

Writing Algeria: On the History and Culture of Colonialism

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Historical realities are always enigmatic and, while appearing to be self-evident, are difficult to decipher; and there is perhaps none which presents these characteristics in a higher degree than Algerian reality. That is why it represents an extraordinary challenge, both for knowledge and for action.

—Pierre Bourdieu

The epigraph above was written in the context of what was then called the “Algerian Civil War,” or “The Second Algerian War,” or “the Events of Algeria” by Pierre Bourdieu, who was not happy with the explanation made by some that the violence was the result of Islamic fundamentalism.¹ Yet, it is clear that the statement is not only about that specific episode of horrific violence. Rather, it is about the history of Algeria. This makes one ask: Why is Algerian history in particular so difficult to decipher? How can one explain its unique enigmatic characteristics, assuming with Bourdieu that the situation is unique to Algeria?

Algeria was subjected to one of the most drastic forms of cultural colonialism. From its conquest in 1830 to its independence (but not “liberation,” despite the name of the won war), Algeria has been the object of massive writings about virtually every aspect and about its smallest parts as well as its surroundings and its past—Punic, Greek, Roman, Arab, Turkish, and, of course, French. The highly impressive machinery of the production of knowledge tested by Bonaparte in Egypt was used and perfected in Algeria. As important as the quantity of what the French wrote, however, is the evidence in their writings of the impressive power the French enjoyed in the 19th century. The point here is that for a student of Algeria to know, to read, to understand anything about Algeria, he or she cannot possibly do so without French colonial scholarship. Furthermore, because of the unique prestige of French scholarship by the first half of the 20th century, and because of the close cultural dependency of Algerian nationalist writings, it is extremely difficult to write about Algeria without reproducing colonial understandings, categories and so forth. This is what one calls *postcoloniality*. It is not beyond *coloniality*, but it is a cultural condition that is historically, politically and even epistemologically the result of *coloniality*. What makes this situation even more extreme than others is the “conspiracy of silence” about the recent past, whose legacy continues to shape the present.²

But to claim that Algeria may be in this situation because of a drastic form of colonialism may be only half of an explanation. Colonialism everywhere had such a powerful ability

not only to change and transform, but also to make the changes and transformations everlasting. Thus, if the remark of Bourdieu is correct that Algeria is unique in this respect, the causes of its situation should be looked at not necessarily in the nature of French colonialism, nor even only in nationalism, but also in the state of colonial and postcolonial politics and scholarship alike.

Yet about Algeria specifically, and about North Africa generally, one ought to ask the following questions: How is knowledge possible in this condition marked by a still living, powerful colonial culture? How can one write about a country whose image is created in a historical condition marked by French power? How can one decipher what has become self-evident? And above all, what are the political and epistemological implications of a body of knowledge still un-liberated from its genealogy? By asking these questions, I hope to provide at least the elements of an answer by discussing a few recent books written about Algeria in recent years.

In this review essay, I choose to discuss three books. One claims to deal with the formation of colonial categories, mostly in Algeria. This is *Imperial identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* by Patricia Lorcin.³ The second book, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, by James McDougall, examines the period of the formation of the culture of nationalism.⁴ The third book is by Hugh Roberts, who studies the “Algerian Civil War” in *The Battle Field Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*.⁵

I. On Colonialism

Published in 1996, the book by Patricia Lorcin is still often quoted by scholars working on Algeria. The book has also been recently translated into French and thus, despite its initial date of publication, it deserves to be discussed. Let me also make it clear that by examining this book, I hope to point to some problems and difficulties facing the reader of French colonial archives.

The author aims to examine the colonial categories in Algeria, beginning with the *Exploration Scientifique de l'Algérie* and ending beyond the work of the Arab Bureaux as to include similar construction of categories in Morocco. The book is more specific than this, however. In fact, what it examines is the construction of what is usually called “the Kabyle myth,” that is, the idea that the Berbers, or more specifically the Kabyles, stood in sharp opposition to the Arabs, racially, historically and culturally. One has its origin in Europe—the Kabyle; the other has its origin in the Orient—the Arab.

From the first two chapters of the book (both are called “Security and Renaissance”), Lorcin speaks about the similarity between the Kabyle and the French peasant (sic) (p. 39), and about the fact that “the Kabyle might have been considered primitive but rudiments on which to build a society, along French lines, were present, and that could only be viewed as positive” (p. 39). But how can we know about these “rudiments”? The object knowledge—the Kabyle—is known to us (at this time) mostly through colonial

knowledge. One cannot rely on this knowledge to understand the reality of Algeria, yet claim its deconstruction at the same time. In other words, colonial knowledge creates its own reality whose referee is contained within itself rather than outside of it. Algerian historical reality of this time (if there is one) is known to us only through colonial representations. All of them, in the case of Lorcin, are colonial.

The author maintains that the French came to a rather unknown land, which of course they did. However, one may go to an unknown land, but will still attempt to comprehend it with known categories of his or her own. All the categories the author mentions were known categories to Europeans before even the conquest of Algiers—primitiveness, nomadism, Orient, fanaticism, and so forth. Take the idea of the Berber primitive. Primitiveness was an old category, as old as the idea of Europe itself. The category of the primitive is not only found in Algeria, applied to the Berbers, but it is also found in all the places where colonial powers settled, and that includes anything that was not European.⁶ The same with the category of “nomadism” that was applied to the Arabs, who unlike the Kabyles were perceived by a French officer as “the nomadic and still fanatic Arab population.” Lorcin describes such an author as “moderate in his approach.” One could only wonder what would be an extremist approach in her opinion. Furthermore, Lorcin does not question the category of nomad in colonial discourse, which was a major category in the colonial ideologies. Had she done so, she would have found that “nomadism” as a category is opposed to another one, which is “civilization,” the way Europe was opposed to the Orient. In fact, with nomadism comes savagery and war, and with civilization comes nationhood and peace.⁷

