Women's Identity Through Memories of Physical Violence in Assia Djebar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved:* A Comparative Study

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> "Wounds are reopened, veins weep, one's own blood flows and that of others, which has never dried" (Djebar, *Fantasia* 156)

The purpose of this article is to engage with unspoken memories of subaltern women who survive salient forms of structural and epistemic violence. It exposes the memories of painful past events that are repressed in official sites. With the abundance of these memories, colonized and enslaved subjects seem trapped in and obsessed with the past. Narrating these memories offers a space for resistance in which female storytellers become visible and audible subjects capable of self-representation.

Postcolonial feminists call for subversive writing forms and genres that take into account the diversity of female experiences across the globe. Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, sees writing women's unspoken stories as an act of resurrecting their identities. She uses the term *autohistoria-teoria* to describe feminist writing that presents a non-linear chronology, and includes personal narrative and factual accounts. She highlights the centrality of women's identity-related issues in postcolonial feminist literature, and proposes:

> You've passed a turning point—decided not to drag the dead self into the present and future just to preserve your history. Instead, you've chosen to compose a new history and self—to rewrite your autohistoria. You want to be transformed again; you want a keener mind, a stronger spirit, a wiser soul. Your ailing body is no longer a hindrance but an asset, witnessing pain, speaking to you, demanding touch. *Es tu cuerpo que busca conocimiento;* along with dreams your body's the royal road to consciousness. (558)

Anzaldúa calls for rethinking the existing categories of writing and aesthetically (re)inventing women's individual and collective identities to form transformational alliances (20). Assia Djebar and Toni Morrison share the same aesthetic concerns; through their works, they unsilence the

"petit récits" of the women of their communities and bring them into visibility and light. For this to be possible, they started by investigating their own individual identities ('I') in order to end up merging with the collective 'We.' They do this by subverting genres and literary forms, as it is the case with Djebar's *Fantasia* (1985) where there is a clear imbrication of history, autobiography, and fiction, and with Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) where genres are deliberately blurred. In this case, memory becomes "an act of transfer" (Connerton 93).

Lobna Ben Salem too endorses this view when she examines the merits of narrative trauma. She aptly notes:

> [The postcolonial novelist] portrays the past in a number of ways. Figuring herself as a biographer, as a keeper of the trace, as a witness, as a survivor, she confronts the historic past, and in so doing strives to prevent a long-lived and witnessed violence from returning to haunt the present. Thus, this narrative presents itself as a leap into past memories charged with personal and collective losses. Vestiges of the past survive in a story that starts in medias res, where the narrator feels an urgent need to respond to an immediate demand of memory. ("Taming Trauma" 1)

In their attempt to transform traumatic memories into narrative memories, postcolonial authors, Ben Salem surmises, produce experimental narratives that strive to reflect the intermittent, non-lineal, and duplicitous structure of traumatic memories. More often than not, what the textual fabric of these texts highlights is the limits of representation and the failure of language to grasp trauma's aporetic nature.

Although Djebar's and Morrison's texts revolve around memories of violence that reverberate through the diegetic timelines, each maneuvers history and memory in a different way. However, one can discern three common types of violent memories, namely the memory of infanticide, the memory of burning, and the memory of imprisonment and escape.

Memory of Infanticide

Under colonization and enslavement, children are victims of violence. This type of violence affects individual and collective identity. The purpose here is to provide ample evidence on how this violence operates at the narrative level, whether as a tool of resistance for mothers, or a tool of oppression for the White colonizer. In both cases, childhood experience is affected since it is the point where violence and counter violence meet.

The unnatural act of infanticide occurs for a number of reasons. The first reason is for mothers to save their children from sexual violations. Rape has devastating and traumatizing effects on female identity. The latter is further disrupted when women under slavery are unable to perform their natural role as mothers. Their maternal subjectivity is

disrupted when they helplessly watch the violation and abuse of their children. In a desperate act of re-appropriation, mothers kill their offspring. Consequently, their act is inscribed within the discourse of resistance. This is exactly the case with Sethe in *Beloved*. No matter how exacerbating, shocking, or confusing this action may seem, Sethe stubbornly defends its necessity, in the very name of love. This is clear in the following conversation with Paul D:

> 'It ain't my job to know what's worse. It's my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that.'
> 'What you did was wrong, Sethe.'
> 'I should have gone on back there? Taken my babies back there?' (*Beloved* 165)

Sethe insists that one can kill in the name of love. Her sense of pride, even hubris, is clear in her emphatic sentence "I did that" (165).

