assimilation policy is to erase differences--differences, in fact, which we see erased through contrasting means in these paintings--it seems here

that distance is established for the French at home through this process. These Penelopes are not waiting in Delacroix's, but someone else's home--buried deep in the memory of Delacroix, and deep in the trace of the colonial endeavor. The policy of assimilation worked, then, not to devise a method of establishing connections as equals in a similar civilization, but rather, to make of Algerians a mass of faceless bodies kept at a distance with the detail of their lives made irrelevant. The curtain of colonialism, potentially drawn across by the black woman, speaks not only the voyeur's desire for the stolen glance, but also the establishment of political boundaries.

While, in Renan's terms, we could speculate that the painting speaks the process of memory loss, that it is an example of the moment of forgetting the detail of difference in order to establish a feeling of a common French national identity in spite of cultural and religious differences, here, the black woman speaks another message. The policy of assimilation is a veil which hides beneath it a phantom (a canvas) of that which cannot be introjected, the "darker" truth of colonial endeavor. During the period of France's policy of assimilation toward Algeria, Delacroix seems to have become more assimilated into nationalist politics through revolutionary romanticism. The stated desire to create a race of *évolués* actually makes those who are not *évolué* markedly inferior in their difference.

Samir Amin has written of the sense of geopolitical "betweenness" afforded to the plot of land of which Algeria is a part--for the Arab world, the "Maghreb" signifies the West, for the European it is part of the Orient. This sense of betweenness, indeed of uncanniness, is evident in the Delacroix paintings--in the first, the detail reminds us of difference, as does the haunting figure of the black woman waiting in the sidelines. In the later picture, that threshold between Algiers and Paris is represented through the foggy space between memory and forgetting in which difference intrudes through the veil and through the black woman as trace of colonialism. While the black woman is placed in the foreground as intermediary

between France and Algeria, in reality it is more the case that Algeria is a buffer zone between France and the future colonies of Sub-Saharan Africa, and France's past colonies. In this metalepsis where she apparently cuts off and reveals the scene of the harem, historically she reminds us of the other side--the other colonies, for which Algeria becomes the space between, the buffer zone. Algeria was, after all, both a colony and not one: technically a part of France, three "départements," but not treated like any other "départements." This contrasts with the colonies represented by the black woman, where us and them distinctions had been in the past and would in the future be more readily established. The lack of clearly opposing concepts of us and them in the Algerian context foretells the long and cruel bloodiness of the future war of independence.

Picasso

The "transcendence" of detail of which Delacroix speaks and which he exemplifies in the assimilation into a romanticist style is continued in Picasso's *Femmes d'Alger* series that he painted in order to mourn Matisse. Picasso's interest in the paintings, as Leo Steinberg has pointed out, seems to lie in the fact that there are two--that there is therefore a possibility of dialogue between them, "the liberating awareness that their confrontation makes every compositional decision seem again tentative" (Steinberg 128). If the citation of himself was important for Delacroix in the process of "forgetting trivial details" in order to become more assimilated into a melancholic Romanticist style, for Picasso, the citation of the memory of Delacroix's painting and Matisse's was a dual process. Even as Picasso successfully mourns his friend Matisse, he continues to thematize, as Delacroix did, the melancholic inassimilability of the Algerian situation.

Between December 1954 and February 1955, Picasso produced fifteen paintings, some monochrome but most in vivid colors, twenty drawings, and two lithographs taken through four different stages "after Delacroix." This process of

mourning Matisse, “the last Orientalist painter” according to Maryanne Stevens, who, inspired by Delacroix’s painting, spent much time in Morocco, coincides interestingly for us, with the revolutionary stage of the Algerian war of independence which was launched on November 1, 1954. While the figures in both Delacroix paintings were mostly passive, excepting the black woman who threatens movement, in Picasso’s versions, all characters move within and between paintings. The context of war causes them almost to burst out of their frames, out of their apartment. Through the production of multiple visual representations, as well as through multiple surfaces within each example, Picasso reemphasizes what generations have failed to introject. Assimilation cannot take place, and so melancholic incorporation reemerges at the moment of revolution.