In any event, the division of Berber, as sedentary, opposed to the Arab, as nomad seems to be taken for granted. Arab as well as Kabyle are categories, with meanings associated with them in the colonial period. There is an entire history of their making and a complex politics of their emergence. In short, they are not as natural as they may seem to be. To be sure, the author rejects the connotations associated with the categories—positive for the Kabyle, and negative for the Arab. Not only is this not sufficient, but also what seems to be positive to the author is not positive. Primitiveness, associated with the Kabyle, is not at all positive when one thinks closely about it. First of all, one needs to re-examine the opposition Arab versus Berber. A semiotic analysis of these categories readily reveals that they are not binary and that there is another important category, which is too visible to even be seen. Looking at the colonial semantics of the second part of the nineteenth century, one finds “civilization” in a contradictory relation to “nomadism,” the first category describes Europe (and more specifically, a certain Europe, Western Europe). The second category describes the Orient. Yet, this binary opposition hides other categories. The category of “civilization” implies (not contradicts) the category of primitiveness, a state that is marked by the absence of civilization, not the opposition to it. Such was the case for the Berbers. Europe, and more specifically France, is part and parcel of the dichotomy of Arab versus Berber. This dichotomy is rooted in colonial scholarship and is taken in the form of a self-evident truth. One finds it also in the work of Ageron that Lorcin heavily relies on.⁸ Yet, despite Ageron’s monumental work, it is still part and parcel of the colonial discourse. Ageron’s work represented a change in the colonial discourse, marked by the rise of nationalism and the uncertainty of the colonial

enterprise, but his work was by no means a rupture in colonial scholarship. Such a rupture was operated outside and in opposition to colonial epistemology by Franz Fanon, whose work has known no continuation in France itself—not even in Algeria.⁹

The colonial discourse, and especially that which colonialism either silenced or put at the margins, becomes clear that the opposition was not as well defined as it has become in the work of Ageron and to those who do not question his work on the Kabyle myth. The opposition is completely absent in the early work of colonial authors, and most interestingly in the work of Adrian Berbrugger.¹⁰ It is seriously questioned by an important colonial author, William Marçais.¹¹ It is also rejected by a marginal, yet important, colonial author, Ismael Urbain.¹² Later on, it was significantly rectified by Emile-Felix Gautier.¹³ It would have been extremely expedient to pay attention to these voices that betray and reveal the dynamics and the politics involved in the creation of colonial categories. In other words, the diversity of opinions about what is a Kabyle, who is a Kabyle, what is an Arab, who is an Arab, is of considerable importance given the fact that it sheds light on colonial politics, and reveals its strategies of naming and categorizing.

One may also question whether the Arab Bureaux are indeed “About the Arab” and “the champions of the indigenous population.” What the author says about the Arab Bureaux does not make her think about this idea; namely, that they were interested in “find[ing] the least abrasive method of keeping the indigenous population pacified” (p. 80). “To pacify” and “pacification” are colonial terms that simply mean war. The author herself asserts that this “championship” of the “indigenous people” consists of “security [...] to be achieved by means of a radical transformation of the indigenous lifestyle, namely anchoring the nomadic tribes to the soil” (ibid). The term “indigène” in French colonial discourse refers to inferiority, un-europeanity, un-modernity, savagery, and un-civilization. It is not a positive term. “Indigène” is different from the word “indigenous” used from within Latin American groups, oftentimes by these same groups and their supporters, to claim land, language, and culture.

There is no doubt that the archival research done for this book is impressive. Indeed, one finds more colonial texts in this book than in any one that deals with the same subject matter. And Lorcin’s great merit is precisely that she made such literature available in English. But it is unfortunate that her reading of these texts is also problematic in a number of instances, and the result is often times a reproduction of colonial categories and understanding. Let us give an example—just one, among many. The author quotes Paul Topinard, a colonial author, saying that:

The Kabyle has a fixed abode. His communal administration is highly liberal. He is active, hard-working, honest, dignified, open-minded, honest [again?] and good-humoured. He has elevated sentiments of equality, honour, human dignity and justice. He is courageous and attacks his enemy frontally. The exact opposite of the points enumerated in the summary correspond to the physical type of the Arab (p. 157).

How would one read such a citation? First, the comparison between the bad Arab and the good Kabyle cannot possibly be missed. Yet somehow, it is missed in the following comment by the author:

Topinard was cautious in his conclusions, refraining from overt negative/positive contrasts ... (p. 158).

Alternatively, consider the following example: Lorcin maintains that Ibn Khaldun's work, the *Ibar*, had only a little impact on French scholarship. Why? Because, according to her, he was only translated in 1852, and especially because Emile-Felix Gautier said: "For all his genius he had an oriental brain which does not function like ours. He cannot be read like Titus-Livius or Polybius, or even Procopius. He has to be interpreted, transported." As any scholar of Ibn Khaldun would recognize, this is a colonial judgement in and of itself, that judging Ibn Khaldun cannot be separated from colonial judgements on the civilization and people from which he is a part. Ibn Khaldun constituted the main source for colonial historians, hence the tremendous importance this author gained in the colonial period to the point that Abdallah Laroui speaks about Khaldunism to describe colonial knowledge and both Azmeh and cheddadi speak of Ibn Khaldun as a colonial phenomenon. All this work was already available at the time the author was writing her research.¹⁴

In any case, the idea of the Arab Bureaux "champions of the indigenous population" was rather a colonial one, used by the civilians against the Arab Bureaux. Now, were the Arab Bureaux sympathetic to the Arabs? The author believes so (p. 78), and writes comparing the colons' views of Arabs to those of the Arab Bureaux:

The stridency of colonial press, which stripped the Arab character of all claims to morality, found no echo among officers of the Arab Bureaux (p. 87).

Here is an image of Arabs from the writing of an officer of the Arab Bureau, not mentioned in this book:

Here is what the Arab people are: almost three million souls who live in the confusion of all the imaginable abominations, an orgy of all known immoralities, from the one of Sodom to the one of Mandarins. A man plunders and robs his neighbour. The latter pays him back. He marries four women and runs after others. When he is strong, he eats the weak. When he is weak, he stabs from behind. The woman is condemned to the virtue of seclusion, sold like a pig in the market appraising herself for being appraised, signifying nothing, giving herself with the first man that comes along.¹⁵

Lorcin also writes about colonial literary and artistic representation of Algeria:

Artistic curiosity about Algeria reflected a wider curiosity about the Orient; a desire to enter different worlds in order to augment creativity and enhance imagination (p. 93).

