

In-Human: Visions of Cruelty in Twentieth and Twenty-First-Century French and Francophone
Texts

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you know who you are

&

in fondest memory

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INTRODUCTION

WAR AND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS: WHERE CRUELTY RESIDES

Calling things by their true names cuts
through the lies that excuse, buffer, muddle,
disguise, avoid, or encourage inaction,
indifference, obliviousness. It's not all there
is to changing the world, but it's a key step.
— Rebecca Solnit, *Call Them by Their True
Names: American Crises (and Essays)*

L'art a pour devoir social de donner issue
aux angoisses de son époque.
— Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*

It is somewhat banal to say that atrocities have always been committed and, inevitably, will continue to occur. We frequently characterize these extremely violent acts as “cruel,” but what do we mean by that word? It is difficult to find a good answer to this not-so-banal question, or to understand the meaning of non-cruelty. “Cruelty” is derived from the Latin *cruor*, that is, blood, but does this etymology alone allow us to define it? “Qu'est-ce que la cruauté?” Derrida asks also, in the first volume of his *La peine de mort* seminar (1999-2000), and replies with the following inconclusive statement: “on prend conscience que la cruauté n'a pas de contraire mais seulement des façons différentes, des modalités différentes, des intensités différentes, des valeurs différentes (actives ou réactives). . . .”¹ I will emphasize throughout this work that cruelty does not have an inverse, a non-sense by which we could define it, nor a unique way of manifesting itself by which we could precisely identify it. One needs only to think of the plurality of contexts in which the word “cruelty” is used: “cruel and unusual punishment” in the area of legal discourse in the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “No one shall be subjected to torture

¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Séminaire La peine de mort. Volume I (1999-2000)*. Paris: Galilée, 2012, 237.

or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”²; cruelty toward animals in animal rights discourse; or sexual cruelty in the context of Sadism and other psychopathological examples. All in all, “cruelty” is a polysemic word that, beyond its etymological undertone, can be ascribed to a plethora of acts and ideas – from war to genocide, from torture to the death penalty, from domestic abuse to eroticism.

Cruelty and the gross generalizations concerning its meaning have consequently led us to a paradoxically parochial impasse: blanketing events as simply violent or calling an extremely violent occurrence “cruel” when it is not clear what the term means neither provides a better understanding of why or how such acts occur nor sheds light on how to try atrocities in a justice system or begin to attempt to recover from them psychologically. Cruelty thus operates in – and destabilizes – an entire nexus linking violence, barbarity, genocide, masochism, terror, evil, and the human to name just a few of the elements comprising such a semantic network. This project sets out to clarify these lexicological categories, their relations, and distinctions. By extension, this work sheds light on how to better define and address atrocities within a politico-juridical framework and, more importantly, elucidates how permutations of cruelty produce ontologies – and specifically a subversion of the presumed ontological stability – of the human. This is noteworthy because the affect surrounding the study of atrocity produces a sort of quandary: how does one analyze violence, excess, genocide without making, as one frequently does, a moral statement? Even the legal dimension of such work seems aligned with judgement of a moral nature to the extent that the law is meant to stop “bad” things from happening and try perpetrators when they do. Literature also necessarily gets drawn into that same kind of conundrum, or at least skirts around it, and cannot avoid a relation to moral presumptions: when

² http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article_5.html.

we read about atrocity, we cannot help but be horrified presumably from a moral standpoint. I recognize these methodological dangers but seek to do more than simply remain conscious of not (re)producing them. It is precisely a theory of cruelty, as I will show, that can move us beyond the idea of evil or moral judgement when discussing conflict, and instead give us a better sense of what it means to be human in the face of extreme violence.

Cruelty may be difficult to define, though when it is analyzed, it is consistently referred to within frames of excessive violence – both in relation to crimes of psychopathology, and in relation to war. Although I will make mention of cruelty with respect to neurobiology and psychoanalysis in Chapter 1 of this work, an examination of cruelty in the context of warfare from the last 80 years is this project’s primary task.³ I have chosen to study representations of war in literary texts born of World War II (September 1, 1939 – September 2, 1945), the Algerian War of Independence, also known as the Algerian War, (November 1, 1954 – March 19, 1962) and Algerian Civil War (December 26, 1991 – February 8, 2002), and the Rwandan genocide (April 7 – July 15, 1994). There are three reasons for these choices. First, my corpus, within a French Studies dissertation, is confined to French and what we term “Francophone” texts. Second, outside questions of the death penalty, animal rights, and sadomasochistic eroticism, “cruelty” occurs most frequently in French and Francophone literature of the 20th and 21st centuries as a descriptor of acts and events pertaining to warfare (where there is military violence, there may be cruelty). Third, by covering several geographic regions, my chosen

³ It is imperative to note that as it is impossible to address all global and historical atrocities, I do not analyze, for instance, slavery and colonialization *tout court*, other examples of blatant cruelty. As Achille Mbembe highlights, “La plantation est en effet un tiers lieu où les formes les plus spectaculaires de la cruauté ont libre cours, qu’il s’agisse des atteintes au corps, de la torture ou des exécutions sommaires” (Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l’inimitié*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016, 30).

corpus offers a plurality of perspectives on a variety of atrocities (global war, civil war, and genocide).

The research that I am proposing in this dissertation, then, seeks to advance the rich existing literary, political, and historical scholarship on war, violence, postcolonial studies, and human/post-human studies. Though my project is interdisciplinary, endeavoring to offer an innovative understanding of atrocity by incorporating the thought and insight of disciplines as far-reaching as political science, sociology, law, and literature, it consciously does not employ the research methods of the social sciences nor make a normative argument on cruelty, nor try to develop algorithms for, say, predicting instances of cruelty in war based on probabilistic models of expectation. Indeed, there already exists a robust literature examining empirical data and the correlations, even causal relationships, that can be drawn from variables pertaining to warfare, its motivations, manifestations, and ramifications. See, for instance, Stathis N. Kalyvas's *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2000), where focus is given to violence perpetrated against civilians in civil wars, Jeremy M. Weinstein's *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (2006), and David Kilcullen's *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (2009). This project, though indebted to the wide-ranging research that came before it, turns to the poetics of language through fiction and the reality of atrocity through history, harnessing, highlighting, and always returning to, in the final analysis, the power of literature to offer a glimpse into (in)humanity in times of violence.

Literature from certain recent conflicts and against the background of World War II demonstrates how acts of cruelty that take place in contemporary global politics cannot easily be accounted for either according to presumptions generated by traditional political discourses, or through discourses of human rights; in fact, the notion of cruelty cannot even be contained

simply within the concept of the human. Rather, because new social forms of violence produce new textual aesthetics, I will analyze examples as diverse as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Salim Bachi, and Maïssa Bey on the one hand, and the writings of Gilbert Gatore and Marguerite Duras on the other, in order to demonstrate how cruelty goes beyond questions of conflict and norms of behavior to expose and problematize the distinction between the human and inhuman. Through my corpus I analyze how the humanness of both victims and perpetrators of cruelty is systematically put into question: these individuals are dehumanized – compared to insects and animals for instance, or rendered monstrous – insofar as they are seen as not conforming to the category of what is “acceptable” for a human being (“monstrous,” then, in the Aristotelean sense as developed predominantly in Book 4 of *On the Generation of Animals*).⁴ Notice how Hélène Cixous qualifies victims of cruelty in the Nazi concentration camps as entirely rid of their humanity: “les captifs ont pour la plupart perdu leur sublime et mystérieux trésor natal: l’humanité.”⁵

My understanding of cruelty as pushing the human beyond its current ontology comes out of literary texts, then, but of course these works are circumscribed by extreme historical events. In Chapters 3 through 5, I will also be addressing the historical record of Algeria and Rwanda and partially that of WWII (as the expansive archive of the Second World War is already thoroughly researched), demonstrating how cruelty functions in the latter context in cross relation to the more contemporary former examples. Real-life documents and policy – seen in archival findings, survivor testimony, and UN Conventions – will corroborate my literary findings. Ultimately with these juxtaposed analyses, I will underline a certain power of literature,

⁴ The question of what constitutes a “normal” body is obviously raised here. I take up this specific element of monstrosity in Chapter 4, since the notion of physical deviance becomes important in Gilbert Gatore’s *Le Passé devant soi*.

⁵ Cixous, Hélène. *1938, nuits*. Paris: Galilée, 2019, 66.

to the extent that fiction does the work of defining the terms on which I focus and their real-life repercussions. In much the same way as Robert Harvey – who, in *Sharing Common Ground: A Space for Ethics* (2017), examines the unique perspective that literature lends to an understanding of the extreme (the Holocaust or Hiroshima, for instance)⁶ – I will be underscoring the particular kind of thinking that circulates in literature. This literary knowledge in fact complicates historical, juridical, political approaches in order to underline not only the intricacy of cruelty, but also its operative function, *its* power in shedding light on other concepts such as monstrosity, the inhuman, and, ultimately, the human.

The inhuman, from the Latin *in-* (not) and *humanus* (derived from *homo*, or human being), is a term designating the non-human: the bestial, the technological, the impersonal, the monstrous, and unspecified other-than-human states more generally.⁷ The inhuman can consequently represent the non-human animal, the deformation of the inhuman into a monstrous mutation, or the non-natural and inanimate as in the soulless machine, or, even, narrative impersonality created by a narratological procedure that occludes the human within a text. The specificity of the word “inhuman,” and the importance of its use versus simply “non-human,” is

⁶ Harvey focuses predominately on Duras and Foucault, detailing how the former, for instance, “constructed – through the literary imagination – a model for effectively mobilizing the work of memory in regard to humanity’s crimes against itself” (Harvey, Robert. *Sharing Common Ground: A Space for Ethics*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2017, vii). Literature is vital to an understanding of the violence the world witnesses.

⁷ I do not have the space in this project for a discussion of the technological, of the human’s relation to it, of the human becoming other through machinery or the machinic, nor of transhumanism, that is, the enhancement of human beings with technology, or artificial intelligence, though of course all of these can be clarifications of the inhuman in a different context. For more on the animate versus the inanimate and the relation of these terms to the inhuman, the non-human, and technology, see David Wills’s *Prosthesis* (1995), *Dorsality: Thinking Back through Technology and Politics* (2008), and *Inanimation: Theories of Inorganic Life* (2016). Also consider the work of Norbert Wiener, who wrote about automation and is thought to be one of the founding fathers of artificial intelligence. As he states, highlighting similarities between the machine and the human and underscoring how the latter could be understood vis-à-vis the former, perhaps even as an extension of it: “It is my thesis that the operation of the living individual and the operation of some of the newer communication machines are precisely parallel” (Wiener, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1950, 15). For more on the inhuman as a form of technology within the specific frame of war, see Grégoire Chamayou’s *Théorie du drone* (2013). Paris: La fabrique, 2013, 21.

precisely that by virtue of including within itself the word “human,” “inhuman” recognizes the non-human – that which is excessive or lacking or transgressive or other or extra-human or simply not human – as *stemming, projected from* the human. The human is therefore understood as a point of departure from which the inhuman is derived. The inhuman is thus a human that is rendered completely other while continuing to refer to the human, bringing to mind Lyotard’s question: “Et si . . . le ‘propre’ de l’homme était qu’il est habité par de l’inhumain?”⁸ As we shall see here, it is precisely cruelty that allows for such a crossing of categories. In order to underscore this ontological overlap, I have recourse in this study to the lexicological contrivance of the *in-human*.

In what follows, I will show that when we put pressure on the concept of cruelty, what we are actually putting pressure on is the notion of the human and its relation to the inhuman in its various manifestations. Indeed Cixous briefly mentions “le . . . cruel humain-inhumain,”⁹ and though she does not further develop this particular wording, I will argue that cruelty specifically highlights a problematic of the border separating the human from the inhuman, in fact imbricating the inhuman with the human, ultimately demonstrating in what ways those who engage in cruel acts, and who have acts of cruelty enacted against them, are in-human. My thesis, then, has thus far been laid out and will continue to develop as follows: cruelty is a hard-to-define concept, though it systematically refers to excessive violence, and armed conflict is often

⁸ Lyotard, Jean-François. *L’inhumain: Causeries sur les temps*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2014, 14. Though titled *L’inhumain*, Lyotard’s book deals more with the concepts of posthumanism. As Gaëlle Bernard summarizes, for Lyotard, “l’histoire . . . est inhumaine en ce que l’homme n’est ni son principe ni sa fin” (“Préface,” 7). Lyotard’s quote after his question continues: “Ce qui ferait deux sortes d’inhumain. Il est indispensable de les tenir dissociées. L’inhumanité du système en cours de consolidation, sous le nom de développement (entre autres), ne doit pas être confondue avec elle, infiniment secrète, dont l’âme est l’otage” (14).

⁹ “c’est le mondial public cruel humain-inhumain avide du spectacle des exécutions capitales qui ne manque jamais une occasion de paître et qui vient voir voir voir, mais quoi?” (Cixous, Hélène. 1938, *nuits, op. cit.*, 140) This is perhaps the most recent either literary or theoretical direct mention of cruelty as something human-inhuman, though Cixous does not elaborate on this choice of terminology or on cruelty in any other capacity. The dash, however, acting as a border, ideally captures the idea of cruelty resting on the frontier between the human and inhuman.

the context for such violence. My literary examples are set against a background of a series of 20th and 21st-century conflicts and explicitly bring cruelty into focus. This in fact complicates the idea of the human, since cruelty is an experience at the limit of the human, the point at which the human tips over into the inhuman. Cruelty demonstrates that the human is not clearly distinguishable from the inhuman, which in turn troubles the presumption that the human has an innate essence that constitutes and defines it. In other words, cruelty shows how the human blurs at its edges: each one of my literary examples will provoke a *mise en scène* of that blurring, calling for a staging of the problematic between human and inhuman, of the inhuman within the human, bringing into focus the in-human. But if my examples speak of cruelty in terms of in-humanity – of the human in relation, namely, to animality, monstrosity, and the impersonal – and thus clarify cruelty as a question about where humanity and the human begins and/or ends, they also speak of cruelty in terms of excessive violence.

Elissa Mailänder considers precisely the relation between cruelty and excessive violence, and offers an anthropological study of cruel acts committed by female SS guards (*Aufseherinnen*) in *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944* (2015). Mailänder differentiates between cruelty and violence by underlining that “cruelty surpasses and exceeds the basic acts of violence and murder.” She continues: “Unlike cruelty, violence and killing are self-limiting in their capacity for escalation as sociologist Heinrich Popitz has argued – if only because death establishes a definitive and final boundary.”¹⁰ I will build on these different ideas by arguing that a cruel act not only destabilizes human ontology, but is also an excess to an economy of violence that paradoxically generates

¹⁰ Mailänder Koslov, Elissa. *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. Translated by Patricia Szobar. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015, 268.

this very economy. Within the context of warfare, acts of cruelty will be understood as irregular acts of war, that is, acts that are extra-legal, that reside beyond the rules of classically-conceived war, but that are defined and regulated by an economy: they are enacted for a reason – torturing someone for information, for instance – and thus they generate value. In other words, cruelty is a value-producing phenomenon that exists on the margins of armed conflict in contravention of the rules of war.

In the literary examples studied here, cruel violence will frequently also be conjugated with monstrous violence in a way that strikingly echoes Colin Dayan’s juxtaposition of cruelty to the monstrous as follows: “The occult sorcery of human cruelty brings us closer to thinking about the meaning of monsters.”¹¹ Monstrous acts too reside beyond the rules of war, but they are acts that are aneconomic: they are represented as gratuitous and even nonsensical and enacted for the sheer reason of being enacted – bombing a village for the simple sake of bombing it as we will see in Chapter 2, or torturing for the simple sake of torturing as we will observe in Chapter 3. Far from being a way to compare the scale or atrocity of atrocities – an unnecessary and hazardous method of differentiation – monstrous acts are not strictly speaking worse acts than acts of cruelty, but altogether different kinds of irregular acts of war; these are “different modalities of ‘violence’”¹² as Judith Butler would say. Though both cruelty and monstrosity are infringements of socially accepted behavior in general and war in particular, the cases of monstrous violence that are analyzed in what follows differ from cruelty in being based on forms

¹¹ Dayan, Colin. *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 26. Dayan also speaks of blood stains (evoking cruelty) and the monster (see “Blood” in Chapter 2), though again does not further enlarge on the relationship between specifically cruelty and monstrosity.

¹² Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York/London: Verso, 2016, 3.

of gratuitousness, whereas cruel acts will come to be understood as extreme violence that generates value and thus its own economy.

I have now mentioned not only war, but also *irregular* war, and before proceeding further I think it is important to examine more closely the variable nature of violent conflict. While addressing literary representations of wars in my analyses, I will simultaneously historically contextualize the causes of and motivations behind these conflicts, and the outcomes of retaliatory and reconciliatory justice in general, and will use violent conflict as a point of departure for the study of cruelty in what appears, specifically, as a post-Schmittian political or geopolitical framework. Carl Schmitt¹³ has been the authority on agonistic questions since the 1930s and his model, which presumes to distinguish between “classical” warfare and everything else he calls “partisan,” has been respected and referred to within a certain framework of political theory and philosophy in order to classify conflicts from, broadly, the Treaty of Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the Second World War. According to Schmitt, classically-defined or “bracketed” war takes place as an armed confrontation between nation states along the frontier separating them. The battle is essentially a gladiatorial struggle between noble warriors who respect and admire their enemies, and the perpetrated violence is sanctioned, knowable, and organized. As he explains,

The traditional European bracketing of wars between states emerged after the 18th century from specific concepts of bracketed war and just enemy derived from the age of monarchy. These concepts were interrupted by the French

¹³ It is impossible to undertake a project about the atrocities of war that takes as its starting point the writings of Carl Schmitt without underlining the fact that Schmitt, anti-Semitic and having joined the Nazis, was known as the Third Reich’s “crown jurist” and questioned at Nuremberg after WWII. I stress the fact that I am focusing on a very particular articulation by Schmitt about enmity to then formulate my own understanding of global warfare and the exceptional acts that sometimes constitute it and am in no way condoning his political activities or in any way trying to redeem him in those respects. For more on Schmitt’s collaboration with the Nazi Party and the rise in popularity in the last three decades of his writings and their reinterpretation by both right and left-wing commentators see Mark Lilla’s chapter “Carl Schmitt” in *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review Books, 2016) and Andreas Koenen’s *Der Fall Carl Schmitt: Sein Aufstieg zum “Kronjuristen” des Dritten Reiches*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

Revolution, but the Congress of Vienna reaffirmed them and they became thereby much stronger.¹⁴

Schmitt's categorizations actually go back further than the 18th century and are in fact born of classical conceptions of warfare dating back as far as Ancient Egypt. The concept of a war being fought on the basis of *jus ad bellum* (right to war) and *jus in bello* (appropriate, lawful wartime conduct) – criteria that constitute just war, that is, war that was understood to follow specific, conventional rules – has been formally developed since at least the time of Augustine in the 4th century and reinterpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th. In the *Summa Theologicae*, the latter develops the three principles that are to be followed in a lawful (equated to, in this context, Christian) war: the war must be initiated by a sovereign and not an individual; it must be waged with a good cause; and it must be fought with the good intentions of combatting evil and restoring peace.¹⁵

¹⁴ Schmitt, Carl. *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*. Translated by G. L. Ulmen. New York: Telos Press Pub, 2007, 35-36.

¹⁵ “In order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of a private individual to declare war, because he can seek for redress of his rights from the tribunal of his superior. Moreover it is not the business of a private individual to summon together the people, which has to be done in wartime. . . . Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault. Wherefore Augustine says (Questions. in Hept., qu. x, super Jos.): ‘A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.’ Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil. Hence Augustine says (De Verb. Dom. [*The words quoted are to be found not in St. Augustine’s works, but Can. Apud. Caus. xxiii, qu. 1]): ‘True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, of punishing evil-doers, and of uplifting the good.’ For it may happen that the war is declared by the legitimate authority, and for a just cause, and yet be rendered unlawful through a wicked intention. Hence Augustine says (Contra Faust. xxii, 74): ‘The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things, all these are rightly condemned in war’” (St. Thomas Aquinas. *The Summa Theologica*, 2nd part. Benziger Bros. edition, 1947. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, <https://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/SS/SS040.html#SSQ40A1THEP1>). Michael Walzer provides an excellent analysis of the difference and relation between the reasons why wars are fought and how they are fought in *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977): “War is always judged twice, first with reference to the reasons states have for fighting, secondly with reference to the means they adopt. The first kind of judgement is adjectival in character: we say that a particular war is just or unjust. The second is adverbial: we say that the war is being fought justly or unjustly” (New York: Basic Books, 2015, 21). My focus here is predominately *adverbial*, that is, emphasized on the means by which wars are fought, but of course, this cannot be simply and starkly separated from

Departures from the classic model – constituting what Schmitt labels “partisan” conflict, that is, irregular, extremely politically engaged, and predominantly mobile warfare – not only pose problems regarding the conduct and categorization of war, and thus complicate today’s global political climate and how we discuss its conflicts, but also call into question Schmitt’s very distinctions.¹⁶ In *Theory of the Partisan* (1963), born of two lectures delivered in 1962 at the Universities of Navarra and Zaragoza, Schmitt argues that partisan warfare is warfare that has spilled its classical categories and, as he puts it, has gone beyond bracketed war. As he explains:

The modern partisan expects neither law nor mercy from the enemy. He has moved away from the conventional enmity of controlled and bracketed war, and into the realm of another, real enmity, which intensifies through terror and counter-terror until it ends in extermination.¹⁷

Wars that do not adhere to international rule or regulation frequently deteriorate precisely into a dimension of enmity, personal hatred or vendetta through military action. Indeed, as Schmitt explains, “For as long as a people exists in the political sphere, this people must, even if only in the most extreme case – and whether this point has been reached has to be decided by it – determine by itself the distinction of friend and enemy. Therein resides the essences of its political existence.”¹⁸ Unpacking Schmitt’s concept of the political, Kalyvas explains how “[w]ar is just the natural expression of enmity. . . .”¹⁹ The political thus *polarizes* individuals into friend

the *adjectival* nature of unjust war, as Walzer himself acknowledges – “[t]he dualism of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* is at the heart of all that is most problematic in the moral reality of war” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶ The idea of a formal *Politik*, or politics and policy, of warfare, goes back to at least Carl von Clausewitz who in *On War* (1832), his seminal treatise on both the theory and strategy of war, writes: “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. . . . The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose” (Translated and edited by Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, 87).

¹⁷ Schmitt, Carl. *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, 11.

¹⁸ Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007, 49.

¹⁹ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 64.

and enemy, in other words, enmity and violence are produced by political divisions. In sum, identifying Spain's retaliation in the form of guerrilla warfare in 1808 to Napoleon's invasion of the country as the inaugural example of this kind of war, Schmitt defines the four characteristics of partisan warfare as follows: irregularity (partisans do not wear uniforms, nor do they prominently display their weapons), mobility (in the sense of guerrilla warfare), intense political engagement (that is, it is no longer a question of states fighting each other, but of parties and factions), and telluric character (partisan warfare is fought on land and is different from piracy or other forms of maritime or aerial warfare).²⁰

And yet Schmitt's distinction of wars and the notion of a *modern partisan* born in 1808 is problematic and, in fact, wholly mythic. War for a long time has gone beyond the category of circumscribed and regulated violence, thus making Schmitt's categories inoperable in some way, obsolete to a certain extent. His presumptive distinction between partisan and nonpartisan warfare is non-tenable, since there always have been elements of the partisan in conflict. Moreover, despite war's ever-changing character, the idea of "irregularity" labelled as a tenet of Schmitt's definition of partisan warfare has a long history. As explained in the 2013 United States Air Force Doctrine Document [AFDD] 3-2, "Irregular Warfare,"

The use of IW [irregular warfare] to unhinge and defeat a militarily stronger adversary is as old as war itself. It is described in the earliest treatises on combat—by Sun Tzu and Thucydides, for example. Actions which today would be characterized as elements of IW have been employed against powers great and small throughout history. Often, these tactics contributed to the defeat of major powers and the demise of empires—the Ottoman, the Napoleonic French, the Soviet empires and the Portuguese empire in Africa being the most noteworthy examples—through national overreach, erosion of will, and sheer exhaustion. More recently, post-World War II decolonization, national liberation movements, proxy conflicts, the rise of globalization, demographic pressures, and ethno-religious strife have all made IW a

²⁰ See *ibid.*, 14-22 for more on these characteristics.

persistent strategic challenge. Indeed, when one considers the entire history of conflict, IW has been one of the most common forms of warfare.²¹

Put most simply, irregular war has existed for a long time and is categorized by the lack of front line between two well-defined armies. The term is defined by the United States Department of Defense as, specifically,

a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). In IW, a less powerful adversary seeks to disrupt or negate the military capabilities and advantages of a more powerful military force, which usually serves that nation's established government.²²

Irregular war is thus a general term that includes many “key activities: stability operations, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and unconventional warfare.”²³ As Kalyvas further explains,

The distinction between conventional (classic) warfare and its “unconventional,” “guerrilla,” or “irregular” counterpart is common in the military literature, although the terminology fluctuates. The intuition behind this distinction boils down to this: whereas conventional warfare entails face-to-face confrontations between regular armies across well-defined front lines, “unconventional” warfare features a dearth of large-scale direct military confrontations or ‘set-piece battles’ and the absence of front lines.²⁴

In addition to an absence of boundary clearly delineating conflict, irregular war is defined by a power disparity. Where conventional wars entail the encounter of two armies of supposedly approximate strength, irregular combat consists in asymmetric encounters of combatant and non-combatant forces, frequently civilians, that are assumed to be of unequal martial ability (be it in regard to “army” size, military training, or equipment). According to Kalyvas and André Beaufre, a French Army officer stationed in Algeria during the Algerian War,

²¹ *Air Force Doctrine Document [AFDD] 3-2*, “Irregular Warfare,” (15 March 2013), 3. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/usaf/afdd3-2.pdf>.