The figures in Picasso’s “Women of Algiers” series often include frames-- whether they are door frames, mirrors, or citations of paintings. It is as if each work holds up a mirror to the art gallery, to the studio, or to the history of art into which Picasso writes himself and Matisse through citation. The reversal of images in the paintings suggests that the ornate mirror of Delacroix’s has been moved here to reflect the women, and perhaps the studio, from all angles. We can observe here in Picasso’s use of the Matisse *Odalisque* which, Picasso said, Matisse had left him, the three stages of mourning or psychic assimilation to which Abraham and Torok refer, and understand how the process of introjection is endemic to that of becoming, or of retaining a sense of self and equilibrium. First, the loss of Matisse causes Picasso to encounter a new moment in which he effectively becomes the principal European artist of the age; secondly, he becomes partly that object which he has lost, seen by the temporary inclusion of Matisse’s work into Picasso’s; and finally, Matisse is successfully introjected into the paintings. The specificity of Matisse’s *odalisques* is lost. Picasso has remembered to forget, and therefore successfully mourned Matisse.

And yet to read this series of works as one through which mourning can successfully occur is potentially to confuse the manifest content of mourning Matisse

and Delacroix with the latent content of Delacroix's melancholia that is nonetheless transmitted to Picasso. Just as the whitewash of assimilation left behind a haunting veiled canvas in Delacroix's 1849 painting revealing the elaborate myth of colonial assimilation to involve the repression of another story, Picasso's series similarly elaborates the failure to mourn, or introject, the Algerian women. The filling of these frames within and between this series recalls a moment within which the Algerian woman could be kept in her harem to be painted, observed and become representative of and infinitely substitutable for all Algerian women. Picasso's Algerian women are filled with sensuous movement, they threaten to move out of the confines of the frame, indeed in some versions they become their own frame--what has been a doorway becomes a headress in another (see C, D, H and O)--the women outgrow the frames within which they have been previously situated and staged. No longer are these women, these phantoms, satisfied with interiors. They threaten to move beyond them, they threaten, in becoming their own frames, to cite themselves through a visual pun, to become their own artists, and to come into existence through iteration of their own interiorities.

The black woman, the trace of colonialism, is in the background of the painting with the exception of the study devoted exclusively to her (Canvas G), and the second painting in the series (Canvas B) where her twisted serpentine figure extends from the foreground to the background. Her body is "janus-faced," simultaneously moving in opposing directions, with breasts and buttocks on one side, a face looking in the other, looking within the apartment, and frequently outside of it through the open door. Picasso places her in the background, reversing Delacroix's composition, as the Saharan buffer zone, looking to France and to sub-Saharan Africa simultaneously.

Although the figures are distorted--breasts and buttocks frequently emerge from the same surface--there is very little sense of flattening here--rather, discontinuity gives way to continuous movement. Not for long can these figures be

framed. And these markers of the body--the breasts, the buttocks-- inscribe race for us, for how does race get communicated otherwise in abstract paintings such as these in which women are painted all sorts of colors: blue, pink, green? It can be only through reference, through citation. The enlarged buttocks, for example, tell us that this is the figure seen from behind, and also, perhaps, simultaneously alerts us to the story of the eroticized black woman in European painting.

The process of citation here mourns the loss of that other moment of forgetting which spoke a consolidation of national identity. Here, this bursting forth speaks confrontation. If the transcendence of detail becomes for Delacroix the move to nationalist identity formation in Renan's terms, in Picasso the move to remember to forget documents the movement of change. Citing Delacroix in the moment of revolution causes him to abandon the classicized and framed in order to take up the confrontation of movement, of the sensuality of Algerian women in their variety, where boundaries as we know them are being questioned and broken down--each figure appears different in spite of the compositional cohesion of the paintings. In fact the process of ingestion of these images found in Matisse (the "Seated Indian" the "Odalisque" and the gate in "Tangier, the Kasbah Gate") through the framework of Delacroix causes the mourning, or documentation of forgetting in Delacroix, to become thematized as mourning, and also of the failure to mourn, in Picasso. And it is Matisse who is mourned, and ingested, into the history of art--a history which, of course, works through constant citation of old masters. Here, the thematization of mourning and citation makes us more conscious of the falsity of that process, for it makes sharp distinctions of time and space which need to be refashioned in the light of a different political moment. The old nationalism of Delacroix, fortified through revolutionary romanticism, is blasted to pieces here in this dramatic shifting of frames and borders and in this twisting distortion of fragmented limbs.

Simultaneously, Picasso's process of citation reveals another interior--the interiority of mourning which characterizes the work of citation. Picasso cites in his

paintings Velasquez's "Las Meninas," the most important work of modern art according to Foucault, and Matisse's "Odalisque" and "Tangier, the Kasbah Gate" within the frame of Delacroix's "Women of Algiers." "Las Meninas" can be seen (Canvas E & F) in the staircase in the back of the painting visible through the open door (Steinberg, 136). In the final version (Canvas O), the staircase intrudes into the painting making up its frame.