Artists and writers might have entered Algeria or the Orient to “enhance creativity and imagination,” but they have also entered Algeria as part of the machinery of empire. For this reason, one needs to question how arts, as a form of knowledge, participate in the power of dynamics of empires. The late Edward Said shows Flaubert and Nerval, despite their physical presence in the so-called Orient, relied on previous writing, including scholarship, to reproduce most often what had already been produced. The idea of Orientalism is that there is a repertoire of images, stereotypes and ideas that is virtually impossible for a writer to break out of. Lorcin may disagree with Said’s views, but needs to make an argument for the disagreement, and more so needs to pay attention to scholarly work that is consistent with the view of artists and writers, who were also learned men, informed about forms of knowledge related to their objects of interest. For instance, had she also read the work of Berbrugger of 1837, as well as the writings about Abdel Qader, she would have realized that at this time, the romantic view in both paintings and scholarship were consistent with the views of Nerval and Delacroix.

In addition, for an historian interested in colonial categories and their construction(s), art played an important role in the transmission of categories and stereotypes. Furthermore, it was an effective means to naturalize the effects of conquest and rules. One does agree that Delacroix’s paintings, for instance, are exotic; however, what is exoticism if not a form of otherness, and what is otherness in the 19th century if not a form of racial difference, and what is racial difference if not civilizational difference itself, and what is the latter, if not an assertion, a justification of difference, that is inequality in rights? To a viewer, the painting of the harem is exotic, but to the historian that same picture symbolizes the Orient with its male domination and its voluptuous, submissive women, both of which are marks of un-modernity, and thus of fundamental difference and otherness. It is this state of un-modernity that calls for, and not only justifies, the colonial enterprise.

Lorcin also writes:

The Royaume Arab achieved little for the image of the Arab. Prejudices and stereotypes, which logically the arabophile and Orientalists should have dispelled, accumulated and were reinforced (p. 96).

One may wonder what “logically” means in this context. But if “logically” refers to colonial reason, colonial agents, scholars, and writers were all inscribed within this reason without which they could not have possibly written and made sense. Colonial scholars and the Orientalists were not supposed to dispel these images, as has been shown by the late Edward Said and others, for they were the ones who were in charge of creating knowledge for reasons having to do with the politics of empire, an analysis of which is lacking in this book.¹⁶ Also, note that the term “Arabophile” is a colonial term used by the civilians against the Arab Bureaux. But from the ideas of the Arab Bureaux about Arabs, there is nothing “Arabophile” in them, since they not only made the opposition of Arab versus Berber and more specifically Kabyle, but they made the former a fanatic, an enemy of Western civilization, and some of them even contemplated the idea of a complete extermination of him, which they considered “an unfortunate impossibility.”¹⁷

In any event, one can see here that the problem of colonial archives poses a unique challenge to the reader. First, in the colonial archives Algeria is itself an archive, constructed through a meticulous work of what was then called “military science” and is now called “social science.” Constructed in a conflicting way to be sure, but the complex colonial power decided on the validity of few representations. It is these representations that benefited from endless repetition both in the colonial period and in the postcolonial area, the result of which was the strengthening of the truthfulness of the representation. With such colonial truths, the philologist method, based on knowledge of colonial language, however intimate it may be, will do nothing but reproduce colonial representations. As elsewhere in postcolonial studies, one cannot ignore the power dynamics of colonial society and its play in the construction of knowledge. In other words, colonial knowledge, to be historicized and analyzed, needs both to be approached in terms of a genealogical or archaeological approach to see how objects are formed, and through an institutional approach to account for how some colonial objects are dismissed as invalid, how others are imposed as truth, and how these remain as such even after the collapse of institutions that made them possible.

II. On Nationalism

The book of James McDougall is different from Lorcin’s not only because of its subject matter—nationalism instead of colonialism—but also because McDougall reads Arabic sources: he went to Algeria to consult them, he witnessed the Kabyle protest of 2001, and he spoke to scholars in Algiers, especially in Constantine. He is also more explicit about his methodology:

This book examines the place of cultural authority and historical imagination in nationalism. My aim has been to move beyond the tropes of wakening and consciousness still common in writing on this subject with regard to the Maghreb, and to put the cultural history of nationalism back into a critical, materialist discursive history of changing forms of social power and modes of dominations (p. ix).

This sounds Foucauldian, and it is. Yet immediately in chapter II, McDougall goes on to quote from Ben Badis’ statement in the context of the century of French celebration of the conquest. Ben Badis evokes the pain of the conquest, laments the denial of the natural rights of the Muslims and calls for a boycott of the celebration. How does McDougall read that text, only part of which he quotes? McDougall comments: “There is no need to suppose from these texts that Ben Badis had in any respect ‘accepted’ the colonial discourse of France’s civilizational mission, but rather he appreciated its potential value as a terrain of contest on which Algerians, too, could stake claims. The text seeks not the reversal of conquest in a dream of independence, but the recognition in the world after conquest of ‘natural rights’ to dignity, decency and an equitable system of justice” (p. 65). If Ben Badis’ statement is addressed to the Algerians to boycott the celebration, how is it then that the interpretation of McDougall makes it say that Ben Badis requests

“recognition from the French”? Also, is not a request of recognition ipso facto an acceptance of conquest, and even a consecration of the right of the colonizer to grant recognition? What about Ben Badis’ daring prophecy about the downfall of the colonial enterprise, announced in this same context of the celebration of the century of the conquest?¹⁸ Equally important, what about the discourse of the colonial state in this context of celebration? Should that not be read hand in hand with the discourse of the Salafi?

Interpretation has rules and constraints. If the approach announced is Foucauldian, how is it that the context of power relationships is made neither explicit, nor integrated in the interpretation of what Ben Badis said? Yet it is not unclear why McDougall gives this interpretation that the statement of Ben Badis does not support. Making Ben Badis recognize the “potential value of the civilization mission” is an attempt of McDougall to make the discourse of the Salafi closer to the discourse of the nationalists, in such a way as McDougall’s main thesis can make sense. For in fact, the main thesis of the book is that the AUMA (*Association des ulemas musulmans d’Algérie*) provided the culture of nationalism.

This main thesis is based largely on McDougall’s reading of the biography and the life of Madani. Given his declared goal and his stated methodology, however, it is the institution that should be the focal point of analysis, not the biography of such and such, no matter how important a person is. Further, if one is reading texts produced in the colonial context, even by non-colonialist actors such as the members of AUMA, one ought not to ignore the power relationships involved in the making not only of discourse, but also in the making of the institution itself: How was the AUMA founded? In what context? What were the politics of its foundation? What kind of negotiation and ultimately conditions were involved? What are the constraints that regulate what is said? What are the limits of discourse, and thus of power?