²² *Joint Publication [JP] 1*, “Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States,” (25 March 2013 Incorporating Change 1 12 July 2017), x. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp1_ch1.pdf.

²³ *AFDD 3-2*, “Irregular Warfare,” *op. cit.*, i.

²⁴ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, *op. cit.*, 66.

Conventional warfare entails either a shared perception of power parity by the rivals, or recognition by the weaker side that it must play by the existing rules and confront its enemy on the battlefield. Without some sort of mutual consent, no conventional battle can take place. . . . Irregular warfare, thus, takes place when the weaker actor refuses to face the stronger one directly and, instead, fights by deception. In this sense, irregular warfare is an unambiguously proclaimed manifestation of military asymmetry.²⁵

I use the terms “irregular warfare,” “partisan warfare,” “unconventional warfare,” “non-traditional warfare,” “guerilla warfare,” and “asymmetric warfare” interchangeably to mean non-classically or non-conventionally conceived war in the sense we have seen these expressions take above. Even though technically differentiated, these terms remain complementary and for the purposes of my analyses can remain synonymous as they are all used to describe asymmetric conflict that has no clear front line. Indeed, the *AFDD 3-2* continues:

[s]everal terms have been used to describe similar IW activities in the past such as small wars,²⁶ revolutionary warfare, guerrilla warfare, low-intensity conflict, and military operations other than war. Though IW terminology has changed, the basic defining characteristics have not. Despite variations in terminology, belligerents engaged in irregular warfare use asymmetric violence to gain advantage and influence over the relevant populations.²⁷

Thus even when initially distinguished, these terms all come to determine warfare that is not bracketed and that overflows martial rules.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 66-67. Moreover, there are various reasons as to why and how various forms of irregular war differ. As Kalyvas explains, “The cross-national variation in levels, types, and practices of violence across wars may be affected by factors that include the specific profile of political actors and their political ideology (J. L. Anderson 2004; Heer and Naumann 2000; Degregori 1998; Bartov 1992; Furet 1981:51); their organizational structure, underlying social basis, and military culture (Gumz 2001; T. Anderson 1999; Livanios 1999; Mazower 1992); their resources (J. Weinstein 2003); their national and local leadership strategies (Shepherd 2002; Schulte 2000); the type of challenges they face and the assistance they receive from third parties; the prevailing international norms (Ron 2000a); the level of available military technology; and factors such as geography and climate” (*ibid.*, 8).

²⁶ With respect to “small wars,” Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte’s *Der moderne Kleinkrieg: als wehrpolitisches und militärisches Phänomen* (1972) was translated in 1986 as *Modern Irregular Warfare: In Defense Policy and as a Military Phenomenon*, the term “modern irregular warfare” thus being used to translate “*moderne Kleinkrieg*” or, literally, “modern small war.”

²⁷ *AFDD 3-2*, “Irregular Warfare,” *op. cit.*, 3. <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/usaf/afdd3-2.pdf>.

Other bellicose practices that can be understood as irregular are those which constitute war crimes – willful killing, torture, and unlawful destruction and appropriation of property, to name just a few examples. The concept of “war crime” was developed in the second half of the 19th century with the Geneva Convention in 1864 (and future Geneva Conventions adopted throughout the 20th century) along with the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. These international protocols seek to clarify what are acceptable as opposed to criminal acts of war and to develop a precept of humanitarian intervention. The Rome Statute, born of a conference organized by the United Nations General Assembly in 1998, led to the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002 and codifies four international crimes over six pages: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. War crimes, as the Statute highlights, are defined – in part – as follows:

- (a) Grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, namely, any of the following acts against persons or property protected under the provisions of the relevant Geneva Convention:
 - i. Willful killing
 - ii. Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;
 - iii. Willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health;
 - iv. Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly;
 - v. Compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power;
 - vi. Willfully depriving a prisoner of war or other protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial;
 - vii. Unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement;
 - viii. Taking of hostages.²⁸

Achille Mbembe is right to point out the bizarreness of such conventions in *Politiques de l'inimitié* (2016).²⁹ As he writes, “C’est à la fin du XIXe siècle que les bases d’un droit

²⁸ *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. The Hague: International Criminal Court, 2011, 4.

²⁹ A note on Mbembe’s *Politiques de l’inimitié*: Mbembe indirectly references in his text many thinkers who are valuable to this project. There is, first, a terminological overlap between Georges Bataille and Mbembe through the use of vocabulary such as “économie,” “sacrifice,” “gaspillage,” and “excès” in *Politiques de l’inimitié* (see *op. cit.*, 35, 50, 53, 56, 62, 68, 149, and 121), though no obvious link or genealogical relationship between the writers is

international humanitaire voient le jour. Ce droit vise, entre autres, à ‘humaniser’ la guerre.”³⁰

The protocols listed above endeavor to systematize unsystematized conflict, attempt to bracket that which cannot be bracketed. Mbembe provides several examples in *Politiques de l'inimitié* of such irregular warfare. Though he does not use this term nor the term “partisan,” this is essentially what he calls colonial war, for instance, using the descriptor *hors-la-loi*: “Presque toujours hantée par le désir d’extermination (éliminationisme), la guerre coloniale elle-même est, par définition, une guerre sans frontières, *hors-la-loi*.”³¹ As he continues, focusing specifically in the passage below on the “War on Terror,” another example of irregular war,

l’état d’exception justifie la “guerre contre la terreur” – une guerre d’éradication, indéfinie, absolue, qui revendique le droit à la cruauté, à la torture et à la détention illimitée – et donc une guerre qui puise ses armes dans le “mal” qu’elle prétend éradiquer, dans un contexte où le droit et la justice sont exercés sous la forme de représailles sans fin, de la vengeance et de la revanche.³²

The sardonic tone of the excerpt points not only to the hypocrisy of using further violence to combat violence – the result of only more blatant manifestations of irregularity – but equally underscores the irony of trying to humanize wars that, as I hope to show, precisely trouble the

established. Moreover, there is a Derridean presence in Mbembe’s oeuvre, though strangely enough, in *Politiques de l'inimitié* and especially when discussing the pharmakon, Mbembe does not reference Derrida. It is Derrida, however, namely in “La Pharmacie de Platon” (published in *La dissémination*, 1972), who analyzes the notion of the pharmakon (*pharmakos*) and its role as remedy, poison, as well as scapegoat. Finally, building on Fanon, Mbembe elaborates on how in our current era, which has been marked by atrocious decolonial conflicts, “la guerre . . . est devenue . . . le sacrement de notre époque” (*Politiques de l'inimitié*, *op. cit.*, 8). Though Fanon speaks highly of violence, Mbembe defines war precisely as a *pharmakon*: both a remedy and a poison. This, he argues, is what is leading our current era into a society of enmity: “[la guerre] est devenue remède et poison – notre *pharmakon*. La transformation de la guerre en *pharmakon* de notre époque a, en retour, libéré des passions funestes qui, petit à petit, poussent nos sociétés à sortir de la démocratie et à se transformer en sociétés de l’inimitié, comme ce fut le cas sous la colonisation” (*ibid.*, 10).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 40. Judith Butler does not believe in legal war or just war and argues that “wars become permissible forms of criminality, but they are never non-criminal” (*Frames of War*, *op. cit.*, xviii). Within this semantic and ideological framework, cruel and monstrous martial acts are then non-permissible forms of criminality in warfare. Furthermore, the sheer justification of war is a different question altogether, one visited and revisited by thinkers such as Talal Asad (see his *On Suicide Bombing* (2007)) and, especially with respect to the ethics of war, once again Walzer in *Just and Unjust Wars* and *Arguing About War* (2003).

³¹ Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l'inimitié*, *op. cit.*, 40.

³² *Ibid.*, 56.

border between human and inhuman, wars *qui revendique[nt] le droit à la cruauté*. Mbembe highlights how, paradoxically, by trying to safeguard democracy, governments are stepping outside of it: “le processus de *sortie de la démocratie* et le mouvement de suspension des droits, des Constitutions ou des libertés sont paradoxalement justifiés par la nécessité de protection de ces mêmes lois, libertés et Constitutions.”³³ This affects the landscape not only of war, but of the political in general. The motivation behind political decisions and the justification of increasingly irregular wars ceases to be the noble distinction between friend and enemy; instead the motivation is Mbembé’s *inimitié*, or in Schmitt’s terms, “real enmity.”

Indeed, Mbembe’s observations evoke concerns vis-à-vis the concept of war crimes and human rights more generally. We may, for instance, ask: how do we productively classify a variety of criminal atrocity (currently the “war crime”) in order to identify and judge it in the most just way possible? Or, how do we fairly determine what is a human right and who gets to decide that it is?³⁴ Though detailed discussion of these questions is beyond the scope of this project, they certainly do remain central to the reflections offered here. The subjectivity inherent in defining an act as “extremely violent,” and the resulting diversity of actions that have been described as such – many examples of which appear on the aforementioned list codified by the International Criminal Court in 2002 – will be seen in more detail throughout the following five chapters. I contend that it is through analysis of the concept of cruelty that we can more clearly categorize and better understand these fringe acts, their perpetrators, and their victims, and also attain a better grasp of different types of war.

³³ *Ibid.*, 58. See p. 91 for more.

³⁴ This question echoes Butler’s own vis-à-vis democracy: “Can one power ‘bring’ or ‘install’ democracy [or human rights in this case] on a people over whom it has no jurisdiction? If a form of power [right] is imposed upon a people who do not choose that form of power [right], then that is, by definition, an undemocratic [inhumane] process” (*Frames of War*, *op. cit.*, 37).

Overall, in the contemporary period, much armed conflict has involved non-state actors and been carried out in theaters of war that continue to extend beyond their classical conceptions. Admittedly, wars and associated atrocities, such as genocides, have always been happening. But our current era presents a historical juncture that seems actively to call into question political practices and warfare as well as to pose new problems for the international humanitarian community. The violence that the world has witnessed, especially in the last 80 years, is not new, but the questions pertaining to war and violence are being posed anew. Since World War II especially, international institutions have struggled with a number of grey zones: blurred categories of not just organized violence but personal enmity and war crimes and what to do with them. That has been shown in recent history by the failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide, for instance, or by the late intervention in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War (1998-1999), which resulted in NATO's bombing of the country: its first ever instance of military force enacted without the approval of the UN Security Council. So-called humanitarian intervention in general is fraught and problematic – and in fact a deeply political structure – since it is always necessarily imposed by stronger powers onto weaker ones, as criticized by Noam Chomsky, for instance, in his *Rogue States* (2000). And as a result – though I do not have the space to expand on this here – perhaps “intervention” and “aid” in general are yet other modern manifestations of irregular warfare, insofar as they are characterized by an unequal distribution of power, embraced by certain nations for their own gains, a fact which ultimately questions the supposed apolitical nature of humanitarianism.

Though Schmitt's distinctions are polemical at best and flawed at worst, his theory of the partisan is a basis on which contemporary warfare, including the doctrine of war crimes and more largely crimes against humanity – and maybe even humanitarianism – can be productively

analyzed. Indeed, one could go as far as to say that in Schmitt's conception of war according to a set of principles agreed upon by those involved, there is no cruelty. War becomes atrocious, terrifying, and total when it no longer follows a set of rules; cruelty begins when one steps outside of Schmitt's conception of the political, that is, beyond a simple distinction between friend and enemy. Whether or not war has ever been a noble battle between two belligerents and regardless of when war became irregular if it was ever anything but that, how are we to understand contemporary instances of martial rape, medical experimentation, and torture, to name just a few examples of possible wartime atrocities such as we will see here? These acts, as I have defined above, are frequently cruel, as my chosen authors will demonstrate and, as interrogating cruelty will come to show, they can also move beyond cruelty, beyond an economy in which value is generated, and become monstrous, gratuitous, nonsensical. Irregular warfare has not been studied from the perspective of cruelty – and certainly not from a literary perspective – and thus this project seeks to fill that gap.

Indeed, with this mention of the literary, we return to the power of literature and the competing considerations in my analyses: real-life atrocity and fiction; reality and its representation. Historically, atrocities, instances of excessive violence, have happened. Literature in general has often tried to account for things at their extremity, and in what follows I will be looking at a series of texts that deal with the specific extremity called cruelty. To reiterate then, the historical events that I focus on, their facts, paint a picture of extreme violence. But when we turn to the literary examples, and concentrate on how they deal with what we think we know to be cruelty, what emerges is a much more complex account whereby cruelty is recast as a question of what separates human from inhuman, whereby humanity, and by extension inhumanity, is revealed not to be such a self-evidence after all. The following chapters will

therefore try to shed light on the following question: why is it that texts called upon to deal with cruelty develop such differing ideas concerning it, and diverse techniques for dealing with it? The various literary examples I will examine choose to represent cruelty in highly complex ways, and in the end, show humanity itself to be a problematic concept. In the final analysis, cruelty allows us to understand that the category of the human needs to be – already *is* – more permeable with the category of the monster, the animal, the impersonal, especially when it comes to violent contexts. In an effort to define the in-human by way of cruelty, the following chapters endeavor to contribute to the conceptual conversation of how we conceive and perceive universal manifestations of violence as well as the category of the human. Let us therefore consider these very texts.

In Chapter 1, I will contextualize cruelty by addressing work that has been done on the concept in cases from the literary domain, notably through Sade (to offer a historical view of the topic), in the legal arena with respect to capital punishment and torture, as well as within the context of cruelty enacted toward animals. These examples will shed light on a variety of etymologies and interpretations of cruelty. Antonin Artaud is a particularly interesting figure when it comes to the plurality of definitions of cruelty, since for the playwright, cruelty takes on a meaning that goes beyond *cruor*. A theatre of cruelty, according to Artaud, is not a practice that displays bloody violence and the shedding of blood, but a theatre that shocks and troubles the mind, a theatre that is experienced as a revelatory, emotional burden.³⁵ Again, this underlines the

³⁵ I mention Artaud to pay my respects to this historical usage of “cruelty.” Vigorously defending the term in *Le théâtre et son double* (1938), Artaud writes, “C’est pourquoi je propose un théâtre de la cruauté. – Avec cette manie de tout rabaisser qui nous appartient aujourd’hui à tous, “cruauté,” quand j’ai prononcé ce mot, a tout de suite voulu dire “sang,” pour tout le monde. Mais “théâtre de la cruauté” veut dire théâtre difficile et cruel d’abord pour moi-même. Et, sur le plan de la représentation, il ne s’agit pas de cette cruauté que nous pouvons exercer les uns contre les autres en nous dépeçant mutuellement les corps, en sciant nos anatomies personnelles, ou, tels des empereurs assyriens, en nous adressant par la poste des sacs d’oreilles humaines, de nez ou de narines bien découpés, mais de celle beaucoup plus terrible et nécessaire que les choses peuvent exercer contre nous. Nous ne sommes pas libres. Et

multiplicity of the definitions of “cruelty” and the various perspectives through which this concept can be addressed – a logical stepping stone to the wide-ranging meanings of “cruelty” concerning the death penalty, torture, and animals that I will address via Kant, Nietzsche, Derrida, Freud, Montaigne, and Marcel Hénaff.

On the basis of this theoretical foundation, the following chapters of this dissertation are dedicated to the analysis of literary representations of cruelty in French and Francophone literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. Each chapter is a dramatization of an extreme case of violence and analyzes examples of cruelty witnessed in 20th-century and contemporary-era Rwanda and Algeria, as well as torture and other forms of atrocity including the genocides of the Second World War. The works of Saint-Exupéry, Bachi, Bey, Gatore, and Duras that I study are certainly related by means of their concern, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, with genocide. Though I am not focusing on genocide per se in this project, it is hard to deny that, as Josias Semujanga emphasizes, the 20th century is “the century of genocides.”³⁶ Indeed, the word, synonymous with annihilation, was coined by lawyer Raphael Lemkin around 1944. “Genocide” is derived from the Greek “*genos*,” that is, “race,” and Latin “*-cide*” from “*caedere*,” “to kill.” The term, however, was not used during the Nuremburg trials since the legal concept of genocide was only established in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly and adopted as the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” in 1948. The

le ciel peut encore nous tomber sur la tête. Et le théâtre est fait pour nous apprendre d’abord cela” (Paris: Gallimard, 1998, 123). Maggie Nelson, a cultural critic of the aesthetics of what she calls the *art of cruelty*, focuses on the good or bad use of cruelty in art. To her, the art of cruelty is not art that simply depicts clearly violent or bloody scenes, nor art that condones or condemns such representations, but rather art that engages with cruelty in a more nuanced way, posing ethical or moral questions. In *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*, she dialogues with Artaud, citing other examples of artists who attempt to blur the line defining “the relationship between art and life” (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, 6) – like performing artist Tehching Hsieh – and articulates, as all reflections on Artaud underline, that Artaud’s theatre of cruelty was impossible to create. Such a performance was meant to nearly – if not entirely – annihilate the spectator through the realization and release of his or her inner demons.

³⁶ Semujanga, Josias. *Narrating Itsembabwoko: When Literature Becomes Testimony of Genocide*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016, 188.

Rwandan genocide was the first ever instance of a legally identifiable criminal genocide. Three authors from the 1998 Fest' Africa project, "Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire,"³⁷ make references to and draw parallels between the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust in the works that were born of this writing meeting in Kigali: Boubacar Boris Diop in his *Murambi, le livre des ossements*, Jean-Marie Vianney Rurangwa in *Le Génocide des Tutsi expliqué à un étranger*, and Abdourahman Ali Waberi in *Moisson de crânes*. A conceptual overlap between fascism and France's and Belgium's colonial history was already highlighted by Aimé Césaire in *Discours sur le colonialisme* when he compared Nazism to colonialism in 1950 and, in that very same year, when René Vautier drew the very same parallel in his film *Afrique 50*, taking an anti-colonialist stance and condemning France's actions in West Africa.

Further echoes within my corpus come from the fact that the colonization of Algeria too has been described as a genocide.³⁸ In recent times, Turkey has accused France of perpetrating a genocide against the Algerians, stating that the country killed 15% of its colony's population,

³⁷ As part of this writing project, a group of ten African writers (Boubacar Boris Diop, Nocky Djedanoum, Monique Ilboudo, Vénuste Kayimahé, Koulsy Lamko, Tierno Monénembo, Meja Mwangi, Jean-Marie Rurangwa, Véronique Tadjou, and Abdourahman Waberi) from eight nations (these countries, seven of which are French-speaking, including Rwanda, are Senegal, Chad, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Chad, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, respectively) held a creative residency in Rwanda. As a result, nine works were published in 2000 (Mwangi's articles are forthcoming), including novels, travel essays, a collection of poetry, and a non-fictional documentation of testimony.

³⁸ For more on genocide within the context of colonialism, see the collected essays *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*. Raymond Evans's "'Crime Without a Name': Colonialism and the Case for 'Indigenocide'" and Lorenzo Veracini's "Colonialism and Genocides: Notes for the Analysis of a Settler Archive" are particularly interesting for a more in-depth approach to this topic (Edited by A. Dirk Moses. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010, 133-147; 148-161). For more on the overlap between the Holocaust and various atrocities in Algeria, see Boualem Sansal's *Le village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller* (2008), a text that intersects with these very conflicts in a fictional, yet historical, manner. As Jane Hiddleston summarizes, "*Le village de l'Allemand, ou le journal des frères Schiller (The German Mujahid)* . . . tells the story of two Algerian brothers who discover that their father had been a Nazi officer, and it explores the links among the Holocaust; the Algerian War of Independence, in the 1950s and early 1960s; the Algerian Civil War, during the 1990s; and disaffection in the Parisian banlieues today" ("Writing World Literature: Approaches from the Maghreb." *PMLA*, 131:5 (October 2016), 1391).

after France officially recognized the Armenian Genocide.³⁹ Further discussions revolving around the violation of human rights within French-Algerian relations focus on the brutality of colonialism in general and on torture or, as another example, the treatment of Harkis, Algerians drafted as auxiliaries for the French Army during the Algerian War. Maltreated, to say the least, by both the French and the Algerians after the war, they fell into a no man's land of citizenship, called "collabos" by President Bouteflika⁴⁰ and abandoned by the French.⁴¹ The Harkis epitomize colonial conflict and the aftermath of its tangled identity politics. In 2001, the children of Harkis sought retribution from the French government using the very language of "crimes against humanity."⁴² As Fatima Besnaci-Lancou explains in *Fille de harki*, an account that bears witness to the difficulties, violence, and injustices she incurred as the daughter of an Harki:

Je pense que les actions menées par des enfants de harkis, qui ont déposé le 30 août 2001 une plainte contre x pour "crimes contre l'humanité et complicité" sont de nature à aider la communauté à en finir avec l'état de colonisé. Ils demandent que l'État français reconnaisse sa responsabilité pour les massacres de supplétifs qui ont suivi l'Indépendance, parfois sous les yeux des soldats français, au mépris des accords [*sic*] d'Évian. . . . Les grèves, les manifestations, ou le dépôt de plainte pour crimes contre l'humanité sont nécessaires. . . . Les plaintes pour "crime contre l'humanité" déposées contre l'Algérie ou de "complicité de génocide" contre la France permettront peut-être que l'histoire soit dite.⁴³

³⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/23/turkey-accuses-france-genocide-algeria>. See Ben Kiernan's book *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* for more on this topic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴⁰ See <http://www.leparisien.fr/politique/bouteflika-repond-a-chirac-18-07-2000-2001510445.php>. This same incident is mentioned in Fatima Besnaci-Lancou's *Fille de harki*. As she writes in the closing page of her book, "Le Président algérien a osé comparer, sur le sol français, les harkis aux collabos" (Besnaci-Lancou, Fatima and Marie-Christine Ray. *Fille de harki: "le bouleversant témoignage d'une enfant de la guerre d'Algérie."* Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier/Les Éditions Ouvrières, 2003, 121).

⁴¹ See https://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/article/2012/04/14/sarkozy-l-etat-est-responsable-dans-l-abandon-des-harkis_1685682_1471069.html for then-current President Nicolas Sarkozy's admission of France's responsibility vis-à-vis its "abandon" of Harkis. See also Boussad Azni's *Harkis, crime d'État: Généalogie d'un abandon* (2002).

⁴² See <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20010830.OBS7920/neuf-harkis-portent-plainte-pour-crimes-contre-l-humanite.html>.

⁴³ Besnaci-Lancou, Fatima and Marie-Christine Ray. *Fille de harki: "le bouleversant témoignage d'une enfant de la guerre d'Algérie," op. cit.*, 118-119. See Géraud de Geouffre de la Pradelle's article "Le sort des harkis et la notion

And yet, it is only recently that actions committed by the French in Algeria have been – contestably – identified by the French themselves as war crimes or more largely as crimes against humanity. In February of 2017, when still a presidential candidate, Emmanuel Macron identified France’s colonization of Algeria as a “crime contre l’humanité.”⁴⁴ And yet he backed away from the statement after severe backlash pointing to the country’s division on the topic both civically and politically and its continued reticence in acknowledging its past. Although in 2018 he recognized the use of torture in 1957 Algeria on Maurice Audin, a mathematician and activist, Macron has of yet not offered an official apology on behalf of France for its colonial exploits.⁴⁵ Indeed, genocide and crimes against humanity in the postcolonial world as a whole do not hold much judicial stature. As Géraud de Geouffre de la Pradelle explains,

C’est ainsi qu’à l’issue de la Seconde Guerre mondiale furent seules incriminées à ce titre [de crime contre l’humanité] – par les États vainqueurs – les monstruosité que “les Puissances de l’Axe” perpétrèrent en Europe. Les crimes imputables aux armées japonaises firent, immédiatement après, l’objet de dispositions comparables. Plusieurs épisodes coloniaux, pratiquement contemporains des procès de Nuremberg et de Tokyo, ne suscitèrent aucune mesure de ce genre. Il fallut attendre un demi-siècle pour qu’une réaction se produise à propos des atrocités spécifiquement commises dans l’ex-Yougoslavie, puis au Rwanda, et de celles-ci seulement.⁴⁶

juridique de ‘crime contre l’humanité’” for more on the possible outcomes of this pursuit of justice and what constituted inhumane treatment of Harkis in judicial terms: “On doit pouvoir établir sans trop de peine que les éléments constitutifs du ‘crime contre l’humanité’ sont, ici, réunis – tels qu’ils figurent dans l’article 212-1 (version de 2010) [of France’s Code pénal of 1992, revised in 2010]. La plupart des actes énumérés par ses alinéas 1^o à 11^o ont effectivement été perpétrés, notamment: ‘l’atteinte volontaire à la vie’; ‘l’emprisonnement ou toute forme de privation grave de liberté’; ‘la torture’; ‘l’arrestation, la détention ou l’enlèvement de personnes, suivis de leur disparition et accompagnés du déni de la reconnaissance de la privation de liberté ou de la dissimulation du sort qui leur est réservé ou de l’endroit où elles se trouvent dans l’intention de les soustraire à la protection de la loi pendant une période prolongée, etc.” (*Les Temps Modernes*. 2001/5, n. 666, 242).