Like all traumatic memories, the memory of infanticide is obsessive, as evident in the way its narrative punctuates the whole novel. However, instead of guilt, the dominant affective emotion that saturates Sethe's infanticide memory is gratification. Sethe 'owns' her daughter, and has the 'power' to determine her fate. As the narrator explains: "She could never let it [rape] happen to her own [daughters]. The best thing she has was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing" (251). This clearly transforms the trauma of infanticide, usually laden with shame and regret, into a memory that involves dignity and justice. Ostensibly, infanticide is an extreme means of maternal love and resistance. Its drastic yet deliberate occurrence challenges the enslaver's (sexual) authority.

It is worth noting that the plot of *Beloved* is based on a true story of infanticide. When Morrison was working as editor of a book about Afro-American history, namely *The Black Book* (1974), she added a true story into her edition called "A Visit to the Slave Mother Who Killed Her Child." This story had already been published in a nineteenth-century journal entitled *The American Baptist*. It relates a story of infanticide by an Afro-American enslaved woman called Margaret Garner who ran away from the plantation farm to her family in Cincinnati, but was captured there by her master. Her aim was to protect her four children from rape and bondage by killing them but, like Sethe in the novel, she managed to kill only one of her children[1] (Kocabiyik 344).

As far as *Fantasia* is concerned, Djebar also relates a story of infanticide that is similar to Sethe's in *Beloved.* She recounts that an Algerian mother during the war of colonization "had been fleeing with a child in her arms when a shot wounded her; she seized a stone and crushed the infant's head, to prevent it falling alive into . . . [the French] hands; the [French] soldiers finished her off with their bayonets" (18). Because even the thought of possible rape destroys a woman's identity, mothers commit infanticide to save their children from the violence and violation that they themselves endured. In such extreme moments, the boundaries between

shock and sympathy, love and revenge, agency and coercion dissolve, and make the colonized subject's journey toward self-fulfillment even more complex for lacking the moral stability and well-being that are crucial for identity development. In *Fantasia*, the mother is spared the trauma of infanticide, for she is killed by the French. Her tragic end saves her from the burdens of re-memory.

The case is different in *Beloved*, where the memory of infanticide seems traumatic and irreconcilable. Although mother and daughter are both prone to rape, Sethe chooses life for herself and death for her daughter. This haunting re-memory hurts and controls Sethe's mind completely. Morrison, therefore, inscribes it in the figure of the ghost of Beloved whose resurrection releases the trauma of infanticide and allows reconciliation to take place. Sethe's narrative memory transcends the burdens of infanticide, reconciling her with her past, and leaving open the possibility of catharsis. Reminiscence, not forgetfulness, brings female solidarity into play, and allows the Black community to unite together against the White institution of enslavement. What the novel thus reveals through the juxtaposition of sites of sexual violence that seamlessly flow into one another (through a maternal genealogy: grandmother, mother, and daughter) is how killing in the name of protectiveness or in the name of revenge are two sides of the same coin irrespective of the colonial or racial context in which it occurs.

On the interrelation between infanticide and revenge, Barbara Christian in "Beloved, She's Ours" (1997) notes that infanticide bears special symbolic significance as an act of striking out against the White male sexual predation (41-42). Sethe's mother and Ella kill their children as a way to avenge themselves from their White rapists. Sethe's mother "threw them [her babies] all away. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them" (62). For Ella, "she had delivered, but would not nurse, a hairy white thing" (258). These remembered scenes of infanticide play a significant role in reflecting the power and agency of enslaved women when it comes to their 'possessions,' their children. Their acts of violence can be interpreted as forms of strategic resistance within an otherwise hegemonic system of abuse and victimization.