In any case, McDougall speaks about the different attempts by Algerians to define the nation. Paradoxically, he states that the “young Algerians” from both the first and second generations “all sought to achieve, through their journalism and politics, the equality standing, the partnership in dignity evoked by Ben Badis” (p. 74). This, then, makes their program one and the same. There is no doubt that different individuals and groups sought to define Algeria in conflicting ways. But again, when citing Husayn Lahmek or Ferhat Abbas, McDougall at best paraphrases discourses without linking them to the institutions that made them possible. In fact, for the case of the two cited examples, there is no mention, let alone analysis, of any site of power from which they said what they said in the way they said it. There is also no attempt to tackle the unspoken (part) of the discourse, its political constraints, its regulations, its devices of *veridiction*,¹⁹ that is the mechanisms by which a discourse asserts its claim to truth, of Ben Badis, Madani, Abbas or Lahmek. In fact, the reader is far from the approach announced and closer to the approach denounced, which consists of a literal reading of texts and the repetition of an already made master narrative.

McDougall states that the Muslim status that the Algerian appropriated was not derived from French colonialism, but rather it was constructed. But how so? First, given the

question at hand, one needs to keep in mind that construction, imagination, creation and invention are not processes that come out of nothing—*ex nihilo*—they come from other creations, imaginations.²⁰ In the case at hand, however, Algeria’s Muslim and Arab status was undoubtedly pre-existing in pre-colonial North Africa. There is strong evidence of this in writings by Muslims in the pre-conquest period and even in the work of colonial ethnographers such as Emile Masqueray.²¹ The French invented—that is, they reconstructed—the meanings of what was already there, and they did so with categories that were French colonial. For instance, the French made the category Arab and Muslim mean something quite different. Arabs were equated with nomadism, which was equated with savagery. Muslim was equated with fanaticism. Both Arab and Muslim were among the defining characters of the Orient. For the Muslims of Algeria, even in the Kabyle, the question is not that these notions were constructed to create an “Arab-Muslim identity,” but rather how it was created, in what context, under what conditions; what are the different conflicting dynamics and politics involved in such a drastically important construction. In other words, it is not enough to say this or that notion was a construct; it is also necessary to trace the genealogy of its creation.

It is correct that the AUMA created a national culture, but again, in my view, out of pre-existing elements of local histories and cultures, and under specific constraints, and especially in reaction to the dominant culture of colonialism that created the Orientalist Arab and Muslims from which the Salafi sought to liberate themselves. Yet, McDougall concludes by saying that the ulama’s creation of the Arab-Muslim Algerian identity “derived not from primarily political concerns but from their preoccupation with cultural and religious authority”. Leaving the highly problematic, psychological question of intent aside, how does McDougall distinguish between the cultural, the religious, and the political, especially in a context of colonization, or in any context for that matter? If McDougall is following Foucault, the latter—who follows Althusser—does not make such distinction at all.

In Chapter III, McDougall seeks to examine how the ulama articulated their “claim to unity, sacred socio-cultural authority” (p. 97). To do so, he opted to examine a series of “events” that happened in the watershed of 1936. These events had to do with the key concept of the ulama, to wit, the concept of *tawhid* (unity). From (the colonial) police reports of Constantine, some members of the Hansaliya tariqa were attacked by “several Muslims.” McDougall reads these events as “[indicative of] a much more portentous, and largely invisible [invisible?] struggle over symbolic authority” (p. 122).

McDougall does not question the concept of “event” to be able to fully analyze it.²² Ricoeur, whom McDougall likes to quote from time to time, would have been of great help here. To rely on Ricoeur’s definition, an event is a narrative and thus it is an effort to give meaning to that which happened.²³ Given this definition, an event is thus the meaning assigned to what happened; therefore, an event has only a narrative existence. If this is the case, then the narratives that McDougall analyzes in a positivist way as that which happened should rather be seen and analyzed as an effort of colonial police to give meaning to something that happened. Put differently, these events are nothing more than colonial narratives. The three reports of the police are clearly different from one another:

in the first narrative, the assailants are labelled “Muslims,” in the second, they are labelled “voyous,” and in the third, they are labelled “followers of Mili,” an important member of the AUMA and an author of a major history of Algeria in two volumes. The third report led to the arrest of the most important “national” historian of Algeria. But here again, McDougall reads the reports as if they say the truth. The discrepancy between the theory, what he announces, and the practice, what he does, is most obvious in his treatment of these events.

In this as well as in the story of the ashes of the Saint, McDougall offers only his reading of the “events.” This is contrary to the anticipated “thick description” he announced. In fact, thick description, in Geertz's understanding, is the fact “that the culture of people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong.”²⁴ Instead of his own reading, the author should have offered the readings of the actors (many of them are still alive and well). The tomb of Tha`alibi is still in the Qasba surrounded by visitors and worshipers, ready and happy to be interviewed.

McDougall goes on to say that the ulama created their own totem ancestors and railed against the saints because of their “obsession” with unity.²⁵ But McDougall seems to be unaware of the fact that these ancestors, Arabs and Muslims, already existed among the masses of people, even in the Aures, where stories about the Sidi Oqba and the companions of the Prophet were already the object of belief, whereas those “Berber heroes and heroines” of colonial and post-colonial Algeria were seen as the enemies of Islam; such was the case of Kahina and Kusayla. The question of tawhid is central to Islam, even to the Sufis, who take a different angle to tackle it. If the nationalism of the ulama was adopted by the younger nationalists, this does not explain why a certain Algerian president (the most popular) changed his name to one that includes two major saints: Sidi Houari and Sidi Boumediane.

In any event, there is no doubt that the Salafi created new “ancestry,” mainly the Phoenicians. But here again the question is not only to say that the Salafi constructed this or that figure, created this or that myth, but rather in what conditions these new figures emerged and why. To ask this question is to examine the epistemology of colonial knowledge and analyze its objects. In fact, the ulama created the myth of Carthage. This creation is not necessarily the work of one person, and it is definitively not the creation of Madani. One already finds it in the work of his great teacher who McDougall ignores—Tha`alibi. The myth of Carthage came out of the myth of Rome. Colonial knowledge, especially in the work of archaeologists and historians, created the myth of Rome not only to hide the effects of conquest and justify colonial rule, but also to articulate the superiority of Rome over Carthage. Rome is the Aryan West, Carthage the Semite Orient. The ulama, and again not only Madani, reversed the myth. An analysis of the myth of Carthage, however, should undoubtedly lead to the deconstruction of the myth of Rome.