⁴⁴ See, for instance, *Le Monde*’s reporting on this: http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/02/15/macron-qualifie-la-colonisation-de-crime-contre-l-humanite-tolle-a-droite-et-au-front-national_5080331_4854003.html.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/emmanuel-macron-acknowledges-torture-algeria/570283/>.

⁴⁶ Geouffre de La Pradelle, Géraud de. “Le sort des harkis et la notion juridique de ‘crime contre l’humanité,’” *op. cit.*, 239.

I highlight the atrocities experienced in WWII Europe, Algeria, and Rwanda, and witnessed on a global scale, not only to motivate the corpus I will analyze in the following chapters, but also because these reverberations within my selected authors and the conflicts they represent in their literary production demonstrate the general hesitancy, to this day, of “speaking history.” I in no way intend to say that these different events constitute the same historical moment or trauma, but rather to point to the shared reluctance to label these cases of extreme violence and the difficulty they pose for aesthetic representation. As already mentioned, it is dangerous and unnecessary to amalgamate genocides – perhaps the only thing they have in common is their goal: the complete erasure of a group of persons – or acts of irregular war more generally. As Semujanga writes, describing the concept of the “other genocide,” that is, the comparison of genocides, consequently highlighting the dangers of analogizing and anonymizing or erasing the specificity of genocide: “citer les récits du génocide juif, c’est évoquer la tradition dans laquelle la catastrophe rwandaise a perdu sa spécificité et où son texte s’est universalisé.”⁴⁷ He further explains, focusing on Waberi’s *Moisson de crânes*, how

[t]he Holocaust acquires in *Harvest of Skulls* the function of the interpreter of genocide in order to show it as another genocide. This echo between the two tragedies should not be understood as if the Holocaust would explain the *Itsembabwoko* [Rwandan genocide]; rather, this reference enables the words to be found to say what happened in Rwanda in 1994, and in this way the Rwandan catastrophe discursively becomes the *other* genocide.⁴⁸

Far from eliminating the differences between genocides or violence more generally, I endeavor to underscore how the recapitulation of atrocity functions in works of literature – *pour que l’histoire soit dite* to recall Besnaci-Lancou’s words – and how cruelty specifically speaks to a

⁴⁷ Semujanga, Josias. “Murambi et *Moisson de crânes*: comment la fiction raconte un génocide.” *Présence francophone* 67 (2006), 112.

⁴⁸ Semujanga, Josias. *Narrating Itsembabwoko: When Literature Becomes Testimony of Genocide*, op. cit., 82. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for more on the terms *itsembabwoko* and *itsembatsemba*.

plurality of understandings of war and war crimes and, most notably, may elucidate the category of the human. The words “cruelty” and “cruel” and in particular cases in conjunction with “monstrosity,” “monstrous,” “monster” are systematically used to name, describe, and represent atrocities in literature, and thus these terms are essential for addressing and understanding humanity against the backdrop of violence. As I seek to delineate the human from the inhuman, I will also come to acknowledge precisely how fraught and unclear this divide truly is.

I will begin my detailed readings, in Chapter 2, within the context of the Second World War, by primarily analyzing Saint-Exupéry’s *Pilote de guerre* (1942). I will argue that for Saint-Exupéry, cruel acts always have value attributed to them. In other words, death in war is a valuable death, in spite of its being cruel, because it is a sacrifice. Pursuing this line of thought, I will enter into conversation with Georges Bataille and his notions of excess, economy, and sacrifice, developed in *La notion de dépense* (1933), *La Part maudite* (1949), and *L’Érotisme* (1957). I will point to the fact that Bataille in his corpus speaks of excessive violence, bizarre sexual acts, sacrificial cults, and Chinese torture,⁴⁹ but never theorizes cruelty – a lack that I will address. My literary analysis of cruelty in Saint-Exupéry’s texts will also be informed by the works of sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky and writer, Holocaust survivor, and canonical figure of post-trauma thought Primo Levi insofar as both discuss types of violence and cruelty. As Mailänder affirms:

Sofsky has developed the concept of “excess” as a means of distinguishing between “regulated” violence and “excessive” violence, which is characterized by its lack of purpose or meaning. Here Sofsky is following Primo Levi’s

⁴⁹ For more on specifically Chinese torture, or lingchi, see Bataille’s *L’Expérience intérieure* (1943) where it is first mentioned, and, of course, *Les larmes d’Éros* (1961). The English translation of this latter text, *The Tears of Eros* (Translated by Peter Connor. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 1989), includes five photographs (frequently only four are counted, but there is in fact a cropped fifth, less gory reproduction also) of the “supplice chinois des cent morceaux” (though the practice’s actual epithet is “death by a thousand cuts”). See also Gregory Blue, Timothy Brook, and Jérôme Bourgon’s *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (2008), which delves into the history of lingchi and also dialogues critically with Bataille’s description of it.

distinction between “useful” violence and “useless” violence (*violenza gratuita*), by which Levi means violent acts undertaken solely for the sake of the violence itself, and in which the sole aim is to cause the victim severe pain and bodily harm.⁵⁰

I will argue that cruelty, for Saint-Exupéry, is not simply *excessive* violence nor is it violence *characterized by its lack of purpose or meaning*. For the pilot turned writer, cruelty is not violence that overflows the human boundary. Cruelty, according to him, is a human quality and a word used to describe valuable acts. In Saint-Exupéry, cruelty functions within the human realm, in contrast to acts described as “monstrous,” the word used in dehumanized scenes of acts devoid of value, that is, gratuitous acts, acts so atrocious that they lose all sense and meaning. Thus, by considering how cruelty functions in Saint-Exupéry’s humanist corpus, I will try to understand what constitutes a “humanist” cruelty – cruelty presumed to be uniquely human. I will argue that it is in fact what Saint-Exupéry calls “cruelty” that comes to define his humanism, and that his uses of the words “cruel” and “monstrous” emerge as symptomatic of the problematic that underwrites my study.

In Chapter 3, I will focus on torture in Algeria during both the War of Independence and the Civil War. In order to contextualize the violence of the latter conflict, it is vital to underscore the fact that the insurrection launched by the Front de libération nationale (FLN) against the French in 1954 did not exactly produce a more satisfactory or just outcome for many Algerian citizens. The revolution, then, did not result in any kind of transformative politics, a sentiment summarized well in Bachi’s *La Kahéna* (2003): “Envolées les promesses de démocratie. Nous

⁵⁰ Mailänder Koslov, Elissa. *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, *op. cit.*, 256.

nous sommes battus pour ça! Pour des bandits qui nous ont pris en otages. Et tous sont fatigués de lutter.”⁵¹ The text’s narrator continues:

L’indépendance de l’Algérie proclamée, les prétendants, ils étaient légion, remplacèrent, après 1962 et jusqu’en 1965, les anciens maîtres du pays. Contrairement à ce qu’enseignaient les manuels scolaires, il n’y eut pas de révolution, ou alors ce fut celle du retour à la case départ. Les nouveaux arrivants allaient user des mêmes armes: exploitation et confiscation de nos droits. . . . Hamid Kaïm l’avait compris, quand, dix ans auparavant, en 1979, avec Ali Kahn, ils avaient été arrêtés puis torturés, comme l’avaient été leurs pères par l’armée française.⁵²

Bachi draws a parallel between the French suppression of the FLN during the War for Independence and the FLN’s suppression of young Algerian activists a decade later. Following the 1978 death of Houari Boumedienne, the second President of Algeria, the collapse of Algeria’s oil economy as a result of austerity measures taken by the government, and a general lack of social infrastructure in place for a quickly growing population, Algeria’s youth had fewer and fewer job prospects and a rather bleak future to look forward to. With the 1979 elections looming, they watched the well-off elite of the autocratic regime – the FLN had held power in a single-party political system since Algeria’s independence in 1962 – and expressed their anger and desire for democratization through riots. After a decade of exasperation, thousands took to the streets of Algiers from October 5th to 11th, 1988 during what came to be quickly known as “la semaine sanglante”: the army retaliated with what became “le plus grand massacre perpétré depuis la guerre d’Algérie.”⁵³

In 1989, after ongoing manifestations, protesting, and rioting following *octobre 88*, the constitution was amended succeeding a referendum, which resulted in the legalization of other

⁵¹ Bachi, Salim. *La Kahéna*. Paris: Gallimard, 2003, 196.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 299.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 227. For more see “Algeria: Riots of October 1988” published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aba95c.html>.

political parties. In the local elections of 1990, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) defeated the FLN. In the primaries of the general elections of 1992, held on December 26, 1991, the FIS looked as though it would once again claim victory; this led to a military coup d'état and the cancelling of the second round of elections, ultimately leading to the beginning of the Algerian Civil War. Bey chronicles the coup in *Bleu blanc vert* (2006) as follows:

À la suite des récents affrontements entre l'armée et les islamistes qui ont appelé à la désobéissance civile et à la grève générale, l'état de siège vient d'être instauré pour tenter, a-t-on déclaré, de ramener l'ordre et garder le contrôle de la situation. Alger est sous couvre-feu à partir de huit heures le soir. Les hélicoptères de l'armée tournent inlassablement au-dessus de la ville, tels de gros bourdons noirs. Le hululement des sirènes des voitures de police et des ambulances trace dans la nuit de longs sillons d'angoisse, tandis que de pneus brûlés, çà et là, dégagent une fumée noire et pestilentielle qui s'insinue jusqu'au cœur des maisons.⁵⁴

Describing distorted sights, sounds, and smells pervading the city's landscape, Bey paints a somber picture of quotidian civilian life disrupted and permanently altered by the violence of war.

Both the Algerian War and the Algerian Civil War, then, were characterized by acts of terrorism and guerilla warfare – prime examples of martial irregularity. Torture, another such example, was also frequently practiced in both conflicts. Indeed, when the Civil War began in 1991, torture in Algeria was not a new phenomenon. As the now canonical *La Bataille d'Alger* (1966) shows, torture was already a regular occurrence during the War of Independence. Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958), for instance, sparked outrage in France vis-à-vis the interrogation methods used on the journalist by the French Armed Forces. Alleg, a European in Algeria who

⁵⁴ Bey, Maïssa. *Bleu blanc vert*. La Tour-d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube, 2007, 276.

served as director of the *Alger Républicain* from 1950 to 1955, recounts with precise detail in *La Question* his torture – including waterboarding – by French paratroopers.

Chapter 3 will specifically focus on torture as residing outside the limits of rule-abiding conflict. This will first be seen in my analysis of Bachi's Cyrtha trilogy comprised of *Le Chien d'Ulysse* (2001), *La Kahéna*, and *Les douze contes de minuit* (2007). In his mythologized portrayals of Algeria during the Civil War, Bachi depicts many cruel scenes, including multiple characters who administer torture. My analysis of Bachi's novels will serve to further identify the ever-shifting, nebulous limit between the human and the inhuman that is defined by cruelty and the beyond. Cruelty for Bachi is seen as violence that is justified and rationalized; it describes valuable and useful violent acts. But Bachi is simultaneously a writer of the monstrous; he does not only describe men who perform torture "for a reason," but equally men who commit gratuitous atrocious acts. As I will show, Bachi obfuscates Saint-Exupéry's clearly defined distinctions between cruelty and monstrosity, consequently categorizing perpetrators of torture as *both* cruel and monstrous.

My study of Bey, too, will consider the violent nature of torture and its possible hybrid designation. As she writes in *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .* (2002), collapsing *homme* and *monstre*: "Toute petite déjà, elle essayait de donner un visage aux hommes qui avaient torturé puis achevé son père avant de le jeter dans une fosse commune. Mais elle ne parvenait pas à leur donner un visage d'homme. Ce ne pouvait être que des monstres."⁵⁵ I will focus predominantly on this book as well as on *Puisque mon cœur est mort* (2010) and *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre* (2008), in an effort to study how cruelty and monstrosity operate in Bey's

⁵⁵ Bey, Maïssa. *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .* La Tour-d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube, 2015.

writing. As in my analysis of Bachi, I will be underlining how torture can be seen as a valuable act by its perpetrators in spite of its being cruel, but can equally be understood as a monstrous, gratuitous action. I will also inform my literary analyses with archival finds, namely various documents and reports pertaining to colonial and postcolonial atrocity in Algeria from the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University. Bringing together historical texts and literary ones in this chapter once again attempts to bridge the gap between fiction and reality vis-à-vis my theory of the cruel and underscores the general relevance of literature in understanding real-life instances of violent conflict. Indeed, as I have stated on a couple of occasions now, the literary texts studied here are related to historical events, and if we look at the treatment of the historical in terms of its archival record, we see a similar problematic emerge to that identifiable in the literary. In other words, when we consider archival materials, we see a massive, overwhelming breadth of shocking information about atrocity, and if we scratch the surface of this record, beyond simply stating that the archive shows horrific things from a horrific historical period, we notice that we are digging up the same sorts of issues there that we witness in the literary examples: the archive will bring up the cruel just as much as, and in a similar way to the literary.

In Chapter 4, I will turn to Gatore's *Le Passé devant soi* (2008), a text that focuses on the Rwandan genocide. This book tells the story of an unlikely encounter between people on two sides of the genocide – the murderer Niko, hiding in a cave among a family of monkeys after having actively and voluntarily participated in the genocide,⁵⁶ and the orphaned survivor Isaro,

⁵⁶ We find out at the end of the book that Niko is actually a fictionalized character created by Isaro. Bernard de Meyer also explains the genesis of *Le Passé devant soi*: the novel was born of Gatore's childhood diary, thus a genuine marriage of fact and fiction: "Le point de départ avoué de ce roman complexe serait un cahier que le jeune Gatore aurait tenu durant la première moitié des années 1990, mais qui s'est perdu lorsque l'adolescent a quitté l'Afrique Centrale quelques années après le génocide" (De Meyer, Bernard. "*Le Passé devant soi* de Gilbert Gatore: du génocide à la littérature." *French Studies in Southern Africa*, no. 47, 2017, 40).

adopted into a French family when her own family is murdered, but who chooses to return to Rwanda to carry out a project, “En mémoire de . . .,” that she identifies as extremely urgent, timely, and necessary. Her goal is to collect, years after the event, the testimony of both those who orchestrated the genocide and those who survived it. In this chapter’s analyses, I will concentrate on how *Le Passé devant soi* acutely puts into focus the human-inhuman divide, but this time pairs the figure of the monstrous with that of the animal: both the perpetrator, deemed monstrous and bestial, and his victims, who are killed on the basis of being judged as less-than-human and also animalistic, have their humanity called into question in Gatore’s text. This chapter seeks to understand how the categories of human, monster, and, additionally, animal operate in *Le Passé devant soi* in order to further inform the theory of cruelty that I am developing here.

Niko, for instance, is described on several occasions as a monster because of his deviance from the human norm. His disfigured smile is frightening, and, moreover, he is mute. His inability to speak is thus a lack that can be seen as “monstrous” in the Aristotelian sense, that is, a physical deviance from the norm. At one moment Niko is described as not quite human: “une horrible poupée possédant tout d’un être humain sauf la voix. . . .”⁵⁷ But the specificity of his difference emerges by means of his relation to animality. At multiple moments, Niko is considered to be one of the monkeys with whom he lives. “Trente-huit avec lui,”⁵⁸ the narrator repeats as Niko counts himself as one of the monkeys. Descriptions like that of “Niko-le-singe”⁵⁹ will be an opportunity to study how monstrosity and cruelty relate to animality. By turning to Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002) and various accounts of ethnographic

⁵⁷ Gatore, Gilbert. *Le passé devant soi*. Paris: Phébus, 2008, 95.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 72, 73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

research conducted in Rwanda, the crux of this chapter is to argue that labelling Niko as animal in fact humanizes him. But it does so in an unexpected way, for it requires a profound reassessment of the positivities that are presumed to define the human. Thus in this chapter, I will juxtapose cruelty to monstrosity and animality in order to further understand the imbrication of human and inhuman against the backdrop of irregular atrocities and war crimes.

Characterized by guerrilla warfare and the willful killing of civilians that took place well outside any classical or conventional conception of war, the Rwandan genocide resulted in the killing of at least eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus – by some estimates closer to one million⁶⁰ – in the span of 100 days following the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana along with Burundi’s President Cyprien Ntaryamira when their plane was shot down near Kigali on April 6, 1994. And yet the genocide did not spontaneously occur solely in response to Habyarimana’s death. There are many elements – historical, colonial, and political – that contributed to “manufacturing difference”⁶¹ between the Hutu majority (85%) and Tutsi minority (14%) in Rwanda.⁶² I would like to briefly reference these factors and contextualize the genocide here.

Ruanda-Urundi (present-day Rwanda and Burundi), a former German colony, was made a League of Nations protectorate and given to Belgium in 1921 as a spoil of WWI under the Treaty of Versailles signed in 1919. The Belgians instituted ethnic identity cards starting in 1933 (continuing into 1994) that explicitly labeled individuals as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. Like the

⁶⁰ See <https://unictr.irmct.org/en/genocide>.

⁶¹ Hinton, Alexander Laban. “The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide.” *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*. Edited by Alexander Laban Hinton. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002, 14.

⁶² The final 1% is represented by the Twa people. As the human rights organization Minority Rights Group International notes, “The Twa people (or Batwa) can be considered the forgotten victims of the Rwandan war and genocide; their suffering has gone largely unrecognised” (<https://minorityrights.org/minorities/twa-2/>).

Germans, the Belgians favored the Tutsi for positions of power. Historically the Tutsi were herders, while the Hutu were farmers, and the Europeans used this as a justification of their artificially-induced ethnic hierarchy. Furthermore, the Belgians continued to support the myth that the Tutsi were Hamites from the Horn of Africa (specifically Abyssinia) and thus more civilized, while the Hutu, a Bantu group, were supposedly less so. The Hamitic theory supported that the Tutsi were descendants of Ham, Noah's son.⁶³

Colonialism sowed the seeds of ethnic hatred that was only amplified by the institution of ID cards, but after Rwanda's independence in 1962, ethnic-division-induced tensions were further aggravated, with the West still playing its part. The role of the French selling arms to Rwanda certainly contributed to the severity of the genocide. Researcher and former spokesperson for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) Tim Gallimore explains how, among other instances, "[i]n May 1993, a French arms dealer agreed to sell \$12 million worth of weapons to Rwanda. On Jan. 21, 1994, in violation of the terms of the recent peace accords, a French DC-8 cargo plane landed covertly in Kigali loaded with weapons,

⁶³ Summaries of historical Hutu-Tutsi relations abound. What I have included here is but a fraction of the history of Rwanda, though I have tried to paint a varied picture of the colonial and internal turmoil the country experienced preceding the genocide. The aforementioned *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* by Philip Gourevitch is an excellent introduction to the topic. Alison Des Forges's 789-page *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* is considered to be the definitive source on the topic. Des Forges was a MacArthur Fellow, human rights activist, and historian. Her text contextualizes the genocide historically, geographically, and politically, and also explains the situation before, during, and after genocide. Incidentally, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has a YouTube page that publishes, among other videos, eyewitness testimony of genocide and global atrocity. These testimony videos include Clemantine Wamariya on survivorship and dehumanization (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrFZAofNGi4>) and Des Forges discussing her phone call with Monique Mujawamariya, a human rights advocate colleague in Rwanda. Twelve hours after Habyarimana's assassination, Mujawamariya hung up the phone on Des Forges because she did not wish to have her friend hear her being murdered (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vw4uvNsQciA>). Mujawamariya ended up surviving. Des Forges perished in 2009 in an airplane crash in the US. Clemantine Wamariya recently coauthored with Elizabeth Weil a memoir entitled *The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After* (2018).

including 90 boxes of 60mm mortars.”⁶⁴ Indeed both machetes and automatic weapons were used in the massacres. Gallimore further explains:

Genocide is always organised, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility. And while it is true that most of the killings in Rwanda in 1994 were carried out with machetes and clubs, those government-sponsored militias that were intent on carrying out large-scale massacres were reliant on imported automatic rifles and hand grenades.⁶⁵

Ultimately, as Jean Hatzfeld underlines, the use of these various weapons, the purpose behind these acts of extreme violence, “was meant to purify the earth, to cleanse it of its cockroach[es].”⁶⁶ Moreover, during the genocide itself, there was very little interest on the part of the international community in intervening to stop these acts or their enablement. In fact the word “genocide” was not even used at the time by the media to describe the violence marking this landlocked nation in East Africa, far from the minds of those in any other part of the world, nor were the acts ever labelled as genocide by any international body or nation as they were occurring, and only identified as such after the fact.

Examples of violence and related conflicts that preceded and followed the Rwandan genocide – creating a nexus of warfare – are numerous. They include the Burundian genocides (Hutus killed by Tutsis in 1972 and Tutsis killed by Hutus in 1993) and the two Congo Wars: the first, an invasion of Zaire (the name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1971 to 1997) by Rwanda lasting between 1996 and 1997 and the second, also known as the Great African War, lasting from 1998 to 2003. The Rwandan genocide occurred within the context of armed struggle also: the Rwandan Civil War, which began on October 1, 1990 when the

⁶⁴ Gallimore, Tim. “A Closer Look at Where Rwanda’s Lethal Weapons Came From.” *Huffington Post*, 11 Apr. 2014. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-gallimore/a-closer-look-at-where-rw_b_5135559.html.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* See also Linda Melvern’s *Conspiracy to Murder* (2004).

⁶⁶ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*. Translated by Linda Coverdale. London: Serpent’s Tail, 2008, 64.

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) led by Paul Kagame invaded northeastern Rwanda from Uganda. The Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR, *Forces armées rwandaises*) responded to this attack and fighting persisted until August 4, 1993 when the Arusha Accords, peace treaties, were signed. The RPF resumed fighting on April 7, 1994 and the civil war came to an end on July 18th of that same year. The end of the genocide was followed, in 1994, by a refugee crisis and the fleeing of two million Hutus to the Congo.

There have, however, also been positive developments in social and judicial structures following the Rwandan genocide. The ICTR as mentioned above, for instance, was inaugurated by the United Nations Security Council on November 8, 1994 to try those responsible for orchestrating and carrying out the genocide.⁶⁷ Mandated until December 31, 2015, the ICTR was indeed the first ever judicial body to convict a perpetrator of genocidal war crimes: on September 2, 1998 Jean-Paul Akayesu was judged and found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity.⁶⁸ In addition to the Tribunal, other courts across the country, including the communal Gacaca court system, were put in charge of judicial proceedings and punishments surrounding the genocide. As well as establishing a retributive justice system, in the twenty-six years since the genocide, Rwanda has developed a restorative system of justice through various educational programs along with the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), since 1999, to work toward national peace and reunification. The NURC's mission, as stated on their website, is "to promote Unity and Reconciliation among Rwandans in the aftermath of the devastating 1994 genocide against Tutsis"⁶⁹ through civic education, community-based initiatives, and

⁶⁷ Since then, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, also instituted by the United Nations Security Council, has assumed control of the duties and responsibilities of the ICTR as well as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

⁶⁸ <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007157>.