Matisse's "Odalisque" becomes one of the figures seated in the background of the painting as if observing the process by which Picasso paints the rest of the scene. These questions of foreground and background are, however, complicated again by the mirror image--the position of the reclining and seated women are also in some versions inverted--whereas in the Delacroix the reclining figure is on our left, in the Picasso, she is invariably on our right.

This mirroring composition of the paintings which reflect the art gallery constitutes a phantasmatic scene in which the subjectivity of the artist, of Picasso, develops through self-reflection and through the assimilation through citation of these other great French and Spanish figures. If Delacroix could define the national through the exploration of an interiority (the documenting of loss) informing the aesthetic of "Femmes d'Alger," Picasso's interiority--the mourning of Matisse and the placing of oneself as artist--confronts the moment in which subjectivity develops through citation, through iteration, through "working through." The mirror on the wall present in both of Delacroix's paintings is noticeably an absent image in Picasso's, perhaps because the mirror is elsewhere, perhaps because we see a mirror image.

The mirroring of interiority within these paintings recalls and anticipates not only the history of art and Picasso's own mourning. Picasso, as I have said began and completed these forty or so studies from November 1954 to February 1955--during the first three months of the Algerian Revolution, or war of independence. After eight bloody years, and one and a half million Algerian and twenty thousand French lives later, the Algerian nation was born. Looking at Picasso's Algerian collection, we

recognize the importance of iteration, reiteration and citation of already existing images which constitute images of the Algerian woman, and to some extent, Algerian women's self-image. Picasso writes himself into the history of art through citation, thus becoming the modern subject. The consolidation of self through mourning demonstrates the process of ingestion. Picasso becomes part himself, part Matisse, part Delacroix and part his subject matter, the Algerian women who are breaking out of the image we have had of them. Between France and Algeria lies Spain, Picasso's country of origin, itself torn by civil war documented by Picasso in "Guernica" and the "Weeping Women" in 1937. Picasso becomes again, begins again as the modern subject through an image of a country against which France (Picasso's adopted country) defined itself.

If Delacroix's 1849 cavern demonstrated a *failure to mourn*, an inevitable manifestation of the melancholic spirit that cannot assimilate the other in spite of the rhetoric of assimilation, Picasso's series, in turn, does the same. Indeed, while Picasso appears to mourn Matisse successfully, he simultaneously thematizes the failure to introject the difference of Algeria through a presentation of the encrypted image. Once again, at the time of a shift in political relations with Algeria, the walls of the crypt are shaken: the women, once confined behind the proscenium now appear without it, and threaten to move beyond the frame itself. Picasso seems to suggest the changing relation to Algerian women that was operative in this time of revolution. It is perhaps Picasso's own growing recognition of this that causes him to draw, in 1957, a sketch of Djamila Boupacha, the young Algerian woman who was tortured by the French and whose case was taken up by Gisèle Halimi, Simone de Beauvoir, and a host of French intellectuals.

Diebar

In 1978, before the Algerian government's repressive Family Code (1984) was in place in Algeria but when women's autonomy and access to public space were

already severely limited, Assia Djébar, the Francophone Algerian novelist, filmmaker, and historian, wrote a short story inspired by Delacroix's and Picasso's paintings.

Djébar focuses on the apparent conversation being conducted by the two seated women in Delacroix's 1834 version. Though arguably misogynist, Picasso's paintings speak a complex history of war-torn bodies as well as that of women's freedom as the naked women are unveiled. As Djébar comments in her 1979 essay on Delacroix and Picasso, "Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound," "Picasso was uncovering the truth of the vernacular language that, in Arabic, designates the 'unveiled' as 'denuded' women" (Djébar, Women of Algiers, 149). Citation, for Djébar, then, does not have to be politically regressive in Said's sense. Reading through the lens of postcolonial criticism, these instances of citation, whether misogynist or orientalist, get reinflected in a way that the Algerian woman can reclaim the image.

Djébar cites Delacroix's paintings in her title, moving out of the medium of visual art and into the genre of the short story in order to allow the emergent movers of Picasso's series an interiority of their own. The mixing of media is characteristic of Djébar's writing and film making which makes use of musical form, historical text, film, photography and painting, and indeed this short story was originally conceived as an idea for a film that was never made. Though her stories and novels thematize language difference, she writes exclusively in French, shifting styles dramatically to explore different languages within the overall framework of French.