This is similar to the origins of the Berbers. While there is a discussion of the Salafi construction of the Berbers, there is no mention of how colonials constructed the Berbers. This is important for the AUMA discourse as it is a reaction to the colonial representation

of the Berber as a primitive European. It is only when analyzed as a discursive reaction that one can see that the discourse of the ulama was a colonial discourse, in that it was produced by it, albeit negatively. Simply put, without the colonial discourse, the ulama discourse would have been impossible. Within the intricacies of the Salafi discourse, one finds the colonial argument and its response to it. How so? If the ulama, and not only Madani, maintained that the Berbers are Semites, even from Arab origins, it is also because the colonial discourse maintained the thesis of the Europeaness of the Berber. The nationalist myth intends to integrate the Berber into the Algerian nation; the colonial myth of the European origin is to annex it to Europe, but still keep it in a subordinate position. A Foucauldian approach would rather show that the colonial discourse is such that not only does it create its own objects and determines their relations—Arabs versus Berbers—but it recreates itself even in the work of its detractor, whose discourse could not possibly exist without it. Because of the power relationship, drastically and tragically unequal, the ulama's discursive practices against colonials could not but translate this inequality. For in fact, the discourse of the Salafi contains within itself colonial reason that it opposes. In this respect, the problem of McDougall is similar and yet opposed to the one of Lorcin. While Lorcin reads the colonial discourse in French and ignores local knowledge in Arabic, and thus does not see the dynamics of the construction of colonial categories, McDougall reads the Salafi discourse in Arabic, but ignores the colonial discourse in French, and thus does not see the colonial in the national.

According to McDougall, this is the culture of nationalism that was “instrumentalized.” But this implies three things: 1) that all actors read the literature of the Salafi in the same way, which is hermeneutically impossible given the strong French background of most of them; 2) that the culture of nationalism as articulated by the Salafis passed on to the younger generation unchanged, which is also impossible given the change in conditions and contexts; and 3) that the discourse of the Salafis is of such sacredness that it constitutes a package that one can either take as a whole or leave in its entirety.

Jacques Berque shows that the culture of the ulama was not widely shared, especially among the masses. Ordinary Algerian women often mocked and defied them even by insisting on visiting cemeteries and places of saint worship. Berque humorously narrates the story of women picnicking in the cemeteries, eating some long cookies in the form of fingers that they playfully called *sbi`t al`uqbi*, (the fingers of Uqbi).²⁶ Uqbi was a well-known salafi alim, an important member of the AUMA.

The culture of nationalism and history changed with the younger nationalists, who were more Frenchified. Yet, McDougall does not examine those younger nationalists who differ so much from the older ones. The work of Mohamed Sahli, already available in 1947, and of Lachref, and later the work of Abdallah Laroui, redefined the discourse of nationalism in the Maghreb. More importantly, one does not see in this book the tremendous contribution of Nasserism. Algeria, after independence, was more socialist, with stronger ties to Egypt and Cuba, than Arab and Muslim. It had open hostility toward a neighboring country, Morocco, and a barely hidden disdain for another one, Tunisia, both of which were also self-declared Arab and Muslim, but not socialist. This is to say that McDougall does not problematize the highly problematic concept of national

identity. A simple fact is that the Algeria of Ben Badis, or of Madani, is not the national Algeria of Ben Bella or Houari Boumediene.

To say, then, that the ulama provided the FLN with a national culture is something that has been repeated already by French colonial historians themselves and even today by Algerian intellectuals, the most well known of whom is Jacques Berque. But McDougall goes further when he hastily asserts the following:

The reformists, with their centralizing proselytism, their denunciation of cultural plurality [this is rather a French concept, the reformists denounced rather the colonial system] and of the people's ignorance and incapacity for self-direction, had produced a propitious environment for the reinforcing of the political culture of monolithic, authoritarian (sic) and prescriptive unanimism that has emerged from the exigencies of clandestine political organization and the prosecution of revolutionary war. After independence, the regime would happily redeploy the reformists' 'national culture', under the banner of 'authenticity', as an instrument of control to assert the dominance of the 'unanimist' state in the religious and cultural fields (p. 223).

There is no evidence that this was the case. In fact, the evidence points to the contrary. Culture is not only what one says, but also what one does. McDougall tells us that Madani did not have what one may call a pious Muslim way of life, and that he, as well as the rest of the Salafi, sent their children to French schools. Yet McDougall does not analyze these practices and what they mean. If one is studying a bibliography, as McDougall is, it is crucially important to pay attention to what may seem a flagrant discrepancy between a discourse and a practice. What makes a man have a Salaf discourse and a secular practice? While it is correct that the ideology of nationhood initially articulated by the ulama was important in the struggle for independence, the Algerian state, with the FLN, was constructed more as a secular national state than as an Islamist one. The intolerance that McDougall refers to was caused precisely by the ideology of secular nationalism towards religious nationalism and ethnic nationalism, such as Berberism. This is clear during the mass protest of October 1989 and the violent events of the 1990s, as well as the massive protests in June and July of 2001. In fact, the FIS emerged as a political force by its critique of the FLN as lacking "Islamic principles" and by its claim that the FIS defends these.

Throughout his book, McDougall warns against the dangers of master narrative and the idea of "closed destiny." Finishing his book, one can only wonder how his own story of the Algerian narrative is different from a master narrative, and especially how it is different from an Orientalist narrative that equates Islam with intolerance and authoritarianism. For he is saying that the culture of authoritarianism that marked the Algerian state is that of the religious Salafi. When looking at the neighbouring countries of North Africa, however, their political cultures are similar to the culture of the Algerian state. Former colonies are not known to be democratic. Part of the explanation lies precisely in the still living and astonishingly dominant culture of colonialism, disguised as the culture of modernity (much of it is found in the very discourse of nationalism) in

these countries. Furthermore, nationalism within European countries themselves was characterized by a culture of exclusion, of repression, at the expense of one dominant culture. Various groups and several languages that constituted 78 percent of the non-French speaking peoples were forced to learn and speak French at the expense of regional languages.²⁷ This continues in the present. For instance, practices deemed non-French practices, such as wearing a veil, are required to disappear in France, a state not obviously Muslim or Islamic. This is just to mention France. Otherwise, nationalism is a discourse of exclusion, and oftentimes it is violently repressive.