⁶⁹ <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/index.php?id=83>.

national summits. Furthermore, nonprofit organizations such as Association Modeste et Innocent bring Hutus and Tutsis together in an effort to also work toward reconciliation. In general, various projects – small and large – have been proposed to try and overcome the monumental aftermath of the genocide.⁷⁰

Despite these facts, Gatore's *Le Passé devant soi* in fact eschews any and all description of the genocide or its aftermath. Chapter 4 will thus also raise the problem of witnessing – the recital of repeating the unfolding of a past event in a different context – and the juxtaposition of fiction to testimony as Isaro's project "En mémoire de . . ." inevitably underscores, bringing to mind a text like Derrida's *Demeure: Maurice Blanchot* (1998). In *Demeure*, Derrida focuses on the division, the limits, even the border between fiction and testimony,⁷¹ testimony *in* fiction, fiction and autobiography, by analyzing the role of attestation in Blanchot's *L'Instant de ma mort* (1994) as well as the very act of bearing witness that Blanchot's text itself, by existing, undertakes.⁷² The nebulous form of Gatore's novel – alternating between Isaro's project and

⁷⁰ *Munyurangabo*, Lee Isaac Chung's 2007 chillingly beautiful Kinyarwanda-language film, tells one such story through the friendship between two young men, Munyurangabo (Ngabo) and Sangwa, whose relationship is tried when they stay in Sangwa's village for a few days. The latter's parents brew tension between the two boys, since, as we discover, Ngabo is Tutsi, while Sangwa is Hutu. The film, which offers a reflection on vengeance and reconciliation, begins with the boys stealing a machete, as they are on a revenge mission to kill the man who slaughtered Ngabo's parents in the genocide. Toward the end of the movie, for an entire 6 minutes, a young Hutu man recites a poem entitled "Liberation is a Journey" for national liberation day, July 4th, which commemorates the day the RPF marched into Kigali. In a slow-moving scene, the Hutu teen talks about how he was taught to hate the RPF and to see the Tutsi as cockroaches. He condemns the Hutu majority for having forced young children to participate in the genocide, calling it an injustice to have turned beautiful Rwanda into a cemetery. He highlights how the Rwandan future is bleak, painting a shameful image of contemporary Rwanda, poverty-stricken and misogynistic, and underlines the need to give women a voice. He concludes with a dream to "[sit] together on the grass without division or hate . . . as we live in peace and the guilty seek forgiveness" (Film Movement, 1:21:44). This particular scene can possibly be seen as too idealized, a reconciliation that leads to easy forgiveness and a kind of unrealistic patriotic utopia where everyone gets along, *sits together on the grass*, and loves their reunited country. The rest of the film, however, is a much more honest and accurate rendition of the difficulty of reconciliation. The last scene is a subtle ode to forgiveness: once Ngabo has finally reached the murderer of his family, he cannot bear to kill him. The perpetrator, on his death bed, is parched. Ngabo gets him some water and even helps him drink it.

⁷¹ "C'est le filet de ces limites *entre* fiction et témoignage" (Derrida, Jacques. *Demeure*. Paris: Galilée, 1998, 70).

⁷² Frequently, analyses of testimony also focus on survivorship. See, for instance, Kyle Ikeda's "Unarticulated Memories of the Battle of Okinawa: The Early Fiction of Second-Generation War Survivor Medoruma Shun" (2014) or Maggie Zraly and Laetitia Nyirazinyoye's "Don't let the suffering make you fade away: An ethnographic

Niko's narrative – as we will see, performs a similar function, and not only questions the value of Niko's life, but equally how to represent the genocide and talk about its perpetrators in fiction. Genocide, as we recall from its etymology, is complete and utter elimination, the entire obliteration of a race, an act that invokes a semantic network composed of words such as “complete,” “destroy,” and “exterminate.” As Marc Nichanian, focusing on the Armenian genocide, notes, “Genocide is not a fact because it is the very destruction of the fact, of the notion of fact, of the factuality of fact.”⁷³ Indeed, how does one collect testimony of an event that is meant to completely erase and annihilate? Are works of literature, like *Le Passé devant soi* – in a double capacity through both Isaro's “real” plot and Niko's nested fictional narrative – the response to this *destruction of the factuality of fact*?

Such a question once again underscores the motivation for coupling the archive with literature. The historical record is interesting for its own sake, but literary texts can help us make better sense of it. In other words, there are certain topics and events that judicial narratives simply cannot do justice to, certainly emotionally, and literature thus acts as an archive to tell that story. As Isaro explains in *Le Passé devant soi*:

Même les mensonges des gens, leurs omissions, leurs exagérations me paraissent intéressantes. N'oubliez pas que l'objectif de cette aventure est précisément de mettre en lumière la subjectivité, car c'est là-dessus que se fondent la haine et la violence. Je crois qu'il ne faut pas chercher à tirer vers nous l'horreur de ces événements mais à aller vers elle. Il s'agit de montrer comment les gens qui l'ont connue se tiennent devant elle et en elle, et non pas de leur dire comment ils devraient s'y tenir.⁷⁴

study of resilience among survivors of genocide-rape in southern Rwanda” (2010). I, however, will not be addressing survivorship in this dissertation as it is already a rich topic that has been studied at length.

⁷³ Nichanian, Marc. *The Historiographic Perversion*. Translated by Gil Anidjar. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, 1.

⁷⁴ Gatore, Gilbert. *Le passé devant soi, op. cit.*, 90.

Literature is a collection, an assortment, of opinion, fact, and perspective. It is testimony that bears witness to human beliefs and behavior, and the way in which atrocity is communicated in narrative is essential to our understanding of the traumatic events that define it. Stories of violence must be heard over and over again, in light of numerous voices and various insights. Building on the structural importance of *Le Passé devant soi*, narrative form and its power to communicate the seemingly incommunicable will become the central focus of the chapter following my study of Gatore.

In Chapter 5, I will come full circle by concluding with Duras and returning to WWII, the period with which I begin my dissertation alongside Saint-Exupéry. Duras's corpus and Duras herself have been studied and written on at length and so a question arises, why her? A first, trivial, answer to this question, is that perhaps she has been studied as much as she has because her corpus *has* that much to offer. A second answer – less trivial but just as relevant – is that perhaps everything has not yet been said on the topic of Duras – especially with respect to what Duras herself did not say in her fiction. In this final chapter, I will explore Duras's omissions, her *non-dits*, her writing that instills no pathos with respect to cruel events in the short stories from *La douleur* (1985), an autobiographical text recounting Duras's role in the Resistance during the Vichy era. Against this backdrop of yet another manifestation of irregular warfare, I will focus on questions of textual aesthetics and narrative strategy by analyzing erasure in these texts paradoxically through Duras's use of repetition: her insistence on fear, on the word "peur," in "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier," for instance, and pain, with the persistent presence of the word "douleur," in "La douleur." I will develop erasure as an overflowing of silence, which I will counterintuitively come to define as abject in an act of both dialogue and debate with Julia Kristeva's conceptualization of the term in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (1980). This erasure I will also

term impersonal writing, that is, an extension of the writing of the impersonal as developed by Sharon Cameron in *Impersonality: Seven Essays* (2007), exploring how narratological impersonality is an expulsion of anything human in these short stories by Duras. This would thus demonstrate how a textual abjection through the erasure of cruelty by the author is, once again, a staging of cruelty and its destabilization of the human into the realm of the inhuman.

As I have underscored in this introduction, my project endeavors to listen to the narratives of war, to the echoes among stories of excessive, extreme violence. I seek to understand how warfare is conceived in the modern era specifically through cruelty, and to define cruelty and its related terms against historical martial conflicts as a concept that brings into focus the problematics of the distinction between the human and the inhuman. I have chosen various literary texts that illustrate these blurred fault lines, and bring to the fore the post-Schmittian nature of contemporary global conflict, and politics in general today, through the notion of cruelty. In the final analysis, this dissertation argues, *one should open one's eyes and take a new look at the human, or rather in-human, through this very concept.*⁷⁵

⁷⁵ See Chapter 1's epigraph.

ABBREVIATIONS

The primary texts referenced in this work have been abbreviated as shown below. Pages are cited in parenthesis and refer to the edition listed here (and in the Bibliography).

* * *

Bachi, Salim.

Le Chien d'Ulysse. LCU
Paris: Gallimard, 2001.

Les douze contes de minuit. DCM
---, 2007.

La Kahéna. LK
---, 2003.

Bey, Maïssa.

À contre-silence. ACS
Grigny: Éditions Paroles d'Aube, 1998.

Bleu blanc vert. BBV
La Tour-d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube, 2007.

Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . . EVDM
---, 2015.

Pierre sang papier ou cendre. PSPC
---, 2016.

Puisque mon cœur est mort. PCM
---, 2015.

Duras, Marguerite.

"Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier." MX

"La douleur." LaD

"Albert des capitales." AdesC

"Ter le milicien." TleM

"L'Ortie brisée." OB

La douleur. Paris: Gallimard, 2011.

L'homme assis dans le couloir. LADC
Paris: Minuit, 1980.

Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein. RLVS
Paris: Gallimard, 2006.

Gatore, Gilbert.

Le Passé devant soi.

Paris: Phébus, 2008.

LPDS

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de.

Carnets.

Paris: Gallimard, 2000.

Ca

Citadelle.

C

Écrits de guerre, 1939-1944.

ÉdeG

---, 1994.

Pilote de guerre.

PdeG

---, 2010.

Terre des hommes.

TdesH

---, 1990.

Vol de nuit.

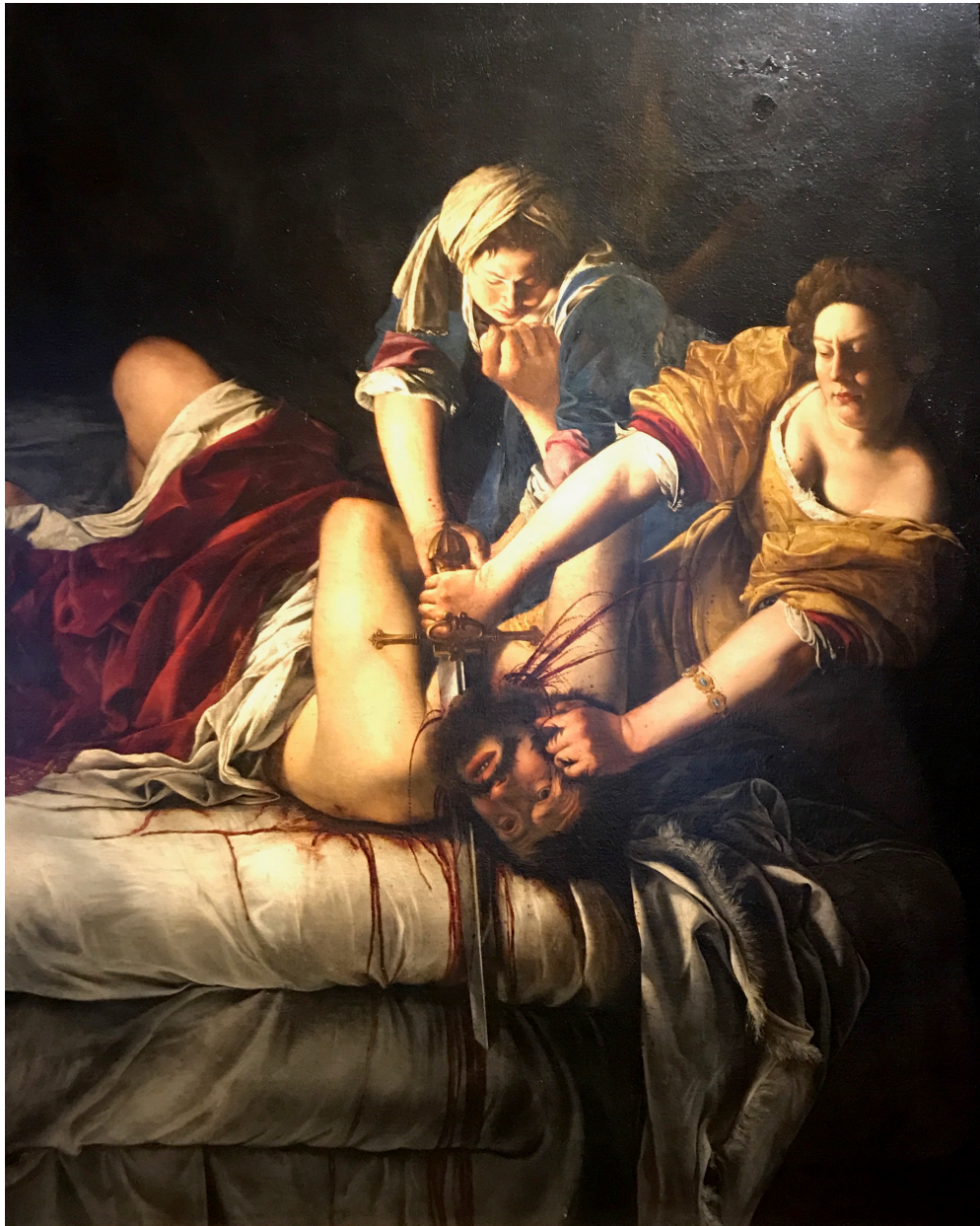
VdeN

---, 2007.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS CRUELTY? CONTEXTUALIZING A MULTIFARIOUS WORD

Perhaps I am risking something when I let one of these truths escape: let others capture it again and give it sufficient of the “milk of pious thoughts” for it to lie still and forgotten in its old corner. – One should open one’s eyes and take a new look at cruelty.
— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*



Artemisia Gentileschi. *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, ca. 1620-1621. The Uffizi Gallery, Firenze (personal photograph)

Carotid artery severed and uncontrollably spewing blood, Holofernes is dead, as told in the deuterocanonical *Book of Judith* and rendered by Artemisia Gentileschi, ca. 1620-1621.¹ The viewer of *Judith Slaying Holofernes* is struck by the determined, peaceful face of the one doing the deed: Judith is seen beheading the general in order to set the city of Bethulia free. Drunk and enamored by her, the commander has let the alluring widow into his tent only then to be held down by a servant and have Judith cut off his head. From the bright red blood dripping and drenching the white silken sheets, even dramatically spraying upward in the shape of a quill, to the intent of the slayer, the agent of the crime, seen through the resolute expression on her face and the strong grip on her sword, the cruelty of the scene is vividly apparent. The act may be atrocious, but necessary for the good of Bethulia's people. The representation is theatrical, excessive, and violently bloody. This is cruelty in all its splendor.

Though Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (1975) analyzes the birth of the prison in the French penal system and the supposed de-theatricalization and de-spectacularizing of punishment, it first begins with a description of Damians's death following an attempted regicide; noticeably, it is theatrical, excessive, and violently bloody. Casanova, present at the execution on March 28, 1757, contextualizes the failed assassin's killing and also paints a vivid picture of the event in his *Memoirs*:

Damien was a fanatic, who . . . had tried to assassinate Louis XV; and though the attempt was a failure, and he only gave the king a slight wound, he was torn to pieces as if his crime had been consummated. While this victim of the

¹ This painting has been housed in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence since 1774. The beheading of Holofernes or representations of Judith simply holding Holofernes's head after the deed has been done have in fact been rendered by various painters, from Cristofano Allori and Caravaggio to Gustav Klimt. No depiction is as bloody, as cruel, as Gentileschi's, however. As Jean-Luc Nancy asserts in an essay in *The Ground of the Image* (2005) (*Au fond des images*, 2003), "the extreme violence of *cruelty* hovers at the edge of the image, of all images. . . . He who is cruel and violent wants to see blood spilt. He wants to see the internal life principle externalized, with all its colorful and flowing intensity. . . . Perhaps every image borders on cruelty. The art galleries of the West are full of images of bloodshed" (Nancy, Jean-Luc. "Image and Violence." *The Ground of the Image*. Translated by Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, 24-25).

Jesuits was being executed, I was several times obliged to turn away my face and to stop my ears as I heard his piercing shrieks, half of his body having been torn from him. . . .²

Foucault cites accounts even more horrific than that:

“Après deux ou trois tentatives, l’exécuteur Samson et celui qui l’avait tenaillé ont tiré chacun un couteau de leur poche et ont coupé les cuisses au défaut du tronc du corps, les quatre chevaux étant à plein collier ont emporté les deux cuisses après eux, savoir: celle du côté droit la première, l’autre ensuite; ensuite en a été fait autant aux bras et à l’endroit des épaules et aisselles et aux quatre parties; il a fallu couper les chairs jusque presque aux os, les chevaux tirant à plein collier ont remporté le bras droit le premier et l’autre après.”³

Quite clearly, Damiens’s execution was as botched – and cruel – as it gets. His body was destroyed and his punishment, purposely as painful as possible, was bound up with his torture. Following this infamous execution, as Foucault explains, two parallel reforms ostensibly come into effect that lead to “la disparition des supplices”⁴: “l’effacement du spectacle punitif”⁵ and “la prise sur le corps qui se dénoue,”⁶ that is, the enlightened “annulation de la douleur.”⁷ We observe this ideology being put in place with the first use of the guillotine in 1792 in France and the presumption that the mechanical reliability of the method made it the first humane form of the death penalty. David Wills in *Killing Times* (2019)⁸ explains how a similar humanist

² Translated by Arthur Machen. *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt 1725-1798*, Vol. 3, Ch. 1, Episode 11. Project Gutenberg: (2006) 2016, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2981/2981-h/2981-h.htm#linkB2HCH0001>.

³ Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard, 2008, 11 citing A.L. Zevaes, *Damiens le régicide*, 1937, 201-214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸ An elucidating reflection on the logic of the death penalty through an analysis of the temporality of capital punishment, *Killing Times* begins with a discussion of the 8th Amendment, taking Justice Harry A. Blackmun’s characterization of the death penalty as “machinery of death” (“From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death.” *Callins v. Collins*, 510 U.S. 1141 (1994)) as a point of departure. In Chapter 3, “The Future Anterior of Blood,” Wills analyses the moment, the duration, of the instant, and pain and punishment in conversation with Derrida, Heidegger, and Hegel, examining the fluid mechanics of blood and arguing that “the merging of the history of blood with the history of humanity derives from the fact that blood marks *the time of the human*” (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019, 91); “blood is a function of time” (88). The chapter culminates in his statement that lethal injection is just as bloody and cruel a method of capital punishment as other

movement was born in the US around this time, two years after France's inauguration of the Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen in 1789: "the 1791 Bill of Rights, and in particular the Eighth Amendment of the American Constitution, determined precisely – as did the French Revolution, however perverse the excesses of the Terror – that the death penalty should not be performed in such a way as to inflict such extreme suffering; in no way should it amount to torture."⁹ We witness, here, in both the French and American cases, the birth of the modernist conceptualization of punishment: the new penal code following the French and American Revolutions forbids torture for capital crimes and outlaws indiscriminate forms of capital punishment. And yet the last two centuries have shown us that this is not entirely the case. Indeed, Foucault's own use of the words "denial" and "utopia" when sarcastically paraphrasing the justice system precisely capture this lack of change:

s'opère la dénégation théorique: l'essentiel de la peine que nous autres, juges, nous infligeons, ne croyez pas qu'il consiste à punir; il cherche à corriger, redresser, "guérir"; une technique de l'amélioration refoule, dans la peine, la stricte expiation du mal, et libère les magistrats du vilain métier de châtier;

Utopie de la pudeur judiciaire: ôter l'existence en évitant de laisser sentir le mal, priver de tous les droits sans faire souffrir, imposer les peines affranchies de douleur.¹⁰

And so, what about the so-called reforms that Foucault identifies above? *La prise sur le corps qui se dénoue*? Underlining that the body still remains an instrument or intermediary, Foucault brings to light the fact that even if it is no longer a question of physical pain inflicted onto the body, it is the body that is locked up or has hard labor as a revocation of rights forced onto it in

forms of the death penalty. As Wills argues, "vis-à-vis the time of blood both [decapitation and lethal injection] are equally bloody, and, one might argue, equally cruel" (118).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 60. Wills again explains, "During [the post-Enlightenment] period, the concept of capital punishment will have explicitly separated itself from the practice of torture. In rejecting torture, the death penalty will become a function of the recognized human right not to have pain inflicted, either for its own sake, or for the sake of some reason of the state" (20).

¹⁰ Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir, op. cit.*, 17, 18.

this new era of punishment¹¹: “même s’ils ne font pas appel à des châtiments violents ou sanglants, même lorsqu’ils utilisent les méthodes ‘douces’ qui enferment ou corrigent, c’est bien toujours du corps qu’il s’agit – du corps et de ses forces, de leur utilité et de leur docilité, de leur répartition et de leur soumission.”¹² And what about *l’effacement du spectacle punitif*?¹³ With the phasing out of the guillotine, the 19th century certainly witnessed a greater concealment of capital punishment,¹⁴ which seems to have continued into our present era with the advent of lethal injection.¹⁵ Though today’s punishment may no longer take central stage among the masses and may have become “invisible” in so far as bloodless, botched lethal injections – *botched* being increasingly their status quo – are just as exhibitionist, appalling, and deliberately dissuasive by example in their execution and their very, continued, existence.

Indeed the mismanagement of state death by intravenous drug is one of many reasons why lethal injection is highly controversial. Even Hospira, the only US company to manufacture sodium thiopental, suspended its synthesis in 2009 because of its use in capital punishment,

¹¹ As Foucault explains, “le châtimement est passé d’un art des sensations insupportables à une économie des droits suspendus” (*ibid.*, 18).

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ Derrida in *La Bête et le souverain* (Paris: Galilée, 440-441) calls into question Foucault’s additional attribution in *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* of the decline of the cruel administration of the death penalty and decline of the death penalty more generally to the advent of biopower because power in the modern age functions with life instead of death. As Foucault states: “Dès lors que le pouvoir s’est donné pour fonction de gérer la vie, ce n’est pas la naissance de sentiments humanitaires, c’est la raison d’être du pouvoir et la logique de son exercice qui ont rendu de plus en plus difficile l’application de la peine de mort” (Paris: Gallimard, 181). Freud develops a very similar line of thinking to Foucault’s in one of his letters to Einstein, and Derrida similarly comments it in *États d’âme de la psychanalyse*: “C’est ainsi qu’il [Freud] justifie, par la vie, par la vie organique, le droit à la vie (donc implicitement la condamnation non seulement de la guerre mais de la peine de mort)” (Derrida, Jacques. *États d’âme de la psychanalyse: l’impossible au-delà d’une souveraine cruauté*. Paris: Galilée, 2000, 78).

¹⁴ Wills elucidates how the spectacle of the death penalty continued to be a public affair well into the 20th century: “the tradition of spectacle had, since colonial times, brought thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of onlookers to witness executions. . . . That practice would continue into the 19th century and in certain states public executions lasted well into the 20th century. The last such event in the U.S. was the execution of Roscoe Jackson in 1937, witnessed by several hundred people who crowded into the small town of Galena, Missouri. Those able to pay the admission fee were allowed into the stockade surrounding the gallows; others crowded outside. It is reported that a number of spectators left the scene with a souvenir piece of the rope used for the hanging” (Wills, David. *Killing Times*, *op. cit.*, 60-61).

¹⁵ At the time of writing, lethal injection is the primary method of capital punishment used in the 29 US states that practice the death penalty, the federal government, and the military.

leading to a shortage of the barbiturate anesthetic, the first step in the three-step lethal injection cocktail.¹⁶ As Teresa Zimmers, a molecular biologist at the Miami Miller School of Medicine explains in an interview with Larry Greenemeier for *Scientific American*: “There’s no record of a medical or scientific inquiry into whether this [three-drug method of lethal injection] would be the best method. And there isn’t any medical evidence to support this approach.”¹⁷ Said differently, there is no evidence that these drugs do in fact kill in the method that they are supposed to. In Zimmers *et al.*’s article on the same topic, the following results are underlined:

We were able to analyze only a limited number of executions. However, our findings suggest that current lethal injection protocols may not reliably effect death through the mechanisms intended, indicating a failure of design and implementation. If thiopental and potassium chloride fail to cause anesthesia and cardiac arrest, potentially aware inmates could die through pancuronium-induced asphyxiation. Thus the conventional view of lethal injection leading to an invariably peaceful and painless death is questionable.¹⁸

These findings suggest that the pain from lethal injection equates to asphyxiation. This is a troubling observation because it puts into question the tranquil nature of lethal injection, the characteristic that supposedly makes this form of capital punishment less *cruel and unusual* than death by electric chair, for instance, which Helen Prejean describes as follows in *Dead Man Walking*:

witnesses over the years have rendered graphic descriptions of state electrocutions, which Justice William F. Brennan, in *Glass v. Louisiana*, included in his dissenting opinion: “The force of the electric current is so powerful that the prisoner’s eyeballs sometimes pop out on his cheeks. . . . The prisoner often defecates, urinates, and vomits blood and drool. . . . Sometimes

¹⁶ In 2010 pentobarbital was introduced to replace sodium thiopental, even though one of its manufacturers, Lundbeck, does not permit its sale for capital punishment related uses.

¹⁷ Zimmers, Teresa A. Interview with Larry Greenemeier. “Cruel and Unusual?: Is Capital Punishment by Lethal Injection Quick and Painless?” *Scientific American*. 27 October 2010. See *Glossip v. Gross* (2015) for more.