Infanticide is clearly portrayed as an attempt by subdued mothers to regain control of their confiscated lives and to become agents of their destiny. This obsession stems directly from their own experience of rape that they want to spare their children. The ultimate resistance for them resides, therefore, in reclaiming their rights for the sake of their offspring. The economy of slavery and its prosperity, they know, depends on robust biological procreation, which, paradoxically enough, engenders the destruction of familial bonds. Infanticide clearly disrupts this materialist logic, and imposes the will of the subaltern, even if it implies self-destruction and sacrifice. Once again, this type of memory, uncomfortable and disconcerting, evinces the difficulty of achieving female identity of the most basic order, that of 'mothers' or 'caregivers.' How to

conceptualize maternal identity when a woman is deprived of the ability to care for and protect her child? Yet, Djebar and Morrison prove that motherhood is a force that transcends colonialism and slavery, even in its most unnatural kind. In this way, it undermines the authority of the colonizer and slave master.

As such, both texts expose stories of infanticide that show how the horrors of rape destroy the mothers' subjectivities and their children's lives. Clearly, these horrors oblige mothers to resort to murdering their children. In the discourse of rape, mothers see killing their children as a means of survival. This type of memory in both texts indicates that the mothers perform their duties to save their children from rape and its legacies by sending their 'progenies' to death instead of witnessing their sexual abuse by the White colonizer. In doing so, these mothers assert their identity and ownership of their children as well. Quite significantly, if the memory of infanticide disrupts mothers' subjectivities, remembering that their children are spared the brutality of the colonizer and the White master heals this division.

It is worth pointing out, at this juncture, that infanticide is not solely practiced by desperate mothers, children die also because of colonial and racial cruelty. Children are often part of the collateral damage in wars, and a valuable asset in human bondage trade. In *Fantasia*, the French war against freedom fighters does not spare children's lives. The story recounts that on the night of 19 to 20 June 1845, according to the report made by the French general, Pelissier, the French burnt the children of the Ouled Riah tribe while at their mothers' breasts in Al-Dhara caves. Djebar reports that "the most horrifying sight was that of infants at the breast" (72). Obviously, infanticide is used by the colonizer as a tool to conquer the land, to claim ownership of the enslaved people, and to destroy the ties between mothers and their children.

In light of what has been argued above, infanticide is a result of violence that affects a fundamental aspect of identity formation, namely motherhood. Memory in both texts shows that it is a gratifying tool of resistance for bereaved mothers. The colonizer, for his part, uses it as a sign of power to kill the will of the colonized. In each case, childhood is destroyed as a result of violence and counter violence. The gist of the analysis hinges on the crucial formative role of narrative memory in re-constructing individual identity, and by the same token, the collective one. After investigating the memory of infanticide, the following section dwells on the memory of burning and its effects on collective identity in both novels. It becomes evident by now how Djebar's and Morrison's portrayal of violent memories reveals a strong engagement not only with the politics of identity fulfilment, but with its ethical conundrum.

Memory of Burning

The list of colonial and racial abuses is long. Persecution, extermination, torture, sexual assault, looting, and forced cultural assimilation are some of these violent crimes. This litany of atrocities is profusely alluded to in Djebar's and Morrison's texts. This section sheds light on the memory of burning, inflicted by the White colonizer.

Based on thirty-seven accounts by the colonizer and three testimonies by surviving victims, *Fantasia* documents the memory of the French colonization in Algeria. Under the title "Women, Children, Oxen Dying in Caves," Djebar narrates the burning massacre that took place in the nineteenth century in the Dahra caves in Algeria. She uses shocking graphic imagery so that the readers can comprehend the terror and brutality of the Algerian genocide. In this genocide, as the episode reveals, 1500 persons of the Ouled Riah tribe: men, women, and children, with their animals, were asphyxiated and burnt alive on the night of 19 to 20 June 1845 by French Colonel Pelissier, with the help of the goumiers[2] led by El-Hajj el-Kaim who guided Pelissier and his soldiers to the caves and collected the wood to burn the hidden Algerians there. After a failed negotiation to subjugate the high-spirited Algerians, the French army set the caves on fire to smoke out men, women and their children. The flames soared to a height of 200 feet, and wiped out the entire Ouled Riah tribe (39).