The narrative of McDougall ends with two lessons from historicism—one expressed by Berque regarding the possibilities of the future in the past, the second one by Laroui regarding hope. The first lesson is from a colonial author who never abandoned the discourse of the civilizing mission of France in the Maghreb, despite his late sympathy for national independence. The second one is from a national author, Abdallah Laroui, for whom the only hope for the Maghreb is modernity—the French one that is. In short, McDougall reproduces the same closed narrative that begins by Islam Jacobin (a French term to comprehend Algeria realities) and ends by authoritarianism, and the same master narrative that makes Islam an obstacle in the road to modernity. He begins by Foucault, a Nietzschean, who tries to understand the archaeology of things, and concludes by Berque, a historicist, who constructs things for use in the present and future. There is nothing more opposite than these two epistemological orientations—a deconstructionist and a constructionist. Further, while Berque, and Laroui in his footsteps, believe that history, viewed as a science of the past, can save us, for it opens time for us, Foucault, in the footsteps of Nietzsche, believes that historical knowledge, as well as all forms of knowledge, cannot be studied without the “will” and politics affecting their production. In the work of McDougall, which is supposed to be critical of nationalism, with an ambitious goal “to move beyond the tropes of wakening and consciousness,” the cited work of Benedict Anderson and Partha Chatterjee could have helped rethink the issue of nationalism in the Maghreb. Without them, it is very difficult to break the tradition of the writing on this subject with regards to the Maghreb, or with regards to any other formerly colonized region.

III. On Postcolonial Violence

After reading McDougall, the question is the following: How can one account for the bloody tragedies of the 1990s that have not entirely ended, despite the very low, yet still very violent, intensity of the killings? To seek an explanation in Islam (whatever this term comes to mean really in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st) is to repeat the discourse of what Bourdieu calls a “racist alibi.” For the simple fact is that Islamist movements in neighbouring countries are neither violent nor even more exclusive than forms of nationalism. In other words, to explain the violence by Islam is contradicted by the fact that where there is Islam, there is not always violence, and where there is violence, there is not always Islam. Few would be able to answer the question as aptly as Hugh Roberts. The author is a seasoned one; an expert on Algeria who observed Algeria during these terrible years often in Algeria itself, and not only from an office in

London.

Entitled “The Battlefield,” Roberts’ book is a collection of articles published between 1988 and March 2002, related to the Algerian tragedy that made international news in the 1990s. The only unifying factor in the book is its subject matter. Its style is journalistic and the point of view one from political science, the discipline of the author. This means that I need to choose a few of the many themes on which to comment.

Roberts writes with a certain audience in mind, which he sometimes calls the “West” or “Western commentators, [and] reporters,” and in fact, most of his argument about Algeria is directed against them. It is meant to correct their misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Roberts lucidly explains how, despite the heritage of the AUMA, the FLN went towards a more socialist ideology that was seen by some, such as the Islamic organization the Qiyam, as more adrift from Islamic values. Roberts also explains that the “Islamist” contest of the State in the name of “Islamic principles” went unabated. In short, what Roberts shows is the fact that the FIS, or radical Islam as he calls it, had a genealogy of its own and that this genealogy goes back to the heritage of the UMA. Yet for Roberts, the Qiyam did not gain much importance because of the successful economic policy carried out by Boumediene. The revival of Islamism is due, according to Roberts, who relies on Etienne, in part to the disenfranchisement of the Arabisants, and in part to Boumediene’s socialist policy and its assault on Muslim private property. Roberts shows how these changes alienated even some prominent members of the AUMA.

Roberts is generally well aware of the problem of comprehending Algerian realities with French conceptions, and he warns against that. He then suggests that Algerian politics should be dealt with in local terms, not in French ones, as has mostly been the case. Therefore, it is the concepts of the *qbail*, the *jemaaa*, *tamen* and the *soff* that Roberts uses to understand political movements in Algeria, such as the FLN, which, in his opinion, is not a political party, but a front unifying various groups that initially had the same goal—waging war for liberation. This is undoubtedly good. But surprisingly, Roberts applies this to the actors of the revolution, and in speaking about Abane and Ben Bella, he talks about their “mistakes” that stem from understanding Algerian realities in French terms, not in Algerian terms. Even though in discussing this Roberts highlights the very internal conflict of the FLN, he offers a rather simplistic view by explaining the “downfall” of Abane or Ben Bella by this or that misunderstanding. In history, there are “mistakes” (whatever the term means, really) actors have to make, other “mistakes” that could not but be made, and good and bad “mistakes.” Behind this lies an entire conception of history, to wit, whether we are actors of history, its doers, or its instruments. It is the last that seems most acceptable to philosophers of history, from Ibn Khaldun to Marx and Weber. Yet this is how Roberts describes the FLN’s politics: “being essentially an elaborate pyramid of hierarchically related *jemaa*, it [FLN] had to be led in the way every Algerian *jemaa* is led, by the force of argument backed by solid alliances and combined with careful consideration for the character and susceptibilities of others (something which Abane palpably lacked); in short, by the ability to mobilise a genuine consensus in

support of every major decision” (p. 52). But how is this different from any political party in a liberal society, or in any modern society? Roberts uses Edmund Burke to understand what a party is, but more sociological definitions can be found in Gramsci and Weber.

Instead of examining Algerian politics in and of themselves, in their relation to the societal grammar that made them, and also in relation to France, Roberts mourns the passing of colonial ethnography that is supposed to provide “insights” about the present of Algeria. Not only did colonial ethnography not die, but it is precisely that which continues to inform scholarship about Algeria. It is then that same ethnography that needs to be deconstructed to see how it has created a new reality in Algeria, in which both colonial and post-colonial scholars (to say nothing about non-scholars and non-politicians) still believe. It is these same colonial “insights” that Roberts uses to understand the tragedy of Algeria from the 1990s onwards.