¹⁸ Zimmers, Teresa A., *et al.* “Lethal Injection for Execution: Chemical Asphyxiation?” *POLS Medicine*. 24 April 2007, 646.

the prisoner catches fire . . . There is a sound like bacon frying and the sickly sweet smell of burning flesh. . . . The body frequently is badly burned. . . .¹⁹

Such an account names various horrors: degrading, humiliating sights, sounds, smells, and substances are reported, highlighting extreme pain – from displaced oculi to a burnt epidermis – and putting into question the duration of death, pointing to the fact that the electric chair may not in actuality provide an instantaneous execution. Similar observations were in fact already underlined by the doctors Piedelièvre and Frouner in 1956 with respect to the guillotine, casting doubt on this sanguine method of beheading: “Tout cela peut durer des minutes, des heures mêmes, chez des sujets sans tares: la mort n’est pas immédiate . . .”²⁰ These words could just as easily be ascribed to contemporary executions.²¹

What about *cruelty*, then, entwined in both the idea of *the annulation de la douleur* and *l’effacement du spectacle punitif*? Limitations on cruelty’s use as purposeful pain or torture in punishment are supposedly dictated by the Eighth Amendment, which states that “[e]xcessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.”²² As seen above, however, a presumed reduction of pain, assumedly indicating that punishment no longer necessarily also doubles as a form of torture, does not automatically equate to the disappearance of cruelty. In the final analysis, today’s punishment – though it may have today become less theatrical, or at least theatrical otherwise – is no less cruel, as Jacques

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19-20. See also *Provenzano v. Moore* (1999).

²⁰ Camus, Albert. “Réflexions sur la guillotine,” *Réflexions sur la peine capitale*. Paris: Gallimard, 2002, 151. Derrida also comments on this passage and states that “[a]u fond le texte de Camus . . . entend démontrer que la mort par décapitation sous la guillotine . . . est un processus différencié, lent, dont la durée est difficile à mesurer et qui s’accompagne des plus indicibles et cruelles souffrances” (Derrida, Jacques. *Séminaire, La peine de mort I, op. cit.*, 320).

²¹ See Berman, Mark. “The Prolonged Arizona Execution Used 15 Doses of Lethal Injection Drugs.” *The Washington Post*. 4 August 2014.

²² “Eighth Amendment.” *Legal Information Institute*. 17 March 2018. http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/eighth_amendment. For more on the eighth amendment, see Colin Dayan’s *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, notably Chapter 6 and especially p. 181-186.

Derrida's *La peine de mort* seminar (1999-2000; 2000-2001) argues, focusing on the ever-present cruelty of the death penalty, "qu'il s'agisse ou non du sang."²³

Regardless of whether or not our current society is (still) cruel in its practice of the death penalty, of whether or not the changes Foucault describes have actually been put into effect, perhaps most interesting in this first chapter of *Surveiller et Punir* is the latter's identification of the motivation behind these reforms. It is the idea that less cruelty equates to more humanity: "moins de cruauté, moins de souffrance, plus de douceur, plus de respect, plus d'humanité,"²⁴ Foucault states, explaining the law's understanding of the reduction in the severity of the penal system as something quantitative. But it is not any random quantities that find themselves on opposite sides of an algorithm here: these variables are cruelty and humanity. Cruelty, we begin to see, finds itself attached to the concept of humanity; less cruelty equates to more humanity, and by extension more cruelty equates to less humanity – and perhaps even more inhumanity. There is consequently, here, already an inkling of the fact that a cruel act renders the human less so, that cruelty somehow rests on the border of the human and something other-than-human.

In this chapter, I will focus on gathering an understanding of what cruelty is. Marcel Hénaff in his *Violence dans la raison?: conflit et cruauté* (2014) understands "l'énigme de la cruauté"²⁵ in the most general sense as deliberate violence enacted against living beings with the aim of having them suffer.²⁶ Though he does not differentiate between physical and psychological cruelty, according to him, cruel acts can be classified into four categories:

²³ Derrida, Jacques. *Séminaire, La peine de mort I*. Paris: Galilée, 2012, 238.

²⁴ Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir, op. cit.*, 23-24.

²⁵ The final chapter of his book, underscoring the ineffable nature of cruelty, is titled "Violence dans la violence: l'énigme de la cruauté."

²⁶ "la cruauté au sens le plus ordinaire: celle d'une violence exercée sur nos semblables ou sur d'autres êtres vivants avec la volonté explicite de les faire souffrir" (Hénaff, Marcel. *Violence dans la raison?: conflit et cruauté*. Paris: L'Herne, 2014, 166).

1) la cruauté codée rituellement ou juridiquement; 2) la cruauté événement, liée à un épisode violent; 3) la cruauté professionnellement exercée (torture) ou administrativement organisée (camps); 4) la cruauté comme pathologie individuelle.²⁷

With his varietals of cruelty, Hénaff helps illustrate the multiplicity of cruelty and its various modalities, capturing the imprecision of what cruelty is. Though he provides a certain rigor by organizing and clearly breaking down the act, his multiple categorizations only help underline that cruelty manifests in different ways, in myriad contexts, and takes on different shades and facets every time. In its sheer breadth, from legal to ritual to professional to personal acts, cruelty is not a singularly definable concept or action.

Though cruelty is highly varied and variable, I argue that it systematically destabilizes the presumed limit between the human and inhuman, in fact displacing it to incorporate the inhuman within the human and ultimately elucidating Hénaff's designation of cruelty as "cette propriété d'inhumanité [qui] est au cœur de l'humanité."²⁸ Hénaff's wording may set the terms for the discussion that is to follow, but I will specifically show how the notion of the in-human is raised and problematized by means of cruelty. I will begin with a historico-epistemological conception of cruelty in order to illustrate precisely the paradoxical breadth and specificity of the notion and its vast historical meanings which will serve as a foundation for the literary analyses of the following chapters. By considering etymologies of the term, I will develop theories of both bloody and bloodless, or psychological cruelty. Tracing out these various traditions will also highlight, throughout this chapter, how a theorization of cruelty as a concept that reconfigures the border delimitating the human from the inhuman both relates to and differs from cruelty's etymology and historical usage. Then, I will develop the notion that cruelty subscribes to an

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

economy, focusing on histories of the death penalty and Derrida's thought to do so. Following these examinations, I will continue with my literature review by addressing questions of animal rights and cruelty toward animals to then consider the neurobiology behind acts of cruelty. Next, I will take another, closer, look at Hénaff. Subsequently, I will consider Sade's works: key literary representations of cruelty. Finally, further tracing my anti-chronology, I will conclude with Montaigne's views on cruelty. In each of these instances I will underscore how cruelty encapsulates the notion of the in-human, that is, how cruelty highlights the constituent inhumanity of humanity – whether we disavow it or not.

Etymologies of Cruelty

In *États d'âme de la psychanalyse* (2000),²⁹ echoing his words in the first volume of *La peine de mort* as I highlighted in my Introduction, Derrida asks: “qu'est-ce que c'est, ça, la cruauté? Où ça commence? Où ça finit?”³⁰ There are numerous ways to answer such questions, as there are in fact various etymological genealogies of the word “cruelty.” Derrida differentiates between two such genealogies in *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*: on the one hand, there is a bloody cruelty, “cruauté sanglante,”³¹ derived from the Latin “*cruor*,” that is “blood,” on the

²⁹ There are two intellectual couples that Derrida analyzes in *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*: Freud and Einstein (and their epistolary correspondence), and Freud and Nietzsche – and, notably, the similarities and subtle differences between these two latter thinkers' views on cruelty. Freud speaks of cruelty in his writings, but never formally theorizes it or its relationship to psychoanalysis or, rather, psychoanalysis's relationship to cruelty. And yet, Derrida underlines that Freud believes that there is an opposable term to cruelty, while Nietzsche does not (Derrida, Jacques. *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*, *op. cit.*, 10). This term is Eros: “l'amour et l'amour de la vie, contre la pulsion de mort. Il y a donc un contraire à la pulsion de cruauté même si celle-ci ne connaît pas de fin. Il y a un terme opposable, même s'il n'y a pas de terme qui mette fin à l'opposition” (74). It is not so much an opposite of cruelty, not an end of or to cruelty, but a parallel in reverse of cruelty, a concept that runs in tandem to cruelty. One cannot be without the other; there can be no Eros without Thanatos, no love of life without the cruel death drive. Indeed, the death drive is the very foundation of cruelty: “une certaine pulsion de mort qui, à l'origine de toute cruauté, justement, peut prendre la forme destructrice d'un sadisme” (46).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10. For a sanguinary history, a history of humanity as “*homo-hematocentrism*,” (Wills, David. *Killing Times*, *op. cit.* 114) see *Killing Times*, Chapter 3 and Gil Anidjar's *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

basis of which cruelty inscribes itself into a semantic network that includes “*crudelis*”:

“ruthlessness,” “unfeeling,” and “*crudus*”: “raw,” “crude.” On the other hand, there is a non-bloody cruelty, “une cruauté de la *psyché*, un état de l’âme, donc encore du vivant, mais une cruauté non sanglante,”³² as underlined by Freud’s choice of the word “*Grausamkeit*” (although interestingly this word appears rarely in Freud’s corpus). Whereas the theatricality and bloodiness of cruelty – blood *tout court* – with which I opened this chapter by way of Holofernes and Damians is one way of understanding cruelty, that is, vis-à-vis *cruor*, *Grausamkeit*, Derrida continues, is defined as “faire souffrir *pour* souffrir, voire de torturer ou de tuer . . . *pour* prendre un plaisir psychique au mal pour le mal, voire *pour* jouir du mal radical. . . .”³³ This latter form of cruelty is thus more psychological than its former physical manifestation.

Catherine Toal also provides an extensive chronology of the various historical and philosophical accounts of cruelty in her introduction of *The Entrapments of Form: Cruelty and Modern Literature* (2016).³⁴ She too begins with the “*cruor*” genealogy of the term before

³² *Ibid.*, 11.

³³ Derrida, Jacques. *États d’âme de la psychanalyse*, op. cit., 10. David Krell explains the genealogy of the term “*Grausamkeit*”: “Hermann Paul’s discussion of *grauen*, althochdeutsch (*in*)*grūēn*, mittelhochdeutsch *grūwen*, originally related to the Old Slavic *grudu* and the ancestor of our word *gruesome*, is that which sends chills up and down the spine; the *grausam*, *grauenhaft*, and *grauenvoll*, or that which causes us to utter *mir graut vor* [I dread], is *schauderhaft* [horrible]. The adjective *grausam* originally means *grauenerregend*, that which arouses horror. Later in its history, presumably in the seventeenth century, although already in Luther, the meaning is intensified to mean ‘frightful,’ – *fürchterlich* – if that is an intensification. Rather, this intensification of sense actually involves a kind of reversal or inversion: the word now applies to the actor rather than the recipient. The shudder that goes up and down the spine is now not one of horror but of titillation, of a certain twisted Eros. The current meaning of the word, but already in Luther, is ‘merciless,’ *unbarmherzig*, cruel.” (“Empowerment and Cruelty: Derrida, Freud, Nietzsche” Workshop. Brown University, March 2016) In this account of “*Grausamkeit*,” there is an inversion at play between the victim and the perpetrator of cruelty, a change from a passively termed word to a positive definition. Cruelty is no longer reactive (as in, “your actions affect me cruelly”), but active (in other words, “you are cruel”). Thus cruelty is now a term that labels a perpetrator with the victim, however, still wholly involved in the calculations or formula of cruelty.

³⁴ *The Entrapments of Form* comprises a study of the formal structure and aesthetics of cruelty in 20th-century French and American literature through Proust, Sade, Poe, Melville, Tocqueville, Artaud, and Henry James. The book, as Toal writes, “elucidates the hidden structures that decide the modern outline of cruelty as a concept and an eventuality” (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016, 125). Toal argues for a 20th-century French literary and philosophical aesthetic based on Proust’s vision of cruelty, explaining: “My argument here is that the kind of cruelty Proust juxtaposes to sadistic theatricality – permanent, ineluctable, despite being given other names – is one that reverberates throughout twentieth-century French aesthetics and philosophy, and that it is always formulated

developing other cruel avenues, citing Clément Rosset's *Le Principe de cruauté* (1988), which explores an "ethics of cruelty" by which a philosophical work supposedly can and should be judged:

je me suis demandé si on pouvait mettre en évidence un certain nombre de principes régissant cette "éthique de la cruauté," – éthique dont le respect ou l'irrespect qualifie ou disqualifie à mes yeux toute œuvre philosophique. Et il m'a semblé que celle-ci pouvait se résumer en deux principes simples, que j'appelle "principe de réalité suffisante" et "principe d'incertitude."³⁵

In the event, there is little in Rosset's book specifically about either ethics or cruelty, and the question of why philosophical works should be judged with respect to cruelty in particular remains unanswered. Rosset equates cruelty to pain but does not fully uncover the complexities of the term beyond stating that reality is painful and tragic and hence cruel: "Par 'cruauté' du réel, j'entends d'abord, il va sans dire, la nature intrinsèquement douloureuse et tragique de la réalité."³⁶ Although this first description could provide more elucidation as to the specificity of cruelty and its agony, Rosset's second definition of the term points directly to its particularity: "j'entends aussi par cruauté du réel le caractère unique, et par conséquent irrémédiable et sans appel, de cette réalité, – caractère qui interdit à la fois de tenir celle-ci à distance et d'en atténuer la rigueur par la prise en considération de quelque instance que ce soit qui serait extérieure à elle."³⁷ Though such a (non-)definition may again beseech further development, what is of note

specifically with reference to (and in revision of) Sadean narrative features and conventions" (94). Though not mentioned in Toal's book, Barthes too juxtaposes Proust to Sade. See "La moire" and "La division des langages" in *Sade Fourier Loyola*. Paris: Seuil, 1971. Those looking for a chronological overview of cruelty and its definitions should consult Toal's introduction in which she turns to Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and his "*De crudelitate*" in *Summa Theologiae*, Machiavelli, Montaigne, Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive*, to subsequently underline how pleasure was introduced to the concept of cruelty in the 18th century, as James A. Steintrager has also highlighted. Next she briefly mentions Voltaire, Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville, Nietzsche, and Sade, introducing also Ernst Jünger, Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir*, and Maurice Blanchot's definition of cruelty as "la négation de soi" in *Lautréamont et Sade* (Paris: Minuit, 1963, 45, a notion found again in Bataille's *L'érotisme* and Simone de Beauvoir's *Faut-il brûler Sade?*) – a structuring quote for the whole of her project.

³⁵ Rosset, Clément. *Le Principe de cruauté*. Paris: Minuit, 1988, 7-8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

is Rosset's characterization of cruelty as *unique*. Indeed, it is precisely this quality of cruelty that makes it so remarkable: cruelty, "son caractère inéluctable,"³⁸ relates to a variety of violent, gruesome, atrocious, painful concepts – it seems inescapable, ever-present in so many different instances – and yet is its own, singular act. Once again, we are compelled to contend with the multifarious nature of cruelty. And yet understanding cruelty, from the past to today – what Toal, Rosset, others as we shall see below set out to do – remains an active task, far from complete.

Derrida sets out to do precisely this, to return to his *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*. He reproaches psychoanalysis for not having paid attention to cruelty, though its very task has everything to do with cruelty, with cruel suffering; the whole project of psychoanalysis is supposed to talk of aberrant – even abhorrent – behavior, of perversion, and yet it does not expressly tackle cruelty. Although the word is used in psychoanalysis – "*Cruauté, souveraineté, résistance*: je suis loin d'être sûr de savoir, ni même qu'on sache en général, ce que ces mots veulent dire, malgré leur usage en somme assez courant, chez Freud et dans la psychanalyse en général" – there is a "'résistance' fondamentale,"³⁹ a reluctance with respect to cruelty in the psychoanalytic system. And although psychoanalysts refrain from addressing cruelty, they are the only ones who can engage with it as such, according to Derrida. He states:

Le seul discours qui puisse aujourd'hui revendiquer la chose de la cruauté psychique comme son affaire propre, ce serait bien ce qui s'appelle, depuis un siècle à peu près, la psychanalyse. La psychanalyse ne serait peut-être pas le seul langage possible ni même le seul traitement possible quant à cette cruauté qui n'aurait pas de terme contraire ou de terme tout court. Mais "psychanalyse" serait le nom de ce qui, sans alibi théologique ou autre, se tournerait vers ce que la cruauté psychique aurait de plus *propre*.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

And thus, having identified this chosen discourse, at the end of *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*, Derrida issues three challenges or prescriptions for psychoanalysis today, “trois instances, donc, ou trois états,”⁴¹ as follows:

1. Dans l'ordre du *constatif*. . . , la psychanalyse pourrait dans l'avenir prendre sérieusement en compte . . . la totalité du savoir . . . et tout ce qui, dans l'ordre de la prescription performative, donne lieu à un savoir. . . . 2. Dans l'ordre du *performatif*. . . , la psychanalyse doit prendre ses responsabilités, inventer ou réinventer son droit, ses institutions, ses statuts, ses normes, etc. . . . 3. Et voici, au-delà du plus difficile, l'im-possible même. . . . La venue inconditionnelle de l'autre, son événement inanticipable et sans horizon, sa mort ou la mort même, ce sont là des irruptions qui peuvent et doivent mettre en déroute les deux ordres du constatif et du performatif, du savoir et du symbolique. Peut-être au-delà de toute cruauté. . . . Sans cruauté, avec une humble gratitude pour qui lui aura prêté l'oreille – et sans alibi.⁴²

What can we make of the idea of a “beyond cruelty,” *au-delà de toute cruauté*, mentioned at the end of this passage? Can there be a beyond cruelty? Indeed, a *beyond cruelty* is unclear in *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*, since Derrida says that this prospect is *im-possible* – “Et voici, au-delà du plus difficile, l'im-possible même.”⁴³ The dash seems to open up the possibility of a yonder, however, and let us consider how.

(An)Economy

Derrida's questioning of an *au-delà* is intimately related to the notion of economy: “J'en appelle ici à un au-delà de l'économie, donc de l'appropriable et du possible,”⁴⁴ he details. And if a beyond cruelty is im(-)possible, according to Derrida, it is because he understands cruelty to be aneconomic. Derrida conceptualizes cruelty as such for several reasons, most clearly getting this point across when he asks, “quoi de plus anéconomique, dira-t-on, que la destruction? Et que

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 84-88.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

la cruauté?”⁴⁵ He also considers it aneconomic in response to Freud’s desire to arduously economize cruelty: “En verité, cette anéconomie, Freud travaille sans cesse à la réintégrer, donc à la prendre en compte, à en rendre raison, de façon calculable, dans une économie du possible.”⁴⁶ And yet for there to be economy of cruelty, according to Derrida, there would have to be the possibility of a non-cruelty, and, what would that be? What is the opposite of cruelty? There is none:

Quand je parle . . . d’une cruauté qui n’aurait pas de contraire ou qui en tout cas serait irréductible, de telle sorte que tout contraire aurait seulement à composer avec elle, je veux dire ceci: il y a seulement des différences de cruauté, des différences de modalité, de qualité, d’intensité, d’activité ou de réactivité dans la *même* cruauté.⁴⁷

With no opposite and a seeming inability to be commodified and exchanged in order to be reduced in any way or cancelled out, cruelty does not appear to be appropriable to an economic system.

I in fact respectively agree and disagree, to a point, with Freud and Derrida. As I will continue to argue in this dissertation, cruelty is a supplement to an economy of violence: though I also accept that it is not reappropriable because of its strictly additive nature, I do not see it as aneconomic. Cruelty is enacted for reasons that render it valued and it is this value that can be commodified in order to further generate the economy to which cruelty belongs. Though there may be no balancing out or cancelling out of cruelty, and though it may have a supplemental function and not an equilibrizing one, it precisely continues to generate the systems to which it belongs. Thus cruelty and the currency of its value are vital, constitutive element of its economy.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

What, then, would be the simplest way to summarize a notion that is non-reappropriable but not aneconomic? Cruelty is rather *unique*, to paraphrase the aforementioned Rosset. If Rosset's definition of cruelty shows us anything, it is that cruelty is frequently the default term for describing the indescribable, a word, as my explanations above have endeavored to show, that refers to certain excessively violent, irreducible acts that are beyond the reappropriable, beyond being reclaimed or recovered, but that by this very supplementary nature generate the economy whose periphery they inhabit. "Cruelty" thus clusters together all sorts of horrific or perverted, impermissible acts or ideas with any particularities the term could reference jettisoned because of its sheer breadth. Indeed when Toal searches for cruelty's meaning by focusing on the root of the word through Seneca, by way of Aristotle, she highlights the discussion of cruelty appearing in Seneca's *De Ira* (On Anger) and *De Clementis* (On Mercy) as also underscoring the broad idea of the forbidden: "[b]oth texts . . . consider cruelty a kind of trespass into an illicit realm. . . ."⁴⁸ But cruelty is not just the illicit, it is equally power and, perhaps most importantly – in the context of punishment and, later in this dissertation, war – the intersection of the two.

Power and the Death Penalty/(An)Economy Continued

In addition to "*cruor*" and "*Grausamkeit*," Derrida equally underlines the importance of "*Bemächtigung*," the drive or will to mastery, in relation to cruelty and, namely, the death penalty, again in *États d'âme de la psychanalyse* and also in *Résistances de la psychanalyse* (1996). He asks in the former, "y a-t-il aussi une cruauté inhérente à la pulsion de pouvoir ou de maîtrise souveraine (*Bemächtigungstrieb*) . . . ?"⁴⁹ And replies: "Einstein avance alors une hypothèse qui va dans le sens même de ce que sera la réponse de Freud, à savoir celle d'une

⁴⁸ Toal, Catherine. *The Entrapments of Form*, op. cit., 2.

⁴⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *États d'âme de la psychanalyse*, op. cit., 14.

pulsion de cruauté (c'est-à-dire au fond une pulsion de mort) qui va de pair, sans s'y réduire, avec cette pulsion de pouvoir (*Bemächtigungstrieb*). . . ."⁵⁰ *Bemächtigung* is a technical term for "empowerment," and though it is not commonly used to describe "cruelty," there is a certain moment in Freud when it is (similarly, though, this word again does not appear frequently in Freud's corpus). As Laplanche and Pontalis explain in their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* under the entry "Pulsion d'emprise," *Bemächtigungstrieb* is a "[t]erme utilisé en quelques occasions par Freud sans que son usage puisse être codifié avec précision. Freud entend par là une pulsion non sexuelle, qui ne s'unit que secondairement à la sexualité et dont le but est de dominer l'objet par la force."⁵¹ They continue, "C'est dans les *Trois essais sur la théorie de la sexualité* . . . que Freud invoque pour la première fois une telle pulsion: l'origine de la cruauté infantile est rapportée à une pulsion d'emprise qui n'aurait pas originellement pour but la souffrance d'autrui, mais simplement n'en tiendrait pas compte . . . ; elle serait indépendante de la sexualité. . . ."⁵² David Krell similarly summarizes Derrida's interest in *Bemächtigung*, referencing Freud and Einstein as follows:⁵³

The theme of *Bemächtigung* becomes increasingly important to Derrida after 1980: in *Résistances* and *États d'âme de la psychanalyse: Adresse aux États Généraux de la Psychanalyse* . . . , the concept is of central importance. (In *États*, see esp. 14, 35, and 47.) Here too it is a question of the power that all mastery presupposes—the *Macht* of *Bemächtigung*. Yet in these later works the emphasis falls on the cruelty of exercised power, that is, on the aggressive side of the death-drive. Derrida brings such cruelty into connection with the death penalty, especially as practiced in the United States, and with Einstein's and Freud's reflections in *Why War?* on the need to restrict the sovereignty of nation-states.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵¹ Laplanche, Jean, and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis. *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, 5th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009, 364.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 364-365.

⁵³ Freud and Einstein corresponded with one another in 1931. Their letters were published under the title *Why War?* in 1933.

⁵⁴ Krell, David Farrell. "Pulling Strings Wins No Wisdom." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2011, 39n7.

Both cruelty and *Bemächtigung* are certainly related to capital punishment. Consider the use of the word “cruelty” in, once again, the Eighth Amendment – *cruel and unusual punishment* – which, in American jurisprudence, inextricably links cruelty to the death penalty. Or, think of *Bemächtigung* as the State’s sovereign power to put to death its citizens,⁵⁵ will to mastery at its finest, *the cruelty of exercised power*, which once again interweaves cruelty into questions of sovereignty, power, death: in a word, capital punishment. Undoubtably, then, a discussion of cruelty cannot avoid the question of the death penalty; I have briefly delved into this topic already – but let’s explore it a bit further.

At the beginning of the 7th session of the first volume of his seminar *La peine de mort*, Derrida debates a question that is repeated several times throughout the text: “Y aurait-il une économie de la peine de mort?”⁵⁶ And although a conclusive answer to this question is never provided, it is closely related to a second problematic: that of cruelty. *Y aurait-il une économie de la peine de mort?* And what role does cruelty play in all this, in the notion of economy specifically, as I have already briefly mentioned? In order to answer these two questions, we must consider historical systems of equivalence. Where Kant is the spokesperson of the *jus talionis* when it comes to crimes, that is, an eye for an eye, Nietzsche underlines the problem with such equivalences, even beyond the precise context of the death penalty. In Section 5 of the Second Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche focuses on contracts and the relations established by their signatories. Specifically, it is responsibility by way of promise as established by a contract, in general terms, that he develops in this essay. As he writes, referencing the “strange” relation between debtors and creditors:

⁵⁵ See Derrida, Jacques. *États d’âme de la psychanalyse*, op. cit., 56.