Assia Djébar's "Women of Algiers in their Apartment" is a short story about postcolonial Algiers, the women and men that inhabit this area, the languages they speak and hear, the different occupations they have, and the various locations they inhabit. Djébar allows the emergent movers of Picasso's series an interiority of their own.

The sensuality of Djébar's prose includes vivid painterly descriptions, dialogues coming to life and breaking off into elision, and descriptions of women emerging and dissolving into various visual, acoustic, and social backgrounds.

“Women of Algiers in their Apartment” tells the story of Sarah, a former activist during the war of independence, who works in a studio making documentaries. Sarah is married to a surgeon named Ali whose son, Nazim, runs away from home. Nazim is an adolescent, and like two-thirds of the Algerian population, was born after independence in 1962. The runaway Nazim announces his departure to his father in a letter deliberately written in an assimilationist nationalist Arabic that he knows will be incomprehensible to him. We also meet Sarah’s friend, Anne, a Frenchwoman who has returned to Algeria to die; we meet her as she regurgitates the pills that she has failed to swallow in a suicide attempt. Another war-torn woman who has spent time in a “madhouse” is Leila, who is discovered by a painter friend of Ali’s. Leila, an old comrade of Sarah’s, epitomizes for Sarah the isolation of those women who have no outlet for their postwar trauma, nor for their stories of the war, and of the infamous prison, Barberousse. This woman shares a sense of fragmentation, of an incomplete story and an unconsolidated self, with Sarah. Sarah, however, has an outlet for her anguish in her film work, where the many voices, languages and stories in her head have an outlet in the montage of audiovisual production. Ultimately, Sarah tells of the necessity for women to communicate with each other, Anne decides not to kill herself, and we are left with an image of a changing relationship between Algeria and France, where veiled and unveiled women emigrate to Parisian **arrondissements**. While the women in this story are drawn together through their sex, it is the difference within women’s voices, that the FLN had suppressed, with which we are left. And Djébar asks us to recognize these differences so as to understand present day Algeria. She shows us the multiplicity of languages that are a part of everyday existence in Algeria, and demonstrates the multifaceted cadences of these through the adoption of a variety of style, genre and media even within the scope of this short story. The Algerian nation, just like Renan’s French ideal, has similarly remembered to forget the coerciveness of its own assimilationist policies.

“Women of Algiers” is written in four sections, and the modernist mode of the

Picasso series reemerges through the multifaceted interiorities that we read here. The first three each culminate with an “interlude,” and the fourth with two tentative “diwan”-- the first, spelled with a “w” “for a diwan of the water carrier,” the second, spelled with a “v” “for a divan of the fire carriers.” All four meanings of the term “divan” are relevant here--a Muslim council, the room in which the council is held, a couch and an Arabic collection of poems. The water carrier, a servant in the *hammam* or bath house, a woman described as almost black and of nomadic (perhaps Berber) descent from the Sahara region, lies on a stretcher having fallen, reciting a series of prose poems in an interior monologue. Words intrude into her poems from elsewhere--from her mind? From the other women who surround her? If she looked in two directions in the paintings, here she listens and speaks in two. The hospital and the ambulance --the locations of the wounded--become the court where questions of representation get negotiated. This Berber woman, a representative of those erased by the Ottoman empire as well as by the FLN, is the “unveiled” one, perhaps a displacement of the black slave from Delacroix. Simultaneously that slave, she is metonymy of melancholia, she can reveal that process of forgetting elaborated in the other divan for the fire carriers. These are the forgotten women who were carriers of arms and bombs during the revolution, and whose public militant actions were briefly celebrated. We hear a story now forgotten, a trauma misunderstood, of Leila, a fire carrier who is “discovered” in a “madhouse” by a passionate painter still caught up in the anger of revolution. Leila holds court with Sarah, our protagonist, another fire carrier--how do they mourn their wounds? How do they re-member their dismembered bodies? Where are the narratives which publicly acknowledge their suffering and sacrifice?

Where are you, you fire carriers, you my sisters, who should have liberated the city . . . Barbed wire no longer obstructs the alleys, now it decorates windows, balconies, anything at all that opens onto an outside space . . . In the streets they were taking pictures of your unclothed bodies . . . The bombs are still

exploding . . . but over twenty years: close to our eyes, for we no longer see the outside, we see only the obscene looks, the bombs explode but against our bellies and I am--she screamed--I am every woman's sterile belly in one.