Drawing on Pelissier's report to his brother and the testimonies of other soldiers, Djebar describes the crime scene: "All the corpses are naked, in attitudes which indicated the convulsions they must have experienced before they expired. Blood was flowing from their mouths; but the most horrifying sight was that of infants at the breast" (72-74). These lines portray the inhumane treatment of the Algerians by the French. It narrates the extermination of the Ouled Riah community which refused to surrender to the French army. Boersma notes that "Djebar narrates how the Berber tribes in the western regions of the hinterland try to keep their independence. She particularly focuses on the Ouled Riah tribesmen who were unwilling to surrender and withdrew in caves" (12). As such, the novelist resurrects the victims. Ironically, Djebar is indebted to Pelissier, the "butcher-and-recorder" (64), for documenting this crime of fumigation. She also appreciates his honesty for writing a realistic report that falls into her hands accidentally and enables her to "weave a pattern of French words" (78) and narrativize his massacre in Algeria. Pelissier, for his part, might have been taken by bouts of guilt that pushed him to write down the brutality of the scene in an attempt to 'work it through.' Lieutenant colonel Canrobert writes, however, that "Pelissier made only one mistake: As he had a talent for writing, and was aware of this, he gave in his report an eloquent and realistic, much too realistic, description of the Arabs' suffering" (75). For Canrobert, Pelissier is blamed for not hiding the ugly face of colonialism behind a sophisticated and euphemistic

language so as to camouflage the crudeness and violence of the event (Kershaw 60).

However, the Ouled Riah's genocide is neither the first nor the last crime by the French against the Algerians. As revealed through some victims' memory, crimes of asphyxiations and burning people alive were a common practice. Djebar, in *Fantasia*, mentions two other fumigators in addition to Pelissier. She writes: "less than two months after Pelissier, Saint Arnaud well and truly asphyxiated at least eight hundred Sbeahs" (76), a practice that scandalized French public opinion in Paris, and led "Cavaignac, forced by Republican opposition, to settle matters quietly" (78). Furthermore, the French frequently put the Algerians' homes and farms on fire. One of them is Lla Zohra's. Her house and farm are burnt by the French four times (161). Cherifa's house too is burnt three times in the city of Zaouia. Cherifa recalls: "they burnt our house down for the third time … 'France' arrived and burnt the whole place down" (117-118). This type of crime has never been acknowledged by French authorities as a war crime. By excavating its memory, Djebar brings it to the fore and demands justice for its victims. "The work of the colonized," if one is to believe Fanon, "is to imagine every possible method for annihilating the colonist" (*The Wretched* 50).

In a similar manner, Morrison narrates memories of burning in *Beloved*. Sethe recalls the hanging, burning, and shooting of Sixo by the schoolteacher at Sweet Home in the aftermath of his escape. Sixo lost his mind before he died. As for the other runaway slaves, the slave owner "buttered Halle's face; gave Paul D iron to eat; crisped Sixo; hanged her [Sethe's] own mother" (188). Torture and terror form a nexus at the heart of the slavery ideology that operates dialectically to enhance White sovereignty and curb Black resistance. Sethe herself is tortured by fire at the hands of the schoolteacher who enflames a "chokecherry tree, trunk, branches, and even leaves" (16) on her back while pregnant with Denver. Clearly, burning occupies an important place within the set of torture techniques which the Whites use to punish and terrorize their slaves. Beyond the reach of law, slaves' crimes have been for so long unrecognized and unpunished.

Historical records attest to the practice of burning as a form of punishment. In case of resistance or escape, the slave owner enflames the slaves' foreheads with burning hot metal, drawing specific signs on their head's skins that cannot be hidden. Deborah H. DeFord captures the brutality of this practice, saying:

> Wherever European colonists settled with slaves, they established slave laws that were meant to protect the white population and keep the enslaved people under control … In Puerto Rico, slaveholders tried to make it impossible for their slaves to escape and then claim to be free by branding the slaves' foreheads with burning hot metal. The branding permanently identified someone as a slave. (23)

In tune with historical records, memory in *Beloved* shows that burning the Black body is a disciplinary principle associated with power and control. In the colonial context too, burning is a form of punishment meant to impose the sovereignty of the ruler. Yoked together as they are, *Fantasia* and *Beloved* loosely but emphatically narrate types of violent memories. Whether applied to the slave or the colonized subject, they are degrading, both physically and morally.