⁵⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Séminaire, La peine de mort I*, op. cit., 235.

Let us be clear as to the logic of this form of compensation: it is strange enough. An equivalence is provided by the creditor's receiving, in place of a literal compensation for an injury (thus in place of money, land, possessions of any kind) a recompense in the form of a kind of *pleasure* – the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely upon one who is powerless, the voluptuous pleasure “*de faire le mal pour le plaisir de la faire*,” the enjoyment of violation. . . . The compensation, then, consists in a warrant for and title to cruelty.⁵⁷

In this passage, Nietzsche underlines a total lack of equivalence: the creditor finds himself in a position of superiority with respect to the debtor. Moreover, the lender has the ability to exert his power without restraint – venturing into the domain of *excessive* power. As a result, the creditor can, ultimately, occupy a position of cruelty: the word itself is used by Nietzsche, *title to cruelty*, with the French *faire le mal pour le plaisir de le faire* explaining the term. Thus, where there is purported equivalence between creditor and debtor, the supposed equivalence of damages in actuality is firmly skewed. The death penalty, in a similar way, is the ability of the State (creditor) to exert without restraint its power on someone (debtor) who becomes completely powerless. In other words, how does one add up or measure the cruelty of the State through its administration of the death penalty and the crime of an individual? How does one redistribute cruelty from victim to perpetrator when the redistribution is nothing but a new form of infliction? One doesn't. As Nietzsche and Derrida underline, it becomes more and more difficult to consider a retributive equivalence between crimes and their punishment.

Albert Camus, whose corpus abounds in representations of capital punishment, also meditates on the law of retaliation in *Réflexions sur la guillotine*, an essay published in 1957 that concisely lays out his abolitionist stance.⁵⁸ As he writes,

⁵⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989, 64-65. The quoted expression is from Prosper Mérimée's *Lettres à une inconnue* (1874) and is also cited in French in the original German of Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.

⁵⁸ At the beginning of this text, he reveals the impressions the death penalty left on him early in life. Camus's mother recounts to him the story of his father who, in 1914 Algiers, witnessed the decapitation of a man who had

Le châtement, qui sanctionne sans prévenir, s'appelle en effet la vengeance. C'est une réponse quasi arithmétique que fait la société à celui qui enfreint sa loi primordiale. Cette réponse est aussi vieille que l'homme : elle s'appelle le talion. Qui m'a fait mal doit avoir mal . . . ; qui a tué enfin doit mourir. . . . Le talion est de l'ordre de la nature et de l'instinct, il n'est pas de l'ordre de la loi. La loi, par définition, ne peut obéir aux mêmes règles que la nature.⁵⁹

Here, there is a distinction made between Nature and Culture, Nature and Law. Camus argues that by implementing the death penalty, the State avenges the murder of the victim in a quasi-arithmetic way – a troubling formulation that already underlines a lack of equivalence. On the other hand, vengeance, an act motivated by instinct, is of the order of Nature. But the Law, as Camus expresses, is by definition independent of instinct; laws thus incited by “Nature” should not hold. Camus’s ideas in fact echo those of Nietzsche. Where in 1887 Nietzsche announced a satisfaction, Camus names a vengeance, a sentiment that in reality issues from satisfaction: an act is avenged so that the victim and victim’s family are *satisfied* vis-à-vis the crime committed against them.⁶⁰

Moreover, the satisfaction that Nietzsche speaks of is particular, as it is put in parallel with a *pleasure*, with the enjoyment to *vent power freely*, thus a kind of *overflowing* of satisfaction. This *jouissance*, as the French translation calls it,⁶¹ carries with it the notion of frenzy, overabundance, excess. What is capital punishment if not the *jouissance* of murder? The

killed an entire family of farmers, children included. In a very similar scene, a child, Jacques, asks his mother about his father witnessing an execution in *Le Premier homme* (1994, posthumous). A visceral reaction to the death penalty is repeated yet again in *L'Étranger* (1942); waiting in his cell toward the end of the text, Meursault remembers a story his mother had told him about his father witnessing an execution. The former recounts the event in the following way: “il était allé voir exécuter un assassin. Il était malade à l'idée d'y aller. Il l'avait fait cependant et au retour il avait vomi une partie de la matinée” (Paris: Gallimard, 2012, 166), reinforcing a notably abject, bodily reaction – nausea, vomit – to a human being reduced to a *corps pantelant* in a text imbued with a humanist abolitionist stance against the death penalty.

⁵⁹ Camus, Albert. “Réflexions sur la guillotine,” *op. cit.*, 164-165.

⁶⁰ Mbembe echoes Camus acutely in a different context, speaking of the war on terror: “Où s'arrête la justice et où commence la vengeance?” (Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l'inimitié*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016, 50)

⁶¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La généalogie de la morale*. Translated by Isabelle Hildenbrand and Jean Gratién. Paris: Gallimard, 1985, 69.

State gives in not only to natural instinct – residing outside the rule of law – by avenging the committed murder, but also to an overflow of these instincts: too much vengeance, too much satisfaction, too much power of punishment and premeditation. As Camus notes, “qu’est-ce donc que l’exécution capitale, sinon le plus prémédité des meurtres, auquel aucun forfait de criminel, si calculé soit-il, ne peut être comparé?”⁶² There is thus a lack of equivalence in the excessive satisfaction – the premeditation of the State – in the execution of capital punishment. As Camus declares, “Le crime impuni, selon les Grecs, infectait la cité. Mais l’innocence condamnée, ou le crime trop puni, à la longue, ne la souille pas moins.”⁶³ We return, here, to the etymological sense of the word “cruelty.” The polis, *par sa loi même*, is soiled by an excess of punishment as a result of gushing, overflowing blood.

Camus’s entire reflection on the death penalty rests on the fact that capital punishment is an impossible equivalence of cruelty. “La peur dévastatrice, dégradante, qu’on impose pendant des mois ou des années au condamné, est une peine plus terrible que la mort, et qui n’a pas été imposée à la victime,”⁶⁴ he states. Moreover, underscoring a multiplicity of death, he notes: “En règle générale, l’homme est détruit par l’attente de la peine capitale bien avant de mourir. On lui inflige deux morts, dont la première est pire que l’autre, alors qu’il n’a tué qu’une fois.”⁶⁵ This second death is an excess with respect to the *jus talionis*, thus a cruel condition that is only applied to the condemned. Here, an eye for an eye does not hold precisely because of the *remainder* of cruelty that exists in the waiting conditions before the condemned individual’s execution. The possibility of an economy of the death penalty is consequently called into question precisely because of this excessive cruelty in the double death – death in waiting

⁶² Camus, Albert. “Réflexions sur la guillotine,” *op. cit.*, 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

followed by the execution itself – of the death penalty. As Derrida states, “on ne peut pas penser la cruauté sans le temps, le temps donné ou le temps pris,”⁶⁶ echoing Prejean, Piedelièvre, and Frouner above vis-à-vis the time of capital punishment: we cannot think cruelty without thinking its timeline, or rather, the double death of punishment by death, the non-instantaneous nature of the death penalty blatantly exposes its cruelty.

Overall, the death penalty does not establish any equivalence, any equaling out; its only outcome is addition. In the same way that one death cannot replace another – one questions how two different infinite sufferings can be compared – cruelty cannot be measured nor balanced out. In the final analysis, if capital punishment is a kind of violence that is supposed to retaliate against, counteract the perpetrator’s committed violence, its excessive, non-arithmetic nature – with respect to time taken or pain induced, for instance – is cruel. But the death penalty is but one avenue through which the economic stakes of cruelty play out. Cruelty itself is excessive, non-arithmetic, only adding time, pain, punishment to an economy. Certainly, then, we once again bear witness to the fact that by its additive nature, cruelty is not reappropriable. But once again, I ask: why must this excess be aneconomic? Can this excess not actually be seen to generate the economy to which it belongs in the same way as, say, the inhuman generates or at least motivates the human to which, it too, belongs?

Indeed, the notion of excess also finds itself inextricable from the very idea of the inhuman. The case of William Kemmler, the first man to be executed with the electric chair – a botched 8-minute long process in 1890 – resulted in the Supreme Court’s reflection on the fact that “[p]unishments are cruel when they involve torture or a lingering death; but the punishment

⁶⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Séminaire, La peine de mort I, op. cit.*, 302.

of death is not cruel within the meaning of that word as used in the constitution. It implies there something inhuman and barbarous, something more than the mere extinguishment of life.”⁶⁷ This particular interpretation by the court of the phrase “cruel and unusual” aligns cruelty with inhumanity, reading the “and” of “cruel and unusual” as equivalence, rendering the terms intimately related, if not nearly synonymous. This *something more*, this *excess*, is something *barbarous, inhuman*: it takes the human and begins to render this being something other, something in-human, a human verging on the inhuman.

The idea of the human extending beyond itself all the while remaining human is a notion that parallels much contemporary thinking and the understanding that excesses are always already inscribed into the thing that they exceed. Instances of aberration in law for example, or the possibility of such anomalies, are there from the very beginning, present within the supposed limits of societal rules and penalties. As Colin Dayan writes in *The Law is a White Dog* (2011), as does Derrida, also, in his work, what claims to be an exception or excess is actually built into our penal, punitive, and disciplinary systems from the very start:

imprisonment is, of course, a highly abnormal condition, and nowhere as much as in supermax units that isolate behavioral expectations from the realities of normal human experience. Thoughts and emotions are wrenched out of any meaningful context. Instead, helplessness, extreme isolation, and other mechanisms of incapacitation are incorporated into incarceration.⁶⁸

The extremes of incarceration, these “abnormal” conditions – solitary confinement, sensory deprivation, isolation – are already inscribed into the “normal” legal framework, since, Dayan continues, these practices have slowly become sanctioned, gradually become “cleaned up”:

Increasingly inhuman and degrading treatment becomes legitimate insofar as it is sanitized. Dark and dirty cells are replaced with clean, well-lighted cages.

⁶⁷ *In re Kemmler*, 136 U.S. 447 (1890).

⁶⁸ Dayan, Colin. *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons*, *op. cit.*, 110.

The flames and gas of the electric chair and gas chamber are superseded by the illusion of medically and painless killing by legal injection.⁶⁹

Inhuman, legitimate, illusion: these three terms outline how such excesses paradoxically fit into an economy of supposed justice. Inhuman treatments are rendered legitimate through the illusion that they are warranted and authorized.

Ultimately, Dayan focuses on beings at the periphery – slaves, felons, ghosts, animals, in addition, more generally, to the limits between persons and property and the imbrication of these categories – and their treatment in law in her book. Underscoring a baffling legal relationship between marginal figures and the norm, she writes:

Throughout legal history the trade-offs between persons and property make the grossest violations of personhood not only necessary but acceptable. New entities in law are codified, but the logic in these procedures sometimes borders on the bizarre. Its fictions have the most striking effects in our social and political experience. Penal incapacitation in its many forms is accompanied by fabulous taxonomies that rework the distinctions between human and inhuman, predator and victim, virtue and vice, even flesh and spirit.⁷⁰

The words *fictions* and *fabulous* here echo the *illusion* mentioned above: in a strange, even bizarre way, excesses are codified within that which they exceed and are becoming more and more – have become – acceptable. Consequently, according to Dayan, taxonomies are reworked, critically implicated, rendered unclear in puzzling ways; it becomes difficult to differentiate clearly between predator and victim, virtue and vice, flesh and spirit, even human and inhuman. But as I have been developing here, it is precisely cruelty that problematizes the distinction between human and inhuman, rendering the divide undecided to the point of displacing the limit and, consequently, completely reconfiguring the category of the human.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

Indeed, building on Dayan's idea of excess but vis-à-vis cruelty would lead to the idea that the possibility of cruelty is always built into the notion of power and human relations – into the notion of the human in short. We may dream of ourselves, as humans, as not being cruel; we may have fictionalized extreme acts as other, but cruelty is at the center of the human and, when enacted, is what forces the human to its limit. The human may be in constant disavowal of its constituent cruelty, but cruelty forces the human to interact, to draw this border. A continual decision is thus made between human and inhuman in the face of cruel acts, a decision that is re-inscribed in each instance of naming an act as cruel or not cruel, of affirming that the human can be, and even is at times, inhuman. Is the inhuman thus not a *beyond* cruelty, or to reiterate Derrida's terminology, the *au-delà*? Or rather, both the beyond and the within, the excessive beyond that is always already inscribed into the system that it exceeds? Perhaps, then, to conclude with Derrida and the above analyses, it would make sense to say that the in-human is indeed the im-possible. That inhumanity helps define the human may seem impossible, but cruelty shows us that it is but an im-possibility.

Cruelty, Animals, and Animal Rights

“The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?”⁷¹ writes Jeremy Bentham in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1780, revised 1823), thus laying the foundation for the discipline of animal rights and the fight against animal cruelty. Although Bentham's examination extends beyond the scope of my inquiry, since I focus in Chapter 4 on *humans* represented as animalistic and the cruelty they receive and bestow, the question of cruelty nevertheless raises concerns vis-à-vis non-human animals also.

⁷¹ Bentham, Jeremy. *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, second edition, 1823, chapter 17n122. See Derrida's *L'animal que donc je suis* (Paris: Galilée, 2006, namely 277-279) for an analysis of Bentham's quote.

How are animals treated cruelly and what can we do about it? Furthermore, beyond this legal and psychological dimension of the mistreatment of animals by humans,⁷² linking cruelty to animality also allows us to pose radically antithetical questions such as: can animals themselves treat cruelly? Can animals be cruel?⁷³ Such inquiries gesture to another set of questions relating to intention and whether animals can be *intent* on being cruel. Consider, for instance, how neuroscientist Kathleen Taylor defines “cruelty”: “unjustified voluntary behaviour which causes unforeseeable suffering (unwanted, aversive psychological or physical harm) to an undeserving victim or victims.”⁷⁴ Taylor underscores cruelty as deliberate; perpetrators are intent on making their victim(s) suffer and have envisaged this pain and distress in advance: “Extreme cruelty, such as the torture of individuals or the massacre of groups, is deliberate in the sense of having been planned, sometimes for years.”⁷⁵

Though we may not have concrete answers as to whether non-human animals can demonstrate what Taylor underlines as constitutive cruel motives, what we do know is that we do not hesitate to call cruel humans animals, and consequently, in a sense, say that animals can be cruel. Cruelty is thus productive not only for reconsidering the category of the human, but can also be a way of reconsidering animals on their own terms precisely by considering – neurobiologically, philosophically – whether or not they can be cruel. More generally, questions of cruelty and animals pave the way for an examination of the place of non-human animals with

⁷² “[Animal anti-cruelty] laws are a patchwork of federal, state, and local laws, some dating back to the 1800s” (Brewster, Mary P. and Cassandra Reyes, editors. *Animal Cruelty: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Understanding*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2013, 46).

⁷³ Think, for instance, of a cat playing with its prey and tearing it apart “for fun.” Such behavior may be ingrained in the cat’s instinctual response to finesse its hunting skills, thus practicing by making their prey suffer further, or it may be a manifestation of the habituation of cats to play with objects, and by extension their prey. See Hall, Sarah L., *et al.* “Object Play in Adult Domestic Cats: The Roles of Habituation and Disinhibition.” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, vol. 79, no. 3, Nov. 2002, 263-71.

⁷⁴ Taylor, Kathleen. *Cruelty: Human Evil and the Human Brain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 171.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

respect to human animals. Though I do not have the space to develop this further here, I mention, for instance, Derrida's *L'Animal que donc je suis* (1998), which questions the always already troubled idea of the human and the fact that Western philosophy has been constructed on the exclusion of the animal. In the text, Derrida asserts that "animal" and "I," and by extension the human, are strange, unstable, prosthetic units that are not natural. And, when one begins deconstructing "the animal," it equally reflects on the human animal self. Moreover, the word "animal" is itself loaded with the very valences it tries to critique, since it predicates a unit of homogeneity for all species that are not human and suppresses the variance of animals. Derrida's antidote to this is, at least, to use the word *animot*, which echoes the French plural *animaux*, thus underlining the plurality of the animal kingdom and encompassing a multiplicity of non-human animal life.⁷⁶

Apart from troubling taxonomies or questionable labels, the notion of "the animal" more generally shines a light on many ethical dilemmas, one of which is the animal's supposed fate as an in-between – which I will only briefly allude to. Seen as an object when eaten,⁷⁷ the animal is something more-than-object yet less-than-human at other times. This, Bataille explains, is the poetic fallacy of animality: "being neither a thing nor a man."⁷⁸ Furthermore, the presumption that the animal is an in-between has made the treatment of animals different than that of humans and opened up a breach in the interpretation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." As Derrida posits, "'Thou shalt not kill,' which is often translated by Levinas as 'You shall commit

⁷⁶ As Derrida writes, "*Ecce animot*. Neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals, and rather than a double clone or portmanteau word, a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera waiting to be put to death by its Bellerophon" (Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Translated by David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 41).

⁷⁷ Legally, animals are in fact "characterized as personal property" (Brewster, Mary P. and Cassandra Reyes, editors. *Animal Cruelty: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Understanding*, *op. cit.*, 45).

⁷⁸ Bataille, Georges. "Animality." *Theory of Religion*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1992, 34.

no murder' . . . forbids murder, namely, homicide, but doesn't forbid putting to death in general. . . . It is a 'Thou shalt not kill' that doesn't forbid one to kill an animal; it forbids only the murder of the face,"⁷⁹ that is, the Other in Levinasian terms.

Beyond the death and killing of animals, however, cruelty toward animals, in much the same way as cruelty toward humans, takes on many shapes and forms: torturing animals, neglecting them by not providing adequate food, shelter, or sanitation, or zoosadism, that is, deriving pleasure from inflicting pain on them. By and large, animal cruelty is defined as the intentional infliction of pain on non-human animals.⁸⁰ There is, however, no unanimous global legislature on this form of cruelty. Laws pertaining to animal care, neglect, and abuse vary not only by country but oftentimes even by jurisdiction and do not always cover all animals or all possible forms of animal mistreatment. These laws are frequently ill-defined and offer some species (namely cats and dogs) more protection than others.

The first statutes pertaining to animals and their care in the United States are found in "The Body of Liberties," 100 liberties formulated in 1641 by the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Liberties 92 and 93 concern animal warfare and state the following:

92. No man shall exercise any Tirrany or Crueltie towards any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use.

93. If any man shall have occasion to leade or drive Cattel from place to place that is far of, so that they be weary, or hungry, or fall sick, or lambe, It shall be

⁷⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, *op. cit.*, 110. See also Moore, Stephen D., editor. *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014 and Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. For more on Levinas, whose explorations of the animal question were formed by the traumatic thinking of the after-war period and the Shoah, see Derrida's essay "Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Lévinas" in *L'Écriture et la différence* (1967) and John Llewelyn's *Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics* (1995).

⁸⁰ See Tanner, Julia. "Clarifying the Concept of Cruelty: What Makes Cruelty to Animals Cruel." *Heythrop Journal*, vol. 56, no. 5, September 2015, 818-835.

lawful to rest or refresh them for a competent time, in any place that is not Corne, meadow, or inclosed for some peculiar use.⁸¹

Today, all states except South Dakota have laws that deem cruelty toward animals a felony.⁸²

The one federal law that does exist in the US pertaining to the treatment of animals is the Animal Welfare Act, enacted in 1966. Since then, the act has been amended eight times in order to improve the standard of animal care and protections for non-human animals. However, the law is applicable only within the context of research, exhibition, and the treatment of animals by dealers in commercial settings, and again leaves unstated general protocols for the safety of animals.⁸³

Reasons for animal cruelty have been studied as a displacement of frustration and anger or manifestations of childhood abuse, with cruelty toward animals considered a forerunner of psychopathic behavior.⁸⁴ Mary P. Brewster and Cassandra L. Reyes's *Animal Cruelty: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Understanding* is a monumental and nearly exhaustive reference on the subject. The text organizes animal cruelty into various manifestations – animal cruelty for profit, animal cruelty as sport, animal hoarding, among other illustrations – with numerous motives discussed: sexual deviance and family violence to name but two examples. As is stated in the textbook,

⁸¹ Lockwood, Randall, and Allie Phillips. *Investigating and Prosecuting Animal Abuse*. 2013. <https://archive.org/download/InvestigatingAndProsecutingAnimalAbuse2013/Investigating%20and%20Prosecuting%20Animal%20Abuse%202013.pdf>.

⁸² In South Dakota such a crime is ranked as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

⁸³ For the amendments themselves see “Animal Welfare Act.” United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act>.

⁸⁴ Although its credibility has since been called into question, the Macdonald triad (Macdonald 1963) was meant to identify three behaviors – arson, zoosadism, and enuresis – that when exemplified together were to be seen as a precursor to crime. See also Browne, John A., *et al.* “Does Witnessing Animal Cruelty and Being Abused during Childhood Predict the Initial Age and Recurrence of Committing Childhood Animal Cruelty?” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 61, no. 16, December 2017, 1850-1865 and Flynn, Clifton P. “Exploring the Link between Corporal Punishment and Children’s Cruelty to Animals.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 61, no. 4, 1999, 971-981.

Gullone (2012) demonstrated that animal cruelty behaviors predominantly appear alongside human aggression and violence, as well as other crimes, including non-violent offenses. Almost without exception, the perpetrators of animal cruelty crimes are the same individuals who engage in other aggressive or antisocial behavior including partner and child abuse, and bullying.⁸⁵

Here, animal cruelty finds itself within the same nexus as human aggression, antisocial behavior, and abuse. Indeed, having considered cruelty to animals – and the breadth of acts that such cruelty encompasses, precedes, or gestures toward – we return, with this quote, to human victims and perpetrators.

Cruelty to and from Humans

Why, then, do humans engage in cruel acts toward other humans? For Taylor, individuals who act cruelly are often “normal” people, a trope that has been visited and revisited in various works and analyses. Hannah Arendt, for instance, while describing the accused in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), quotes precisely this language of “normalcy” from Eichmann’s trial: “Half a dozen psychiatrists had certified him as ‘normal’ – ‘More normal, at any rate, than I am after having examined him,’ one of them was said to have exclaimed, while another had found that his whole psychological outlook . . . was ‘not only normal but most desirable.’”⁸⁶ When this occurs, these supposedly “normal” people do not apply the same moral principles to their victims as they do to individuals whom they do not wish to attack, which Taylor ascribes to there not having been enough activation of brain patterns that would cue moral awareness to the contrary. One such reason would be because these patterns have been made less effective through *otherizing*,

⁸⁵ Brewster, Mary P. and Cassandra Reyes, editors. *Animal Cruelty: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Understanding*, *op. cit.*, 251.

⁸⁶ Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London; New York: Penguin Books, 2006, 25-26.

the first step in executing a cruel act, according to Taylor.⁸⁷ The term “otherizing” or “otherization” does not label the recognition of another as other in an affirmative sense – this is not a Levinasian critical theoretical use of the term to designate an *other* in a community – but in an objectifying, devalorizing, dehumanizing manner, that is, a derogatory qualification of someone. Even simply imagining acting violently or cruelly toward someone already activates the same parts of the brain as carrying out the act, according to Taylor. As she explains, “imagining or talking about doing something, watching someone do it, and doing it oneself all involved overlapping patterns which use the same brain regions. Consequently, even mild otherization primes people for aggression, whether or not it explicitly encourages them to act aggressively.”⁸⁸ The other reason for cruel behavior would be that these patterns have never been applied because the world of the perpetrator has been shaped by myths of evil⁸⁹ – that is, that a certain group of people or race are inherently evil or inferior. In the case of war, as Taylor writes, “If otherization has been effective . . . , then the soldier will have accepted that in this situation the normal moral rules do not apply. The prisoner is seen as not human enough (that is, insufficiently similar to the soldier) to deserve the social insurance provided by moral codes.”⁹⁰

Overall, Taylor’s understanding of cruelty is rather broad: she sees the act in many instances – from bullying to murder. And although she sorts examples of cruelty into two subcategories – sadism, the pleasurable aspect felt when inflicting pain onto someone, and “callousness,” all other forms of cruelty – these taxonomies are expansive. Again, this underscores quite clearly the difficulty in unifying acts of cruelty: each cruel instance is its own

⁸⁷ Taylor, Kathleen. *Cruelty: Human Evil and the Human Brain*, *op. cit.*, 168. As Taylor states, “severe stress, whether emotional or physical, inevitably precedes the worst extremes of otherization and cruelty” (114).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

unique case of excessive or perverse, excessively and perversely damaging, violence. More importantly, however, as I find it essential to an understanding of cruelty and precisely the one that I am developing here, is the fact that Taylor points to cruelty as a purely human characteristic: “If we can come to see cruelty not as otherized evil, but as comprehensible, if morally vile, behaviour, it may be a little less painful to grasp that being cruel is part of being human.”⁹¹ But I would push this observation even further. Not only are we as humans cruel, we presume that one defining feature of the human is its ability to know what cruelty is – an extreme example of a morally vile or unethical act – on the basis of which we can define ourselves as being above it. Cruelty in turn becomes the lodestone for our suppositions about what humanity wants to reject as not us, but because we are constantly reminded of the fact that we are capable of it – and continuously bear witness to instances that prove that we are – it never stops challenging how we define ourselves. We thus return to a central element of the thesis I am developing: cruelty is always already inscribed into the notion of the human and its enactment results in liminal situations that force us to challenge the category of the human and redefine it in relation to the inhuman; cruelty questions and unsettles the limits of human ontology.