(Djebar, 44)

This meshing of two kinds of representation--legal arbitration and designation (*vertreten* and *darstellen* in Marx's terms)--are at the heart of Djebar's story--how can the articulation of trauma move into the realm of public space? How can one bear witness? How can one remember that which has deliberately been forgotten? How can a critical politics, or a critical nationalism, derived from melancholia, address the assimilationist mourning of the nation-as-state that remembers only in order to forget?

If modernity is characterized by the division between private and public space as many have argued, the emergence of the modern Algerian woman into subjectivity is, in this story, enacted through citation, but through a citation which enacts the very difficulty of citationality. Djebar begins the volume of short stories with an "Overture." She says:

Don't claim to "speak for" or, worse, to "speak on," barely speaking next to, and if possible very close to: these are the first of the solidarities to be taken on by the few Arabic women who obtain or acquire freedom of movement, of body, and of mind . . . New women of Algiers, who have been allowed to move about in the streets just these last few years, have been momentarily blinded by the sun as they cross the threshold, do they free themselves--do we free ourselves--altogether from the relationship with their own bodies, a relationship lived in the shadows until now, as they have done throughout the centuries? (Djebar, 2)

We hear, in the short story, again of Sarah's tenuous relationship to a form distinguishable from shadow, just as we note that her speech, in contrast to that of the Frenchwoman Anne's whose story is deemed by Sarah to be somewhat symptomatic and predictable (perhaps demetaphorized), frequently breaks off into ellipses, as if the

passage from ingestion to speech cannot yet fully occur.

Sarah, far away, crouched in the gloomiest corner, suddenly wishes she could melt away into darkness . . . Finally, Sarah . . . goes to the bay window . . . :with a quick movement, she pulls open the enormous curtain . . . “No!” the other cries out, blinded.

Sarah turns halfway around: Anne (a French woman) has retreated to the white wall in the back, both hands over her eyes as if to blindfold them . . .

(Djebar, 8)

While the use of cave imagery, or at least of cavernous interiors, obviously refers to the geographical location of Algeria’s cavernous and mountainous landscape, the quotations can also be read as citations of Plato’s metaphor of the cave which theorizes epistemology and the status of artistic representation. Although Djebar’s work is not Platonic in any other way, she, as many feminists before her, rewrites the metaphor to consider the cave as the cavernous and shadowy existence within which women are confined. The woman who moves beyond this blindfolded shadowy existence must not forget, she tells us, “those who are incarcerated” (Djebar, 2) as she is momentarily blinded by the sun.

The shadowy existence which we have seen in Delacroix’s painting is both women’s literal confinement in private spaces, but also the world of images described by Plato. The shadows on the wall, the signifiers which go into the formation of both private space and indeed, interiority, need to be “transcended.” If Plato’s cavern contains the history of artistic expression, those who exist within it are inevitably formulated by this history of signifiers. Iteration beyond the cave can only ever be a renegotiation of existent signifiers through recitation. The figures who appear as if they burst from their frames in Picasso’s paintings, appear here as women who find it difficult to emerge from that feminine space that characterized the cavernous existence. In Djebar, the transcendence of the shadowy world of interiors needs to be taken beyond interiority, into public space.

The emergence of the modern Algerian woman into subjectivity is, in this story re-cited beyond a cavernous existence. Women need to speak to other women, acknowledge the differences of their interiority, and ensure their access to public space. Djébar's iteration of interiors, public discourses, and various languages, dramatizes the slippage between the artistic and the political, between designation and arbitration, between private and public, critical melancholia that involves, as Dominick LaCapra has suggested, the simultaneous processes of acting out and working through and assimilationist mourning. The phantom emerges and is articulated, that which was marked by silence now speaks, thus instituting a model of politics based on melancholia rather than a nationalism based on mourning. This way, we do not simply remember to forget, but take remembering seriously as an imaginative and a political act. The phantom, the material difference that could not be assimilated either by Delacroix, Picasso or by the FLN (the Algerian government) can then be brought into the open, for the walls will finally crumble. Through the process of rejecting the mourning model of nationalism that seeks to erase differences, Djébar's story dramatizes the breakdown of a crypt that: the initial realisation of the lie of assimilation. The expansive sense of multiple identity within the Algerian nation that replaced the French empire remembers, through imaginative history, that which has been forgotten. The lie of the assimilationist model that has turned difference into a phantom, is reconstituted here as a lived political memory. Djébar confronts the phantom of violence, and attempts to give articulation where there has been silence.