In any event, Roberts’ discussion of the ideology of the FIS is again well informed. He makes an important distinction rarely made between the set of ideas of the FIS; many of them came from the FLN via the AUMA, others came from the Middle East, and others were imposed by the Algerian reality and responded to the demands of the masses. Yet, Roberts is very critical of the FIS in a way that he does not show for the FLN, or any other political party in Algeria. The FIS is related to the FLN, yet, according to Roberts, it is populist (sic). Its goal was to galvanize as much popular support as possible, and this is why it made ideological concessions. One of the examples Roberts gives is the invasion of Kuwait that the FIS adamantly opposed. Yet, because of the popular support for Iraq, the FIS took a pro-Iraq policy. But those are two issues: the invasion of Kuwait that the FIS, along with many political parties in the Middle East, opposed, and the US and Allied war against Iraq that all political parties could not, under any circumstances, support.

In his critique of the FIS, Roberts echoes the Algerian elite’s ideas and even language. In this milieu, the FIS was dismissed as populist (sic). The Algerian elite had reasons to dismiss the FIS as populist, for they were actors, part and parcel, of the politics played out in the 1990s. A scholar should rather contextualize these critiques, analyze them as such, and not reproduce them as a scholarly discourse on Algeria.

In his discussion of the FLN, Roberts argues that the FLN was not a party, but a front with different and even heterogeneous ideological elements; thus, it cannot be compared to the Soviet model. Equally, the situation of Islamism in Algeria should not be compared to the Iranian one. For the Algerian state was a Muslim state, unlike the Shah’s state. But why does Roberts believe that homogeneity is a characteristic of a party? Modern political parties are always heterogeneous, both in ideas and in social background. The fact that the FLN was a revolutionary nationalist movement early on, before the foundation of the Algerian state, did not prevent its evolution to a political party with a set of ideas and ideologies not always homogeneous or harmonious, involving actors with a political identity, but not necessary with a cultural or even an economic identity.

The basis and character of public support for the Islamist movement have varied. Roberts explains the popularity of the FIS by a certain number of factors: borrowing from Middle Eastern ideology (sic), the frustration of the Arabisants, hostility to socialism, high rates of unemployment and homelessness, despair of rural migrants, alienation of the urban poor, and “the propensity of urban masses to embrace millenarian visions” (p. 129). As correct as several of these factors may be, each one needs a historical explanation. The explanation by Roberts is similar to the one given by intellectual Algerian actors, who constitute his source of information. Again this discourse should be deconstructed, however. Let us do so briefly. First, the idea that Islamist support is coming only from Arabisants is not entirely correct. Many of the FIS leaders were not only Arabisants, including some of its main leaders. Second, one can only ask why couldn't Arabisant graduates find jobs? Why were they frustrated? Why were they looking into “ideologies” from the Middle East? To ask these questions is necessarily to ask questions about the present and colonial past of Algeria. The Algerian state is not only a creation of the FLN, as Roberts maintained, but is a post-colonial state; that is, it is a state whose foundations and especially its cultural heritage, even early existence, are found in the colonial period. The fight over what Algeria should or should not be preceded by several decades the tragedy of the 1990s. Leaving alone the question of what a state is, and also the military junta that constituted the state in the era of civil war, the Algerian state's culture was not totally liberated from colonial culture. French remained the language of the administration, of politics and of high culture, while Arabic did not become the official language until the protest of October 1989, which forced the state to declare Arabic an official language of Algeria. It is very interesting to note that the ferocious attack and, as a matter of fact, one of the FIS's major attractive points was the critique of colonialism, the call for France to be accountable for its colonial past, the call for the opening of the colonial dossier, and the call to make a clear cut with colonial culture, which many Algerian intellectuals are part of, willingly or not, knowingly or not. Roberts manages not only to soundly critique French views of the Algerian tragedy, but also provides an explanation that goes beyond the narrow and simplistic dichotomy of the State versus the Islamists. He shows that within either the former or the latter, there are views regarding Islam and politics that are varied, sometimes opposed with one or the other, and sometimes similar within one or the other as well.

In other words, instead of explaining the Algerian tragedy by the discourse of one of its actors, we ought to look at this same discourse as part of the problem. We also ought not to underestimate the power that colonial culture continues to exert on minds of an entire generation born and nurtured in the colonial era. The opposition Arabisants = FIS sympathizers versus Francisants = FIS opponents is an extremely interesting one when examined at closely, for after all, the Francisants, who also include the officers of the army, are holders of colonial culture and language.

Roberts himself acknowledges that the problem of Algeria is what he calls “an identity crisis.” This is undoubtedly the case and it is indeed a serious problem facing Algerian society. But one needs in this context, too, to distinguish between cultural, political and economic identities, and see how these have played out and continue to do so, albeit at a low intensity today, in a bloody battle compared only to the one that preceded it in the

colonial period.

Roberts is consistent in using Nietzsche, the use and especially interpretation of whom is highly problematic: first, because Nietzsche engaged in philosophy in the political European present (which is the past of our present), and second, because Nietzsche's statement about forgetting as a necessary condition for action needs to be interpreted in the general framework of his philosophy. Forgetting in his philosophy is not the absence of memory (only the herd enjoy this, hence their happiness), but rather the transformation of memory. Therefore, the issue he addresses applies to all identities, its ultimate goal in Nietzsche's radically humanist philosophy is precisely to show the fundamental of fundamentals—which is the human identity.

In this discussion, however, one would have wished a Nietzschean genealogy of various identities in Algeria—Berbers, Arabs, Kabyle, Shawi, Arab, Touareg. Instead, it is the conception of “Arabo-Muslim Algeria” that is discussed. It is unfortunate that Roberts does not report the views of Algerians instead of interpreting for them what “Arabo-Muslim Algeria” is or is not. One often hears even from “Arabs”: “We are all Berbers, but civilizationally we are Arabo-Muslims.”

There is a similar problem in the discussion of Berberism. There is no genealogy of how Berberism was born in the colonial context initially, but also fundamentally from the work of colonial authors. Yet, Roberts admits rightly that Berberism is “essentially a Kabyle affair.” The question of why Kabylia gave birth to a strong Berber identity and the Shawiya gave birth to a strong Islamist identity is worth asking in this context. But here again there is no historical analysis to show how Kabyle identity was constructed rather tentatively throughout the colonial period.