Uniquely Human: Hénaff on Cruelty

Hénaff too is interested in understanding why people act cruelly, turning to the question of evolution, aggression, and the work of Austrian zoologist Konrad Lorenz as a way of explaining cruelty, the origin of cruelty, the “mechanism” of cruelty.⁹² As Hénaff underlines, something happened to the human animal;⁹³ there was no longer any need for humans to be

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 191.

⁹³ A note on terminology: I mention the “human animal” to echo Hénaff’s repeated choice of words (“l’animal humain”).

aggressive, to have “[des] moyens surpuissants de détruire,”⁹⁴ and yet we retained our ability to be hostile – an aggression combined with superior intelligence and technical skills of destruction.⁹⁵ This remaining excessive aggression has in turn, according to Hénaff, given rise to cruel acts. Expatiating on this archeology, Hénaff develops his own theory of cruelty and I would like to direct attention to, and dialogue with, what I think are three of its points of interest. It is vital, first, to underscore Hénaff’s idea of cruelty as belonging to the human species; second, to address a moment in which Hénaff conflates cruelty and the monstrous; and third, to once again identify cruelty as what I call a limit-experience, that is to say, one that through its enactment pushes the human into the outer layers of its being.

Hénaff’s argument centers on the fact that the human is the only cruel species; like Taylor above, he puts forward the idea that cruelty is a trait belonging solely to the human. As he writes, “il faudrait dire qu’elle [la cruauté] fait partie du ‘propre de l’homme,’”⁹⁶ reiterating the fact that cruelty is something profoundly human. Hénaff supports his position through a brief linguistic, discursive, analysis, summarizing that “[l]’animal qui parle est aussi l’animal cruel. L’animal conscient de soi est aussi celui qui peut vouloir la souffrance la plus insupportable sur

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁹⁵ “la combinaison de son agressivité fondamentale de son intelligence supérieure et de ses moyens de destruction” (*ibid.*, 194); “Or dans le cas de l’espèce humaine, observe Lorenz, quelque chose a déraillé, et cela peut se décrire. Vers la fin du néolithique inférieur, *Homo Sapiens* avait triomphé des principales espèces animales ennemies; il savait se procurer une nourriture suffisante, se protéger du froid, s’organiser socialement. Son potentiel d’agressivité restait cependant intact” (*ibid.*, 180). Many studies have been conducted in various fields on the evolutionary and neurological motivations behind violence and cruelty by way of aggression, retaliation, altruism, and trust. See, among other works, Archer, John. “The Nature of Human Aggression.” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 32.4 (2009): 202-208, which touches on the origins of aggression as a response to both resource competition and the threat of an attack and Roth, Randolph. “Biology and the Deep History of Homicide.” *The British Journal of Criminology* 51.3 (2011): 535-555, an article detailing (homicidal) aggression as a response to political instability in both 19th-century and contemporary Europe and North America. Indeed, Volume 51, Issue 3 of *The British Journal of Criminology* (2011) in its entirety is a special issue dedicated to the study of the origins and evolution of violence and its relationship to various social establishments.

⁹⁶ Hénaff, Marcel. *Violence dans la raison?: conflit et cruauté*, *op. cit.*, 167. There are many other examples of Hénaff underlining this fact. See, for instance, “Nous voici devant une des grandes énigmes de notre espèce: devant l’animal cruel” (*ibid.*, 161), where *notre espèce* is the human species.

son semblable.”⁹⁷ And yet, while Hénaff identifies cruelty as a uniquely human characteristic, cruelty equally coalesces with the inhuman in his analysis. Labelling cruelty as the “inhuman” trait of the human, Hénaff asserts that – we return to a quote cited at the beginning of this chapter – “cette propriété d’inhumanité est au cœur de l’humanité.”⁹⁸

But even more saliently, he conflates cruelty with monstrosity. As he writes, “elle [la cruauté] est tout d’abord monstrueuse.”⁹⁹ If in this chapter I developed inhumanity vis-à-vis excesses, aneconomy or the *au-delà*, here we have a clear articulation of inhumanity as the monstrous. And indeed, if cruelty articulates the human with the inhuman, cruelty and monstrosity too are intimately linked – as a matter of fact inextricably so – and inform one another in provocative ways. Notice how in Toal’s description of the origins of the term “cruelty,” the word “monstrousness” appears:

Baraz argues that only the second book of *De Clementia* offers a distinctive definition of cruelty. In the first, and in *De Ira*, it is invoked interchangeably with the already near-synonymous *saevitia* and *feritas*, each of which can be translated either as “savagery” or “ferocity.” The unique phrase used in *De Clementia* is *atrocitas animi in exigendis poenis* or “brutality of the mind in the infliction of punishment.” . . . Various rendered also as “harshness,” “barbarousness,” “monstrousness,” *atrocitas* here is invoked by Seneca to convey the crossing over of the magistrate into the sphere of criminality, an implication that resonates throughout the historical deployment of cruelty in legal discourse.¹⁰⁰

I will revisit the notion of criminality – not only with respect to cruelty but specifically monstrosity – in the following chapter when I dialogue with perhaps the authority on the topic, Foucault. For the moment, however, there are two ideas from the above passage that need underscoring. First, is this intersection of monstrosity and cruelty: if *atrocitas* is understood to be

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁰⁰ Toal, Catherine. *The Entrapments of Form*, op. cit., 2.

“monstrousness,” that is, the state of being monstrous or engaging in acts of monstrosity, then cruelty, according to Seneca, is defined as a monstrous mind inflicting punishment. Even the “barbarousness” interpretation of *atrocitas* similarly echoes the connotations of monstrousness: barbarousness, from the Greek *barbaros* or foreign, underlines anew a disavowal of semblance, a deformation of what is familiar, a distancing from the (humanly) identifiable. Such a harsh removal from the recognizable (as human) indeed relates to my next point (and let us not forget that *barbarous* already invoked the *inhuman* in the case of William Kemmler as mentioned above in my discussion of the death penalty). Second, then, is this idea of crossing over, of going beyond; if the *atrocitas* of cruelty *conveys the crossing over of the magistrate into the sphere of criminality*, it just as well articulates a crossing over from human into inhuman. In other words, cruelty is a human characteristic, yet monsters, too, are cruel.

As we will see in our analysis of Saint-Exupéry in the following chapter, cruelty and monstrosity are in fact two wholly distinct categories according to him. I will articulate there why such a conceptualization makes sense in his framework and is much more complicated without the optimism of humanism. But regardless, for the time being, of whether or not cruelty eschews the possibility of monstrosity or, on the contrary, necessarily subsumes it, what the side-by-side articulation of cruelty and monstrosity, let alone their conflation, shows is that cruelty and monstrosity belong to the same nexus, and such an intimately related architecture identifies a boundary that is also a breaking point. Indeed, Hénaff’s idea that cruelty, uniquely human, *est tout d’abord monstrueuse*, or inhuman, produces a tension, a limit. Hénaff emphasizes the “expériences limites de cruauté,”¹⁰¹ noting that the experience of cruelty occurs *at* a limit:

La cruauté indique une passion de détruire l’humanité de l’autre; plus encore: de nier la frontière de l’humanité même; de proclamer que l’autre homme n’est

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

pas mon semblable: de produire l'autre comme non humain. Non pas comme animal, ni même comme chose.¹⁰²

We return, here, to an established idea: cruelty is found at the border, *la frontière*, of humanity itself. It is not only a limit experience, an extreme kind of violence that dehumanizes another, *de produire l'autre comme non humain*, but an experience that occurs for the perpetrator at the limit of his or her humanity. In manifesting the in-human, cruelty once again brings to mind Dayan's analysis of the unusual inscribed from the very beginning into the usual, and pushes the presumed boundaries of human being well beyond their comfortable and comforting limits. If I use as a starting point Hénaff's statement that cruelty is a human-specific trait, it is to further argue that cruelty critically implicates the human in its relation to the inhuman, reconfiguring the border that is presumed to separate the two. Moreover, it is to highlight the fact that my theorization of cruelty as operating on the border of the human and inhuman comes into particular focus when cruelty is articulated vis-à-vis monstrosity. In this vein, I would like to turn to Sade, whose cruel literary representations also invoke the monstrous and the more general idea of cruelty as implicated in defining the category of the human.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 168.

The Marquis¹⁰³

The most paradigmatic instance of (literary) cruelty is found in the works of Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade.¹⁰⁴ The 18th-century libertine leaves behind a legacy vis-à-vis the notion that is hard to ignore and which I wholly acknowledge here. I do, however, believe it is time to think outside the parameters of Sadean viciousness in order to develop a theory of cruelty based on modern instances of it. How can we forget Foucault, too, urging us to move past Sade because “he bores us. He’s a disciplinarian, a sergeant of sex, an accountant of the ass and its equivalents.”¹⁰⁵ But before moving beyond this literary paradigm of cruelty, we must think with him, with his monumental, articulately aberrant and abhorrent reflections. Here, I will focus on the fact that although Sade presents a theory of “refined” cruelty in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), his formulation of it with respect to much of the rest of his thinking, as I will

¹⁰³ There is of course the *other M*, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the 19th-century Austrian novelist after whom the term “masochism” is derived. Gilles Deleuze’s *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch: le froid et le cruel* (1967) differentiates between sadism and masochism namely through the ideas of education and instruction. As he writes, “l’‘instituteur’ sadique s’oppose à l’‘éducateur’ masochiste” (Paris: Minuit, 1967, 46), underlining Sade’s libertines’ interest in instruction but not pedagogy or education, as is the case for masochists: “rien n’est plus étranger au sadique qu’une intention de persuader ou de convaincre, bref une intention pédagogique” (18). Focusing on Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs* (1870), Deleuze argues that sadism and masochism are distinct and cannot be combined under the term “sodomasochism”: “Sado-masochisme est un de ces noms mal fabriqués, monstre sémiologique” (114). According to Deleuze, in sadism, a seducer looks for a victim whereas a masochist is a victim looking for a dominator. Though both sadism and masochism are examples of “pornology” (18), acts deemed more than pornographic because their language operates beyond commandments and descriptions, masochism is different from sadism in what concerns the agents of the deed and their contractual obligations or lack thereof. And yet, in a passage that is most interesting to us here, Deleuze recognizes masochistic and sadistic gestures as both abounding in cruelty: “On ne croira pas pour autant que la cruauté de l’idéal masochiste soit moindre que la cruauté primitive ou sadique, moindre que la cruauté de caprice ou la cruauté de méchanceté” (49).

¹⁰⁴ Following Sade, literature kept representing cruel characters. The gothic novel was a new genre of fiction born at the end of the 18th century that corresponded to gothic architecture and renewed medieval thinking. The gothic novel developed mysterious spaces and atmospheres that were imbued with evil and horror, though cruelty was not studied or analyzed in and of itself. One story that comes to mind is William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786), illustrating the orientalist figure of the cruel despot in much the same way as *One Thousand and One Nights* (*The Arabian Nights*) and Delacroix’s *The Death of Sardanapalus*. In the latter painting, a despot contemplates with indifference and callousness the cruel acts around him that all lead to death, highlighting the West’s fascination with, even fantasy of, the cruel caliph.

¹⁰⁵ Foucault, Michel. “Sade: Sergeant of Sex.” *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 2. Edited by James D. Faubion. Translated by Robert Hurley *et al.*, 227. In this interview from 1975 with G. Dupont, Foucault discusses the trend to intersect Nazism and Sadism in films like Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (*Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, 1975) and Liliana Cavani’s *The Night Porter* (*Il portiere di notte*, 1974).

show momentarily, is contradictory. My primary emphasis, however, will be on underscoring how Sade also, through cruelty, and with the help of monstrosity, nuances the presumed distinction between human and inhuman.

Sade's corpus is comprised of a vast number of humiliating, debasing, violent – cruel – examples. Blood abounds in his works of literature, associated necessarily with sex, and to begin with, the loss of virginity is always characterized by the trope of painful, sanguinary tearing. As the Chevalier yells to Eugénie in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, “Crie tant que tu voudrais, petite coquine, je te dis qu’il faut qu’il entre, en dusses-tu crever mille fois! . . . voilà le pucelage du diable . . . Regardez son sang comme il coule!”¹⁰⁶ The universe of Sade is a universe of excess: excessive pain, excessively large membra viriles, excessive loss of control, with Eugénie imploring, “dites-moi quelque chose qui me console des excès où me voilà livrée; éteignez mes remords; encouragez-moi.”¹⁰⁷ Dolmancé is, after all, the man who whips the young woman more than 60 times, with Mme de Saint-Ange commenting, “Scélérat, comme tu as du plaisir à baiser ainsi les vestiges de ta cruauté!” Cruelty is a kind of weapon: it is through cruelty that libertines are initiated, through cruelty that victims are subjugated. But not only do these scenes uncover an obvious cruelty, they highlight the fact that Dolmancé is an entirely corrupt, dangerous, and – most notably – inhuman man: “Il était impossible de mieux trouver l’homme qu’il te fallait: l’irréligion, l’impiété, l’inhumanité découlent des lèvres de Dolmancé,”¹⁰⁸ explains the Chevalier. And Eugénie, describing Dolamancé, yells “Ah! vous êtes un monstre!”¹⁰⁹ calling into

¹⁰⁶ Sade. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976, 182.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

question his humanity because of his cruel acts. Here we encounter a coupling of monstrosity and cruelty as well as a conjoining of *homme* (the human) and *l'inhumain* (the inhuman).

Moreover, cruelty becomes a virtue and not a vice in Sade's universe, with true virtue being in fact punished and not rewarded in any capacity. An analogous message is found in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* – specifically on the topic of cruelty as Dolmancé legitimizes cruel behaviors and pleasures. He explains:

Voilà, ma chère Eugénie, . . . que la cruauté, bien loin d'être un vice, est le premier sentiment qu'imprime en nous la nature. L'enfant brise son hochet, mord le téton de sa nourrice, étrangle son oiseau, bien avant que d'avoir l'âge de raison. . . . La cruauté est dans la nature; nous naissons tous avec une dose de cruauté que la seule éducation modifie; mais l'éducation n'est pas dans la nature, elle nuit autant aux effets sacrés de la nature que la culture nuit aux arbres. . . . La cruauté n'est autre chose que l'énergie de l'homme que la civilisation n'a point encore corrompue: elle est donc une vertu et non pas un vice.¹¹⁰

This passage does not simply identify vice as the answer to a vicious word; it goes perhaps further still by arguing that cruelty is supposedly so pure, so natural, that it is a virtue. Dolmancé supports the idea that cruelty and sexuality – since found in nature – are traits that are possessed by animals, which appears to be a line of thinking different from the notion that cruelty is uniquely human. Sade, through Dolmancé, thus argues that cruelty is a natural state of being and that it is only due to a certain constricting education that most humans are not cruel. And yet, there are contradictions in his argument between the natural and the contrived just as there are with his representations of and commentary on women. Sade seems to categorize women into two groups as explained by Maurice Tourné in his article “Pénélope et Circé, ou les mythes de la femme dans l'œuvre de Sade.”¹¹¹ The Circes are dominating libertines – Juliette for instance,

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

¹¹¹ *Europe* 522(1972): 71-88.

Justine's sister – while the Penelopes are victims of libertinage: the eponym of the *Justine* trilogy and many others like her in Sade's universe. And although certain Circes do exist in Sade's oeuvre, he clearly also articulates the seemingly obvious, purely natural subjugation of women by men: women are “toujours inférieure à l'homme, infiniment moins ingénieuse, moins sage, constituée d'une manière dégoûtante. . . .”¹¹² In the same way that he simultaneously argues for the emancipation of women, for females being just as libertine as males, *and* believing them to be subject *naturally* to domination by men, he insists on a naturist argument of cruelty while also speaking of a learned cruelty and of the refinements of cruelty in his emphasis on the word “instruire” in his works. Wills in fact underlines Sade's insistence on this term in his chapter “Revolutions in the Darkroom: Balázs, Benjamin, Sade” of *Dorsality*, thereby bringing to light the tension between nature and artifice:

Philosophy in the Bedroom is sub-titled *Dialogues Intended for the Education of Young Ladies*, and here, as in other texts of Sade, emphasis is constantly placed on instruction: “It is a matter of an education,” declares Saint-Ange (*Philosophy in the Bedroom*, 190); “I came hither to be instructed, and will not go till I am informed [*savante*],” concurs Eugénie (194; *Œuvres*, 379); “This [is] the lyceum where [the lessons will] be given,” confirms Dolmancé (196).¹¹³

The disconnect in Sade thus resides in the fact that cruelty is an instruction, a demonstration, and yet one should not need to be instructed in nature. Barthes also explains how

[l]a pratique sadienne est dominée par une grande idée d'ordre: les “dérèglements” sont énergiquement régalez, la luxure est sans frein mais non sans ordre (à Silling, par exemple, toute débauche cesse irrévocablement à 2 heures du matin). . . . Le code érotique est composé d'unités qui ont été soigneusement déterminées et nommées par Sade lui-même.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Sade. *Œuvres complètes du Marquis de Sade. T. 7, 2: La nouvelle Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu*. Edited by Annie Le Brun. Paris: Pauvert, 1987, 157.

¹¹³ Wills, David. *Dorsality: Thinking Back through Technology and Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 177.

¹¹⁴ Barthes, Roland. *Sade Fourier Loyola. op. cit.*, 32-33.

And Foucault, too, clearly underlines the refined and staged nature of Sade's sexual scenes, the highly structured aspect of their enactment. He specifically notes "the meticulousness, the ritual, the rigorous ceremonial form that [they] assume."¹¹⁵ Indeed, these nesting-doll-like units – *posture, opération, figure, episode*, where each former combines to form the latter in order to orchestrate the pornographic *scène* or *séance* – are applicable not only to erotic stance but also syntax and rhetoric, "une pornogrammaire,"¹¹⁶ in Sade's work:

On comprend mieux maintenant sur quoi repose et à quoi tend toute la combinatoire érotique de Sade: son origine et sa sanction sont d'ordre rhétorique. Les deux codes, en effet, celui de la phrase (oratoire) et celui de la figure (érotique) se relaient sans cesse. . . . [L]a parole et la posture ont exactement la même valeur.¹¹⁷

These rhetorical devices, furthermore, are at the basis of "mille . . . langages sadiens: le cruel, l'obscène, le persifleur, le poli, le pointu, le didactique, le comique, le lyrique, le romanesque, etc."¹¹⁸; in other words, an entire semantic structure shapes cruelty. If we harken back to Hénaff and his discursive analysis that leads to his understanding of the human as the sole cruel species, we see how in Sade's supposed "natural cruelty," cruelty is structured in a way that appears to be very human after all. Code, units, categories, figures, combinatorics: the practice of the cruel and its associated notions in Sade is governed by order with instruction – perhaps the epitome of human behavior – defining it.¹¹⁹

Overall, psychopathologicosexual cruelty is not my topic. Indeed, any more in-depth treatment of cruelty as a (psycho)pathology would have to deal with the Freudian theory of the

¹¹⁵ Foucault, Michel. "Sade: Sergeant of Sex," *op. cit.*, 223.

¹¹⁶ Barthes, Roland. *Sade Fourier Loyola. op. cit.*, 169.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹¹⁹ Of course, within the idea of structure and posture is this idea of organization. And as we shall see in the chapters that follow, cruelty in warfare though no longer following the rules of war, is itself codified, enacted for reasons, done in a particular kind of way in order to create value in a system of violence, debasement, dehumanization.

drives, within which the distinction between what is libidinal and what is not is difficult to determine. Furthermore, whether or not we can say for sure whether cruelty in Sade is natural (which complicates the idea that cruelty is human, since “natural” may or may not mean human) or learned (in this case more strictly human), Sade does once again show us how cruelty is coupled with monstrosity. How can we deny the fact that extreme sexual cruelty questions the divide between the human and inhuman, namely for the *bourreau*? Cruel excesses bring to the foreground the end limits of human beings; sadistic instigators may very well remain human, but in a manner which redefines their humanity. Sade’s literature of cruelty does more than name and passively receive a world of violence and excess, then: it engages with cruelty in a way that calls into question the agents of cruel acts, underscoring their in-humanity.

Montaigne

In contrast to Sade’s version of the Enlightenment, in which the human is confronted by its paroxysmal opposite, to conclude, let us consider the context in which Montaigne raises the question of cruelty at the inaugural moment of an emerging humanism. In his essay “De la cruauté,”¹²⁰ he meanders through several concepts before landing on our topic of interest. Beginning with a reflection on virtue, something he defines as other and more noble than simple goodness,¹²¹ he brings to mind the Ancients who praised virtue as strength and looked down on pity, compassion, sympathy: malleable feelings that were not the object of respect, especially for the Stoics. In “De la cruauté,” however, Montaigne’s stance on virtue and mercy are enigmatic.

¹²⁰ Other examples of cruelty are found in Montaigne’s “Couardise Mere de la Cruauté” (II, 27) and “Des coches,” where, in the latter text, the King of Mexico is tortured by the Spanish and his resilience “rendait de plus en plus honteuse leur [the Spaniards’] cruauté” (III, 6, 912. *The Montaigne Project*. The University of Chicago. <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/montessaisville/navigate/1/5/7/>).

¹²¹ “Il me semble que la vertu est chose autre, et plus noble, que les inclinations à la bonté, qui naissent en nous” (“De la cruauté,” II, 11, 422. *The Montaigne Project*. The University of Chicago. <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/montessaisville/navigate/1/4/12/>).

He appears to suffer with the criminals and victims he describes in the text and seems to exhibit a number of fellow feelings.¹²² When he addresses concepts that oppose virtue – notably vice – he considers cruelty, to get to the heart of the essay, not only as a vice that he despises, but as the most extreme vice, portraying it as a mix of pleasure and violence, as well as a kind of spectacle meant to inspire fear in the public,¹²³ something characteristic of cruelty throughout the ages and involving a demonstrative, flowing, spurting blood. Considering his own position on cruelty, Montaigne introspectively writes:

Je hay entre autres vices, cruellement la cruauté, et par nature et par jugement, comme l'extreme de tous les vices. Mais c'est jusques à telle mollesse, que je ne voy pas esgorger un poulet sans desplaisir, et ois impatientement gémir un lievre sous les dents de mes chiens: quoy que ce soit un plaisir violent que la chasse.¹²⁴

Ironically hating cruelty cruelly, Montaigne takes a singular stance on the notion and its manifestations through torture, the punishment of criminals, and the mistreatment of animals in “De la cruauté.” Such a rejection of cruelty in the era of the horrific Wars of Religion (1562-1598), which epitomized the practice of quotidian public spectacles of cruelty through the punishment of criminals, and within the context of hunting as an aristocratic pastime, is of note, and begs, perhaps unanswerable, questions such as: are these displays of empathy on Montaigne’s behalf? Is this a response to the atrocious violence of the time? Is Montaigne

¹²² For more on Montaigne offering an ethics of mercy that is to be embraced socially in the *Essais*, see David Quint’s *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the Essais*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. For an opposing perspective, on the other hand, see Cynthia Nazarian’s “Montaigne Against Sympathy: On Affect and Ethics in the *Essais*” (*Montaigne Studies*, vol. XXX, 2018). Nazarian identifies the moments of fellow feeling in Montaigne’s *Essais* as simply amounting to the latter’s personality traits and not sympathy as an ethical posture.

¹²³ See “De la cruauté,” II, 11, 432-433; “ce m’a tousjours semblé un spectacle tres-desplaisant” (*ibid.*, 433).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 429. Nazarian explains that Montaigne’s “reference to his extreme *mollesse* at the killing of chickens or hares is a straightforward self-criticism, rather than a denunciation of hunting” (“Montaigne Against Sympathy: On Affect and Ethics in the *Essais*,” *op. cit.*, 133-134). However, Montaigne does not clearly state that he is not denouncing hunting, thus it is not so simple to argue that it is solely his own *mollesse* that he is criticizing. This is what renders his viewpoint unique: as an aristocrat at the time, Montaigne would have been expected to indulge in hunting activities and entertain guests with such play, and yet it is not clear whether or not he is condemning the practice in general in this passage of “De la cruauté.”

himself conflicted on his views on cruelty: hating cruelty, though cruelly, as though this very hatred is somewhat of a vice in and of itself?