I speak of the nation in terms of mourning and politics as melancholia not in order to subsume the historical, and assimilate it, as it were, into the family romance of psychoanalysis. Nor do I wish to suggest that the assimilationist tendency of the state can simply be reduced to Renan's model of nationalist mourning. Rather, through the historical mapping of the work of citation, the nation as conceptual formation reveals itself to be formulated simultaneously with that of the nationalist

subject. While mourning and melancholia are always differently nuanced by their context, I have employed them here to demonstrate how the catachresis of nation is a regurgitated phantom that is repressed by the State. The State, in turn, seeks to assimilate, indeed to mourn, thus making all subjects into figures who are always already national subjects.

By way of conclusion that is simultaneously a beginning that raises questions for the future, we turn to a recent example of the continuing re-citation of Delacroix. In a recent documentary, Femmes D'Alger (Kamel Dehane, 1993) Djébar is interviewed. She speaks of the many voices in her head which achieve expression and release in writing. This film also interviews three other women: a young radio journalist, a former combatant in the war, and a designer who has decided to wear the veil, all of whom give their testimonies. The interviewer poses questions about their lives, the power of men, their careers, religion, and the future of Algeria during this time of civil strife and violent attacks on public female figures. The film is pertinent in these troubled times of Algeria's ongoing civil war. We see the women in the 1834 painting in fragments, just as later we see current day women of Algiers silenced, and also depicted in fragments. We move into the 1834 picture as it comes to life. As we move into a stage set up like that of Delacroix's women's apartment, women singers come to life. We move from the material of the painting to a scene of women interacting, and then back to the painting again. We return to this scene intermittently in the film as the women speak of their lives. The final shot is of a film set designed to look like the Delacroix apartment. The women are absent. Where have they gone in this moment of suppression and silencing? Driven into invisibility? Working behind the scenes? Present again in the disguise of phantom? More active than Delacroix imagined, are they out in public space, or have they been driven further into concealment?

In this context of national history as mourning, it seems once again that the nation-State, this time the Algerian nation-State, speaks a lie of the possibility of

assimilation. In the hands of postcolonial Algerians, who inherit the very structure of the nation from the nation that excluded them, moments of melancholia occur in relation to the nation-state itself, that appears inassimilable in postcolonial “Algeria.” The loss that gives rise to both mourning and melancholia is an accumulated loss: the loss of the national ideal.

Reading theories of psychic assimilation alongside French and Algerian cultural production and assimilationist French colonial policy reveals the postcolonial’s melancholia in the everyday experience of the postcolonial subject. If coming into national independence requires a model of history that is assimilationist and can remember to forget, it also gives rise to a critical relationship to that model that spawned the prolonged trauma of colonialism. In the manner of *nachträglichkeit*, what is revealed here is a trauma at the heart of the very concept of national identity. A prolonged trauma results from an accumulation of unassimilable events the outcome of which is melancholia. But it also comes from an *episteme* that is transgenerational. If we place this idea of a melancholic postcoloniality in the context of the work of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, we could suggest that specters do not just hide particular secrets; they could encrypt the operative assumptions behind multiple oppressive ideologies from a variety of sources. The language and structures of the nation-State that was built on the exclusion and incorporation of its colonial subjects, are inherited by postcolonials in what Gayatri Spivak has called an *epistemic violence* that results in a haunting. A crypt normalizes nationalist ideologies, but conceals their exclusionary agenda, that appears as a phantom.

To close, then, let me return briefly to my initial conjecture--There is trauma concealed in the very heart of the theory of European nation-State formation. A phantom is apparently created as a response to an unassimilable and originary traumatic event, which in this case does not seem to exist in terms of a particular event, even as it evolves through changes in policy. If Derrida is correct, however, in

claiming in Specters of Marx that “haunting is historical to be sure, but it is not *dated*” (4), perhaps that originary moment can be theorized as a catachresis. But if origin is itself a catachresis, as I would want to contend in the messy context of hybrid national cultures muddled in the context of nationalism and colonialism and decolonization, then there is no originary traumatic “event” that could be assimilated. Given the shared theoretical roots of nation formation, colonial policy and psychoanalysis, we may want to conjecture that psychic assimilation itself is a colonial formation that is a catachresis in the former European colonies. Perhaps the inability to introject would lead to what Freud considered central to melancholia--critical agency. In the condition of *epistemic violence--which is the violence of assimilation--*in which we cannot not want to assimilate, the experience of melancholia would perhaps eventually identify a phantom, and transfer that critical agency into ideological critique--and an undoing of the nation-state.

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ENDNOTES