It is worth noting that, albeit dehumanizing, burning is practiced by Blacks themselves. They imprint special marks on the hidden parts of their bodies so that their children can identify them in case they are killed or defaced by their aggressors. For example, Sethe recalls how:

> She [Sethe's mother] picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse. Back there she opened up her dress front and lifted her breast and pointed under it. Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin. She said, 'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark.' (61)

Self-mutilation, despite the pain it inflicts, is deemed essential for the Black woman to acquire a sense of identity that she inscribes on her body. Thus, trying – even at the cost of suffering – to foreground the body's self-reflexivity to generate its own subjectivity is important for moral survival. The desire to be identified after death is a form of resistance to slavery's logic of oblivion and invisibility. The daughter, following the lead of her mother, insists she gets her own mark, lest she is forgotten by her community.

Because the violence of memory is multifarious, it generates numerous stories whose damaging and destructive nature is neutralized once they are narrativized. Not all the violent memories necessarily hinge on physical abuse; there are memories that are bitter and painful simply because they violate the moral integrity of their victims. Memories of imprisonment and escape are cases in point. Therefore, the following section examines the memory of imprisonment and escape in both novels, and discusses its effects on female identity.

Memory of Imprisonment and Escape

The memory of imprisonment and escape reverberates in women's minds in both texts, and continuously refreshes feelings of fear (or defiance) inside them. Like other memories of violence, this type of memory has left indelible marks on female collective identity in both texts. Women, in *Fantasia* and *Beloved*, reflect on the way the prison – whether a real carceral experience or a metaphorical sense of entrapment and enclosure –

affects their identity. The joint action of curtailing volition and regulating movement and mobility of the captive subject unavoidably morphs into coercion.

In *Fantasia,* Cherifa's memory reveals her carceral experience in the notorious prison of "The Sacred Wood" (137). There, she is interrogated, tortured, and subjected to sexual harassment. She remembers: "One night, he [the goumier] somehow managed to unlock the door of my cell, then he called me twice, very softly, in the dark. I went out and yelled for the guard. He disappeared" (137). This indicates that imprisonment involves other forms of violence against women. It also shows that the female voice is a tool of resistance and survival. Cherifa's screams save her from the imminent sexual abuse of her jailer. Despite her solitary confinement, Cherifa resists and uses the resources of her body for empowerment. She does not mince her words when she confronts her jailor, a goumier, calling him "'[t]raitor among traitors!' . . . 'You have sold your loyalties! The flag that I believe in doesn't fly above this place! It's over there, in the forests and on the mountains!'" (133-138). Unafraid of the consequences of her rebellion, Cherifa illustrates the pride and dignity of women when confronting their enemy. The memory of imprisonment offers, hence, the opportunity to admire women's will and power that has been unrecognized, because undocumented, in official narratives.

Imprisonment, then, generates exciting forms of resistance; it nurtures new and stronger forms of individual identity. Those who survive incarceration become more resilient because of knowing the extreme forms of power abuse to be inflicted. The way the prison as a power structure affects the shaping of identity is clear when Cherifa narrates how she is imbued within internal power that transforms her meekness into hostile aggressivity: "'[i]f he comes near me again, I'll hit him with the iron bar and finish him off with the knife!'" (138). In spite of electrical shock torture, Cherifa refuses to tell the investigators any information about the names and places of the partisans or about the sources of their food and clothes. "I didn't feel any fear," she explains, "God made these Frenchmen seem like shadows in front of my eyes!" (135). The small body of this thirteen-year-old girl manages even to go on hunger strike. "I stayed on hunger strike for twenty days!" she tells her interlocutor, "As if I depended on them! The main thing for me, as far as the French were concerned, was to show them I didn't need them!" (139). No doubt, the memory of imprisonment reflects a resistant identity, turning shame and humiliation into courage and pride.

A prison may connote settler colonial repression; for the female storytellers in *Fantasia*, however, it is the locus of rebellion. Djebar shows through Cherifa's memory of imprisonment how women assert their identity despite the prison's hegemonic violence. Indeed, the woman's voice (or absence thereof) and her body, which are meant to be disciplined and punished in prison, if one is to follow the Foucauldian logic, become potential sites of resistance. By the same token, the very concept of

coercion and power embedded in the notion of prison loses its meaning through the impact of the transgressive moral and physical forces impinging on or emanating from the prisoner's female body. Djebar, of course, is simply reproducing a (post)colonial classical image of the prison as a site of colonial insurgency and home to native rebels who eventually become national heroes; she is, however, placing women at the center of this discourse.