Regardless of the disagreements one might have with Roberts, most of them having to do, not only with methodological and disciplinary differences, but also to a certain extent with the still highly complex situation in Algeria, where knowledge continues to be the real important battlefield, Roberts' book contains a wealth of ideas and information rarely found in similar work on the Algerian tragedy.

It is clear from the above discussion that our three authors discussed are not only aware of the urgent need and necessity to deconstruct “colonial categories” and to pay attention to “colonial representations,” but they have also undertaken impressive archival and, for Roberts, even ethnographic work to understand the quasi-unique, complex situation of Algeria. They all have in common the belief that things are not as evident as they seem to be, that knowledge cannot be separated from the will to know. This is in and of itself an important development that shows that the field is moving beyond positivist formulations and has already lost faith in the neutrality of knowledge. But to be aware of, to warn against, to call for the deconstruction of something needs more than just a disclaimer and good intentions to do things differently. The intention to do something, or to avoid something else, requires a comparative perspective and acute reflective discursive practices.

Save to a certain extent for MacDougall, however, the very rich postcolonial scholarship that provides similar and different examples of colonial rule is absent in this work. One can only wonder what are the causes that prevent the field from connecting and engaging with fields outside of itself, and therefore becoming part of postcolonial studies.

This is to say that at least from the three examples discussed, representative of the state of Anglo-American scholarship in many ways, there is still much to do and a long way to go to contribute to a truly decolonization of knowledge in this area of North Africa. One effective way to do it is instead of heavily relying on Berque, Ageron, Stora and Colonna, as well as on Frenchified elite intellectuals, we ought to also deconstruct these same discourses that are not only reproducing colonial categories, but also are themselves the product of coloniality. A distance from the French *metropole*, and a use of another language, in a context where postcolonial studies have flourished, may be a great opportunity to do what cannot be done in either France or the Maghreb.

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance* (New York: New Press, 1998) p. 23.

² Despite a few calls from the Algerian state, and from it only, urging France to address its colonial past, the question of accountability has not been addressed as of today.

³ London: I.B. Tauris, 1996; French translation, *Imperial identities*, Limoges: 2005.

⁴ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁵ London: Verso, 2003.

⁶ See about Latin America, Marie-Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (New York: Routledge, 1992). About India, Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990). About Africa, *The Invention of Africa*. None of these references are mentioned in this book that, by its very topic, requires them.

⁷ See Archie Mafeje, "The Ideology of 'Tribalism,'" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2. The idea of nomadism, already found in the work of Ernest Renan, was developed and articulated forcefully by Emile-Felix Gautier in the case of the Maghreb. See *Les siècles obscures* (Paris: Hachett, 1927). To see how that idea survived and was adopted even by some anthropologists, see Marshal Sahlins, *Tribesmen in History* (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1968).

⁸ Among others, Charles-Robert Ageron, "La France a-t-elle eu une politique kabyle?" in *Revue Historique*, vol. 223-4, 1960, pp. 311-12; "Du Myth kabyle aux politiques berbères," in *Mal de voir*, 1976, pp. 331-48.

⁹ Franz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1962). Cited sometime by national historians of the Maghreb such as Laroui, but ignored by French historians. When he is evoked, namely because of the prestige given to him in American academia, he is referred to as a "militant," a term antithetical to that of a researcher.

¹⁰ Adrien Berbrugger, *Algérie : Historique, pittoresque et monumentale* (Paris: 1843)

¹¹ William Marcais, "Comment l'Afrique du Nord a été arabisée," in *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales*, Algiers, vol. iv, pp. 1-21.

¹² Ismael Urbain: On Urbain, see Hannoum, "Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria: The Archives of the Arabe Bureaux," in *History and Anthropology*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 343-379.

¹³ Emile Felix Gautier, using Ibn Khaldun, excludes the Shawiya, the nomadic Berbers, from the category of Berbers, and makes the sedentary Kabyle the only real Berbers. See his *Les siècles obscurs* (Paris: Hachett, 1927).

¹⁴ See Abdesslem Cheddadi, "Lecture d'Ibn Khaldun" in *Peoples et nations du monde* (Paris: Sindbad, 1986); and Aziz Azmah, *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in reinterpretation* (London: Cass, 1982).

¹⁵ Charles Richard, *De la civilization du peuple arabe* (Algiers, 1850) p. 5.

¹⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Also, *Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Timothy Mihal, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

¹⁷ This was the view of Charles Richard, an officer of the Arab Bureau. See his *De la civilization du peuple arabe*. Op. cit.

¹⁸ Again, this "event" happened in 1936, six years after Ben Badis's famous prophecy of the downfall of the colonial system in the midst of the celebration of the century of French Algeria: idha wasala shay' ila haddih, raja'a ila diddih ("the thing having reached its end, turns into its contrary"), and only three years after the warning of Desparmet of a "the birth of a national history of Algeria." See his "Naissance d'une histoire 'nationale' de l'Algerie" in *l'Afrique Française*, July 1933, pp. 387-92.

¹⁹ See Greimas, *Language and Semiotics*, op. cit.

²⁰There is an entire philosophical literature on this issue of construction, creation and imagination. A reading of Ricoeur, often referred to in this book, would have clarified this important concept.

²¹ Emile Masqueray, "Tradition de l'Aurès," in *Bulletin de Correspondance Africaine*, fourth year, 1885, pp. 72-110.

²²An important concept indeed, one of its major theorists is precisely Ricoeur. But McDougall uses the concept in a positivist sense—an event is that which happened. For Ricoeur, an event is a narrative reflecting a point of view, an attempt of someone who attempts to make sense of something that happened, thus an event is a narrative reflecting a point of view. See Paul Ricoeur, "Evenement et sens," in *L'événement en perspective*, edited by Jean-Luc Petit (Paris: EHESS, 1991).

²³ Ibid. See also, "Qu'est-ce qu'un événement?" in *Terrain 30*, no. 38, March 2002.

²⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books 1972), p. 452.

²⁵ The concept "totem ancestor" that MacDougall uses without defining it is a highly problematic one. In fact, it has its history in the anthropological tradition and was used even in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss as a sign of savagery. See *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1966). It was as if Europe has a history, and national heroes and founding fathers (never mothers) of the nation, whereas non-Europe (even those that aspired to be nations, such as Algeria) had totems.

²⁶ Jacques Berque, *Le Maghreb entre les deux guerres* (Paris: Seuil, 1962).

²⁷ Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).