In *Beloved*, the memory of imprisonment relates to two real prisons: the Alfred prison and the prison of Ohio (42, 112, 126). Sethe was imprisoned for three months after the infanticide. She recalls: "The sheriff came with me and looked away when I fed Denver in the wagon. Neither Howard nor Buglar would let me near them, not even to touch their hair. I believe a lot of folks were there, but I just saw the box. Reverend Pike spoke in a real loud voice, but I didn't catch a word except the first two" (183-184). In prison, the Sheriff steals Sethe's pair of crystal earrings given to her for her wedding by Mrs. Garner in Sweet Home in Kentucky. "The jailer took them" (183), affirms Sethe. The prison, seemingly, reproduces the system of slavery where slaves do not have the right of property ownership. Hence, what is given by a White (the earrings) is duly returned to another White. On the other hand, the Schoolteacher and his nephews never get imprisoned for their sexual crimes. This is quite justifiable, since the criminal justice system is molded to serve the interests of the Whites.

In *Beloved,* imprisonment invokes the terror of the Middle Passage. During the Middle Passage, female captives lost their freedom the moment they were forced to kill their babies after delivery (*Beloved* 83-85). The stigma of slavery, in effect, is accentuated by the coercive nature of imprisonment. A similar story of dispossession is narrated in *Fantasia*, where an Algerian mother loses her fetus while taken into exile to France; she "gave birth to the foetus" on the ship in the summer of 1843 during her journey to the island of Sainte Marguerite in France with other forty-eight hostages kidnapped by the French general Saint-Arnaud. The anonymous mother aborts her stillborn "without a cry" (189-90). While holding her baby in her hands, she wonders: "'[h]ow can I bury the foetus, O my prophet, my sweet Saviour!'." Eventually, she throws it into the sea (189-190). The parallels between these stories indicate how women's will is violated and broken under the double force of colonialism/slavery and imprisonment.

Prisons are *charged* sites that imply force and counterforce. Confinement entails subversion, which in turn manifests itself in the agency and self-determination that the prisoner acquires to fight the oppression of prison. It is interesting how these memories speak to each other, shedding light on subaltern history, giving it legitimacy and *raison d'être*. These memories, with their various tempo-spatial references, conflate and strengthen each other.

Conversely, past memories of imprisonment, with their prominent aspect of victimization and their emphasis on resistance, suggest their

importance for shaping collective memory, which Djebar and Morrison weave through a multiplicity of concurrent and interlocking mini-narratives. However, real stories of confinement are supplemented with metaphors of imprisonment that are evinced through the interlacing of many topoi and tropes.

When prison becomes a state of mind, when even open space seems entrapping and enclosed, and when individual acts and deeds are under constant surveillance, it becomes clear that colonialism and enslavement are tropes of imprisonment. Colonized and enslaved subjects feel that they are incarcerated and permanently monitored by "Big Brother."[3] The idea that colonialism and slavery can be metaphorically depicted as a form of imprisonment finds its validity in Michel Foucault's theory of the panopticon. Indeed, Foucault postulates that in the panopticon "each individual in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (220). Foucault's words demonstrate the close affinities between the prison and colonial oppression, loss of agency and volitional independence being the common denominator. In *Beloved,* Morrison sheds light on the organizations of the White "Big Brothers" whose jobs are to watch and kill the slaves, especially after the Emancipation Proclamation. The novel is set in 1873, eight years after the civil war. Its events spread over eighteen years, from 1873 to 1891. Morrison alludes to the secret organizations of White racists that used to kill emancipated slaves like the KKK 'Ku Klux Klan' (66), Talking Sheets (53), and the Supremacists. These racist organizations have been founded by the Whites who refused the Proclamation and caused the civil war in the USA.

As revealed through narrative memory, KKK killed Sethe's mother and attacked Black women everywhere (61). Sethe also tells Paul D that she could not "throw a helpless coloured girl [Beloved] out in territory infected by the Klan. Desperately thirsty for Black blood, without which it could not live, the dragon [the KKK] swam the Ohio at will" (66). To evade murder, slaves had to travel through detours and minor roads. Morrison writes: "[o]dd clusters and strays of Negroes wandered the back roads and cow paths from Schenectady to Jackson … . Forbidden public transportation, chased by debt and filthy 'talking sheets,' they followed secondary routes, scanned the horizon for signs and counted heavily on each other" (52-53). Similarly in *Fantasia*, Djebar evokes on many occasions, secret police systems of the French colonizer that were set to watch and assassinate the Algerians like OAS[4], La Main Rouge[5], and SAS[6] (136).

In fact, the ex-colonized are watched by the White colonizer even after their formal independence. Historically, the Afro-Americans suffered from a slavery-like-life until the 1980s, followed and watched by the non-Blacks. Nowadays, they are still threatened by the Whites. Moreover, many hate crimes based on race and gender have been committed by the

Whites against the Afro-Americans although the Afro-Americans have officially been freed since the Emancipation Proclamation that was signed by President Lincoln on 22 September 1862.

Because of continuous surveillance, escape is imagined as a reclamation of the right to mobility, a breaking of fetters or chains. The women in both novels have no choice but to escape. They hide themselves where they feel that the enemy/captor no longer sees and hears them. In *Fantasia*, almost all characters experience escape. For example, Djebar's own autobiography relates her escape with her husband from the police in Paris (104); Cherifa (119) Lla Zohra (161) the widows (187, 198) all run away from the French enemy. Children and old men suffer from this predicament as well. The elderly of El-Aroub village "flee into the bushes and rocks of the surrounding country" in 1956 (208). They escape to the mountains and valleys to avoid imprisonment. Similarly, in *Beloved*, Sethe, her mother, Ella, the White girl, and Denver escape to survive oppression and confinement. Unfortunately, in most cases, the liberating outcome of escape is only rarely achieved by the fugitives. When they fail, they are subject to harsh punishment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the three traumatic memories of infanticide, burning, and imprisonment, have, somehow, been assimilated and worked through once narrated, attesting, once again, to the healing power of storytelling. These memories show that the identities of women, whether colonized or enslaved, are the same because of the brutality they incur. Both authors use their fictional power to subvert the violence female victims succumb to. In doing so, they allow marginal voices to enter into conversation on gender, race, and sexuality. Memory, as evidenced in the texts, is collective, multidirectional, transgenerational, and lurking at the liminal space of destruction and survival (Halbwachs 23-34; Rothberg 372; Caruth 72). It reverberates inside the victims' minds who try to release it, but get traumatized in the process. While the memory of violence, when repressed, fractures identity, narrating its stories stitches these fractures, it empowers subaltern identity and gives the stories legitimacy and voice. It can now be claimed that memory narrative is narrative identity.

Notes

1. In an interview with Bill Moyers, on 11 March 1990, Morrison explains the source of her novel: "There was a slave woman in Cincinnati named Margaret Garner who escaped from Kentucky, arrived in Cincinnati with her mother-in-law … And right after she got there, the man who owned her found her. And she ran out into the shed and tried to kill all her children, just like that. And she was about to bang one's head against the wall when they stopped her." For further discussion, see Henry Louis Gates' Introduction to his *The Classic Slave Narratives*.

2. The term ‘goumiers’ is used to refer to Arab military units or soldiers who enlisted with or were allied to the French army during the colonial period.

3. “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” was coined by George Orwell in his *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* meaning one’s actions and intentions are being monitored by hegemonic authorities as means of suppressing and controlling the “other” (91).

4. OAS is the abbreviation of *Organisation Armée Secrète* established in 1954. It carried out terrorist attacks, including bombings and assassinations, in an attempt to prevent Algeria’s independence from French colonial rule. Web. 25 July 2020.

5. La Main Rouge ‘The Red Hand’ was a French Terrorist organization operated by the French foreign intelligence agency. It assassinated the Tunisian labor unionist and independence activist Farhat Hached on 5 December 1952; and tried to assassinate the Algerian president, Ahmed Ben Bella, in 1956 two times. See Joseph R. Gregory, “Ahmed Ben Bella, Revolutionary Who Led Algeria After Independence, Dies at 93.” *The New York Times* 11 April 2012. Web. 25 July 2020.

6. SAS is the name of the French Special Force, an abbreviation for *Service Aérien Spécial*.

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