Montaigne does, however, provide concrete, less cryptic examples of what he understands to be cruelty in “De la cruauté” – from civil war to executions to the mistreatment of animals – raising, for instance, “horribles exemples de cruauté que les tyrans Romains mirent en usage.”¹²⁵ And yet ultimately, cruelty is just as ineffable in Montaigne as it is for Rosset, for instance, to return to the figure for whom cruelty is *inéluçtable*. For Montaigne, everything that is “au delà de la mort simple”¹²⁶ – terminology that indicates an excess, an overspill – is “pure cruauté.”¹²⁷ As he states, alluding to the treatment of criminals, “Il faut exercer ces inhumains exceç contre l’excorce, non contre le vif.”¹²⁸ Here, he expresses a preference for cruel punishment to be inflicted on the cadaver of an offender and not on the living body, a practice that would still dissuade the public through an exemplary spectacle of gruesome violence, but without making a living being suffer. In addition to emphasizing an excess verging on the inhuman as underscored above, Montaigne calls these forms of torture, such as boiling bodies or quartering them, “tourmens insupportables.”¹²⁹ In “De la cruauté,” Montaigne is in fact making a case against both forms of torture used at the time: torture as punishment and institutional torture, that is, judicial torture used as a form of questioning where physical pressure is applied to extract information. In the final analysis, cruelty is constituted by excesses that cross over an accepted “human” threshold.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ “De la cruauté,” II, 11, 430.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 431.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 432.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 431.

¹³⁰ Nazarian mentions in passing the idea of excess, stating that cruelty’s “vice comes not solely from its violence, but especially from its excess” (Nazarian, Cynthia. “Montaigne Against Sympathy: On Affect and Ethics in the *Essais*,” *op. cit.*, 134). In this same passage she articulates how sympathy and cruelty are both born of positions of

Montaigne equally highlights the possible progressions of cruelty: “Les naturels sanguinaires à l’endroit des bestes tesmoignent une propension naturelle à la cruauté. Apres qu’on se fut apprivoisé à Rome aux spectacles des meurtres des animaux, on vint aux hommes et aux gladiateurs. Nature, à ce creins-je, elle mesme attache à l’homme quelque instinct à l’inhumanité.”¹³¹ In other words, for those who are bloodthirsty, animal cruelty naturally mutates to abhorrent violence toward human beings, as suggested earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, it is unclear if “l’inhumanité” makes reference to one’s desire to hurt animals, and then men and gladiators, or one’s desire to watch such spectacles, the pleasure one takes at the sight of them. Regardless, for Montaigne, inhumanity becomes unavoidable when discussing cruelty; cruelty is a very human instinct that, however, concomitantly spills over and into the inhuman.

Indeed, Montaigne uses the term “monstre” in the essay – “Je diray un monstre”¹³² – hypothetically calling himself a monster because of the vices he possesses: “mais tant y a que la plupart des vices, je les ay de moy mesmes en horreur.”¹³³ And then another slip, into the realm of the monstrous, occurs when Montaigne writes the following, describing the violence of the time:

Je vy en une saison en laquelle nous foisonnons en exemples incroyables de ce vice, par la licence de nos guerres civiles; et ne voit on rien aux histoires anciennes de plus extreme que ce que nous en essayons tous les jours. Mais cela ne m’y a nullement apprivoisé. A peine me pouvoy-je persuader, avant que je l’eusse veu, qu’il se fut trouvé des ames si monstreuses, qui, pour le seul plaisir du meurtre, le voulussent commettre: hacher et détrencher les membres d’autrui; esguiser leur esprit à inventer des tourmens inusitez et des morts nouvelles, sans inimitié, sans profit, et pour cette seule fin de jouir du plaisant spectacle des gestes et mouvemens pitoyables, des gémissemens et voix

weakness: “The tyrant’s [Alexandre, tyran de Pheres] sympathy and his cruelty share the same traits: effeminacy, *foiblesse d’ame* and a lack of reasoning” (*ibid.*).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 434.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 428. Here, “monstre” is understood in the sense of “une chose monstrueuse” (*ibid.*n4), perhaps precisely highlighting the heterogeneity of Montaigne’s character: a “monstrous” combination of vice and virtue.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

lamentables d'un homme mourant en angoisse. Car voilà l'extrême point où la cruauté puisse atteindre.¹³⁴

Car voilà l'extrême point où la cruauté puisse atteindre: Montaigne describes a pure, gratuitous spectacle of violence that even personal enmity or profit cannot justify. And these vile operations are committed by *des ames si monstreuses, qui, pour le seul plaisir du meurtre, le voulussent commettre*. In other words, monstrous souls engage in cruel atrocities “pour le seul plaisir du meurtre,” perpetrating acts that annihilate any and all value while also being entirely other-than-human. Is monstrosity not the beyond of cruelty, taking cruelty as its starting point? Is gratuitous, monstrous violence not precisely aneconomic (as will be further examined in the following chapter) and thus an *au-delà de l'économie*, to harken back to Derrida's words? If cruelty is inhuman and its beyond im-possible, the possible beyond of the cruel would not only be the inhuman, but the monstrous. We once again confirm the fact that the seemingly impossible idea that the inhuman is inscribed into the human is only im-possible – the dash, once again, pointing to its possibility – and all because of cruelty.

Indeed, Frédéric Brahami, under the entries “Cruauté” and “Humanité” of the *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*, explains Montaigne's cruelty in a similar way: “Avec la cruauté, M. met au jour une réalité psychique et sociale des plus ambiguës, dans la mesure où elle définit une dimension de l'existence qui brouille la séparation trop tranquille de l'humain et de l'inhumain. . . .”¹³⁵ Brahami's formulations provide a lucid confirmation of my argument here: “C'est que la cruauté est l'inhumanité même, pourtant constitutive de l'humanité.”¹³⁶ And again: cruelty is the “paradigme de l'inhumanité.”¹³⁷ Indeed, these statements suggest that

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 434.

¹³⁵ Desan, Philippe, editor. *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*. Nouvelle éd. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007, 272.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 555.

cruelty is a purely human characteristic, though seemingly entirely inhuman. In what follows, I will continue to examine cruelty's revelation of inhumanity as a constitutive part of humanity insofar as cruelty is the *paradigm de l'inhumanité* that nevertheless stems from the human. As we shall see from my literary examples, though we may want cruelty to be inhuman, though we may want to be able to expel it beyond the human in order to redeem the human, cruelty keeps clinging to the human, even at the latter's outside limit. Cruelty infects and defiles the human; it is what, on the edge of the human, cannot be separated from it.

It is precisely the shifting ground between the human and inhuman that is revealed in the light of cruelty, and specifically against the backdrop of warfare, that this project tackles. As mentioned in my Introduction, omnipresent in life and literature, extreme violence and cruelty are mentioned and represented in a staggering number of contexts,¹³⁸ yet there is little critical engagement with cruelty, particularly in literary analysis,¹³⁹ and especially outside the context of the Marquis de Sade. As Toal explains, "Like [Judith] Shklar, [Richard] Rorty sees literature rather than philosophy as the true locus of explorations of cruelty, encompassing novels that 'help us see how social practices which we have taken for granted have made us cruel,' and those which show us 'the ways in which particular sorts of people are cruel to other particular sorts of people.'"¹⁴⁰ I too believe that literature has much to offer vis-à-vis cruelty – not necessarily more than philosophy, but an articulation of both, together, is productive.

¹³⁸ As Judith Butler asserts: "We read about lives lost and are often given the numbers, but these stories are repeated every day, and the repetition appears endless, irremediable" (Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York/London: Verso, 2016, 13).

¹³⁹ This isn't to say that no such studies exist. The proceedings of the Sixth Annual Graduate Conference in French, Francophone, and Comparative Literature at Columbia University from 1996, for instance, are published precisely under the title *Literature and Cruelty*. Thirteen participants engage with texts as diverse as Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, Tahar Ben Jelloun's *L'Enfant de sable*, and Beckett's *En attendant Godot*.

¹⁴⁰ Toal, Catherine. *The Entrapments of Form*, op. cit., 125. American philosopher Richard Rorty engages with the question of cruelty, namely through Nabokov and Orwell, in his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989).

In subsequent chapters, where I will develop literary understandings of cruelty, I will examine in particular how cruelty articulates with, or in opposition to monstrosity. Cruelty remains in the domain of economy as a supplement – something both beyond the economy *and* its generator – whereas monstrosity functions differently. Whereas cruelty celebrates value and reuses it, unexpectedly even valorizing human life, monstrosity annihilates value and expends it gratuitously. But in articulating the relationship between cruelty and monstrosity, I will be further underscoring the relation between the human and inhuman. Consequently, with this project, I am endeavoring to highlight how cruelty signifies rather than simply qualifies. The texts that will be studied here show how cruelty redramatizes the presumed border between human and inhuman by putting two operations into effect: it renders the boundary both visible *and* undecidable, paradoxically showing us that this frontier cannot be stable by materializing, declining, making readable this dividing line. Cruelty is thus a code that is a kind of avowal of the human's continuity with the inhuman. With that in mind, I would like to turn to modern and contemporary literature and the knowledge of cruelty and thus human ontology that circulate in my chosen texts. Let us, then, begin with a literary consideration of cruelty with the help of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

CHAPTER 2

CRUEL HUMANS: ON THE VALUE OF WAR AND LOSS

All of Europe has turned into a monster.

— Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt*

[H]umanism is the only, and I would go so far as to say, the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history.

— Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Widely known for his *Le Petit Prince* (1943), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote many other works haunted by war and the human agents – humanity at large – involved with and within it. That the author is a proponent of humanism is clear from reading any one of his texts let alone his entire corpus. His writings and thinking all have man – and varying degrees of a celebration of the human – as their foundation. As the narrator of *Citadelle* (1948) cries, midway through the novel, “je me tourmentais à propos des hommes” (C 377), echoing Saint-Exupéry’s own preoccupation with – and anxieties about – the outcome of World War II and its human capital and loss.¹ *Terre des hommes* (1939) too is injected with humanism and calls for the establishment of relationships between human beings no matter who they are or where they come from: “Nous sommes solidaires, emportés par la même planète, équipage d’un même navire” (TdesH 175) is a message that reverberates throughout the book.² Perhaps, then, it comes as no

¹ *Citadelle* was meant to be Saint-Exupéry’s posthumous chef-d’oeuvre but was left in a draft state and never edited by the author himself. Speaking to a “tu,” an interlocutor who is sometimes his father, sometimes God, and sometimes the reader of the novel, the narrator of the text, a kind of prince-prophet on various wisdom-seeking wanderings, addresses themes from love to war, friendship to vanity, all underlined by spiritual interrogations in a way that strongly echoes Salim Bachi’s work as analyzed in the next chapter.

² The narratives of all of Saint-Exupéry’s novels focus on human relations. In *Courrier Sud* (1929), for instance, the author’s first novel, romantic relationships as well as the relations between parents and their children structure the entirety of the plot. Workplace relations and the difference between the tumultuous and dangerous task of delivering the mail and the responsibilities those in charge have toward their subordinates are apparent in *Vol de nuit* (1931): Fabien is a courier, while Rivière, his director, has an office job and is responsible for Fabien’s untimely death on route to Buenos Aires by giving him the green light on a night flight. Ultimately, “Rivière-le-Grand, Rivière-le-Victorieux . . . porte une lourde victoire” (VdeN 89): the mission is victorious because Rivière did not succumb to

surprise that cruelty appears at pivotal moments in his corpus and, as I will argue, is imperative to understanding his notion of humanism. What *may* come as a surprise, however, is the fact that though an acclaimed writer, Saint-Exupéry is a regrettably underappreciated figure when it comes to contemplating in-human ontologies. Having lived through, fought in, and written about the Second World War, his reflections speak loudly to the limits of the human – especially in the face of violence – and in this chapter, by focusing on cruelty and *its* limits, I would like to consider precisely how.

Saint-Exupéry's corpus largely revolves around aerial combat and the often autobiographically-inspired protagonists – either fighter pilots or couriers – who figure in his texts. The pilot turned writer consequently offers a unique perspective, that is, one from above, on the physical world and the humans who live on it. From Saint-Exupéry's vantage point, there is a shift in point of view and scale, a distance, frequently coupled with solitude, that is taken with respect to the Earth and its inhabitants. As a result, humans are seen in a different light, in different ways, and frequently take on other, non-human, shapes and forms. They are compared to vermin, parasites, and ants, for instance, in *Pilote de guerre* (1942), and again in *Terre des hommes* are termed “la fourmilière humaine” (TdesH 67). By the same token, humans are seen as being part of a larger picture in the pilot's works: from above, they are integrated into their terrain, one that is often destroyed and scorched by military conflict. Having flown over war zones and participated in the 1940 Battle of France, Saint-Exupéry had seen military, civilian,

the need to suspend night flights, but contentious, since a man died. The glorification of fraternity in times of war is at the heart of *Pilote de guerre* (1942). *Le Petit Prince*, moreover, is principally about human relations and the allegorical classification of humans, be it by their age (“les grandes personnes” versus “les enfants”), ideology, job, or more generally function – or lack thereof – in society. Finally, *Terre des hommes*, recounted at times like a fairy tale that makes one think of *Le Petit Prince*, tells the story of a man training to become a courier. He encounters the deaths of fellow comrades and has a near-death experience himself after a crash in the desert (Saint-Exupéry in fact experienced and miraculously survived such a crash in the Libyan desert in 1935). In the final analysis, the valorization of human relations and a sense of community is his most important discovery (see especially TdesH 35, 36, 107).

and agricultural landscapes mutilated by the war. Indeed, this “pilot perspective” is a lens through which one can read Saint-Exupéry and consider an abundance of questions: man and mankind’s place in war and the world; the environment and ecological concerns born of warfare; military technology – from fighter jets to, by extension in a way that is acutely relevant to contemporary war, drones; and, more generally, humanity, its progress or regression, and the existential musings that inform such questions.³

In a certain interpretation, Saint-Exupéry can indeed be viewed in parallel with the existentialists of post-WWII France.⁴ Sartre, in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), explains how

the first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.⁵

This is a line of thinking similar to that of the pilot who too develops the notion of simultaneous singular and communal responsibility: “Ton sens est fait du sens des autres, que tu le veuilles ou non” (C 341). “Je n’ai plus de sens si je suis seul” (C 357), he continues in *Citadelle*, underlining the fact that meaning is generated through relations between persons and responsibility to one

³ As Pierre-Henri Simon points out in *L’Homme en procès*, a work detailing the humanist tendencies of Malraux, Sartre, Camus, and Saint-Exupéry, the latter figure is an exemplar of humanism, whom Simon describes as follows: “Suspendu entre la force et l’amour, on le voit, de *Vol de nuit* à *Terre des hommes*, passer d’un humanisme héroïque à un humanisme plus simplement humain, où le service des autres, l’instinct fraternel, le progrès, le bonheur de la foule orientent l’activité de l’homme supérieur” (*L’Homme en procès*. Malraux, Sartre, Camus, Saint-Exupéry. Paris: Neuchâtel, 1958, 145).

⁴ Philippe Forest observes how for Saint-Exupéry, “[l]a valeur morale ne se déduit pas d’une vérité qui n’existe pas. C’est plutôt la vérité qui naît de la valeur que l’on se donne à soi-même et qui se mesure à la capacité qu’elle offre à l’individu de s’affirmer souverainement et tel qu’en lui-même. Le raisonnement n’est pas fondamentalement différent de celui auquel s’en remettra Sartre dans *L’Existentialisme est un humanisme* et il n’échappe pas aux mêmes objections dans la mesure où il interdit qu’on discrimine entre le bien et le mal dès lors que l’individu invente authentiquement et pour lui-même la vérité singulière et impartageable à l’aune de laquelle son existence demandera à être jugée” (“Chacun est seul responsable de tous.” *Morale de Saint-Exupéry.* *Études françaises* 46.1 (2010), 20).

⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism including “A Commentary on The Stranger.”* Translated by Carol Macomber. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, 23.

another.⁶ Indeed, Saint-Exupéry and Sartre are products of their time and reflect the violent climates of WWII. Contemplations of mankind, risk, responsibility, fate, and existence in and of itself are thus understandable for both.

Of course, the obvious link between Sartre and Saint-Exupéry, then, is that the one and the other turn to humanism and by extension existentialism as a way of making sense of life after the atrocities of the war. Existentialism, according to Sartre, is a humanism

because we remind man that there is no legislator other than himself and that he must, in his abandoned state, make his own choices, and also because we show that it is not by turning inward, but by constantly seeking a goal outside of himself in the form of liberation, or of some special achievement, that man will realize himself as truly human.⁷

And yet, Saint-Exupéry's and Sartre's views on humanism are distinct. Where Sartre builds on Kierkegaard and Heidegger to rethink the categorical definition of man as "existence preced[ing] essence,"⁸ rigorously developing notions relating to freedom, responsibility, and non-determinism, Saint-Exupéry's humanism – though an overarching feature of the entirety of his corpus – is much more opaque and far less invested in particular models or theses of consciousness. The French pilot's humanism, different with respect to Sartre's on a formal level – Saint-Exupéry never developed an explicit *philosophical* humanism and does not reference any specific tradition or current of thought with his humanistic stance – turns, in my view, on the question of the line between the human and inhuman. His thinking in this sense offers a variation

⁶ This echoes Judith Butler who, when discussing what lives – namely in the context of war – matter or count in accordance with their precarity, states that "[t]he shared condition of precariousness implies that the body is constitutively social and interdependent" (*Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York/London: Verso, 2016, 31). She further asks us to consider "the possibilities of one's own violent actions in relation to those lives to which one is bound, including those whom one never chose and never knew" (179), and in the final analysis offers the following summary: "precariousness as a generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world; responsiveness – and thus, ultimately, responsibility" (34).

⁷ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism is a Humanism* including "A Commentary on *The Stranger*," *op. cit.*, 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

on Heidegger's definition of humanism in his *Brief über den Humanismus [Letter on Humanism]* (1946), where the German philosopher states, in reply to Jean Beaufret on the topic of existentialism, that "humanism [consists in] meditating and caring that man be human and not inhumane, 'inhumane,' that is, outside his essence."⁹ I will show how Saint-Exupéry offers a version of such an idea in his works, focusing on what makes a human *human* in contrast to what inhumanity consists of and, moreover, how these two concepts are related to one another. A theory of what I am calling "humanist cruelty" based on the work of Saint-Exupéry will thus come to light, illustrating how the pilot inflects a traditional thinking of humanism with his thinking of cruelty precisely through a valorization of human life by way of cruel sacrifices.

Saint-Exupéry's ponderings on the value of the human could also – in a different study however, as I do not have the space for this here – be compared to those of William Empson and his *Asymmetry in Buddha Faces* and *The Royal Beast*, both written in the 1930s. As Sharon Cameron states in *Impersonality* (2007), referencing the Wurroo, beings invented by Empson in the latter text who "refuse to be classified as men"¹⁰: "What the Buddha and the Wurroo put in question is a set of presumptions about identifying, judging, valuing – a set of beliefs about human value, about the value of being human."¹¹ But more importantly, the Wurroo's reflection on cruelty is what also defines their understanding of humans. As Wuzzoo, head of the Wurroo, states, "You have got all the spiritual heights in the human race and all the spiritual depths too; that is why you are so cruel,"¹² underlining, as seen in Chapter 1, cruelty as a human characteristic. Indeed, Wuzzoo's observation suggests that the Wurroo, understood to be non-

⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008, 224.

¹⁰ Cameron, Sharon. *Impersonality: Seven Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹² quoted in *ibid.*, 19.

human, are also *not* cruel; cruelty here once again belongs strictly to the realm of the human, but certainly right on its border: “I fancy I see a war of extermination behind the awe in your eyes,”¹³ Wuzzoo continues, speaking to Mary, a human woman, and bringing to mind the excesses, the atrocities of which *human* instigators of cruelty are capable. A similar conceptualization of cruelty will come to light in this chapter.

The word “cruauté” and its variations appear frequently enough in Saint-Exupéry’s collection of works to be of noticeable importance. Cruelty is an essential notion for the narrator of *Citadelle*, for instance, who states, with a certain growing pessimism: “Je comprenais que toute création d’abord est cruelle” (C 126).¹⁴ Interestingly, the word arises very rarely in Saint-Exupéry’s *Écrits de guerre, 1939-1944* (1982),¹⁵ and not at all in *Terre des hommes*. But, as I will show, it does appear in *Pilote de guerre* and is noteworthy not simply for being another instance of the term, but for the understanding of different kinds of martial acts in addition to the categories of the human and inhuman that it (and by extension monstrosity) establishes. To see how, I will focus on the pilot-writer’s concept of sacrifice as a way of giving value to cruel events, a nexus of ideas that invites comparison with Georges Bataille. Philippe Forest already hints at the proximity between Bataille and Saint-Exupéry, describing the latter as “un authentique écrivain moderne au même titre que Malraux, Camus ou Sartre – dont Pierre-Henri Simon le rapproche justement – mais également de Breton, d’Aragon ou de Bataille – dont il est moins loin qu’on ne le pense d’habitude.”¹⁶ Building on this Saint-Exupéry-Bataille parallel,

¹³ quoted in *ibid*.

¹⁴ In the interest of lexicology, the word appears again at the following moments: C 101, 103, 104, 105, 126, 143, 144, 183x2, 249, 362, 375, 420, 450.

¹⁵ The term comes up when Saint-Exupéry expresses his troubled thoughts: “Je suis un bon document parce que je souffre avec cruauté. Le malentendu ou l’inquiétude me font mal d’un coup, comme un couteau. – Certains mots m’apaisent d’un coup” (ÉdeG 368).

¹⁶ Forest, Philippe. “‘Chacun est seul responsable de tous.’ Morale de Saint-Exupéry,” *op. cit.*, 19.

throughout this chapter I will address a number of Saint-Exupéry's literary and non-fictional works through a Bataillean lens, highlighting an architecture of sacrifice and cruelty that, I argue, systematize Saint-Exupéry's humanism. Though Saint-Exupéry's sacrificial ideology is structured in a way that is similar to Bataille's, the former nonetheless complexifies the latter's precisely by differentiating between cruelty and its sacrificial value and something gratuitous, without currency, without value – monstrosity.

It is thus through the notion of value, and specifically human value, that I will underline this idea of humanist cruelty in the pilot's corpus. By doing so, I will stress the simultaneous partisan and cruel elements of WWII and highlight how cruelty can be defined as the excesses, in the Bataillean sense of the term, of an economy of warfare as structured by Schmitt's framework – and the possible limitations of such a view of conflict. For Saint-Exupéry, then, cruelty is humanist and humanizing, as opposed to the purely inhuman, which is seen as monstrous. Humanist cruelty may appear to be an oxymoron but as we shall come to realize, here it is not, since Saint-Exupéry has a particular version of cruelty in relation to sacrifice and its justification from a humanist point of view. Sacrifice embodies death for a cause: patriotism and the protection of France, for instance; sacrifice thus gives value to death and when cruel deaths are called sacrifices, cruelty too can be understood transitively to produce value. This particular kind of cruelty joins the etymological definition of the term insofar, in an obvious way, as there are many bloody events described in the works to follow; but more importantly – and therein lies his originality – Saint-Exupéry through his understanding of cruelty develops a line of thinking that interrogates human ontology and types of martial conduct.

(Auto)Biography

On November 26, 1939, Saint-Exupéry joined the reconnaissance group 2/33,¹⁷ one of the aerial groups that suffered the most during WWII. After spending most of 1941 and 1942 in exile in the United States, the pilot was re-stationed in Algeria and then Morocco, rejoining group 2/33 in Algiers and Oujda. At this time, he trained on the P-38 “Lightning,” an aircraft used by the United States Army Air Forces and the Free French Air Force. After a landing accident, he found himself out of service and depressed for six months until he once again actively joined group 2/33 in April 1944 at the age of 44,¹⁸ only to disappear over the south of France on July 31, 1944 after a series of eight consecutive reconnaissance missions. As Lieutenant Maurice Guernier explains, Saint-Exupéry was possessed by the idea of his own utility:

Il était déprimé de ne pas pouvoir être “utile.” Il insistait sans cesse sur ces mots: ne pas pouvoir être utile. . . . “Est-ce que ma mission est utile? Est-ce que je suis utile à quelque chose dans cette gigantesque machine de guerre qui est déclenchée sur tous les fronts et dans laquelle je ne suis qu’un petit point dans le ciel?” (ÉdeG 289-291)

The pilot-writer wanted to inhabit both sides of his identity: he did not wish to simply write about the war but be an active part of it: “il aurait été malheureux partout sauf au front” (ÉdeG 148), remarks his friend Lewis Galantière, with Léon Werth going so far as to insinuate a *desire* to die, a push toward death: “C’est la mort qu’il eût choisie, affirment quelques nécrologues. Et sans doute il n’attendit pas la mort. Il la provoqua” (ÉdeG 449-450).¹⁹

¹⁷ “le groupe de reconnaissance de photographie aérienne de l’armée de l’Air” (ÉdeG 296).

¹⁸ The age limit for fighter pilots at the time was in fact 30. Today in France, age waivers are reviewed up to the age of 35.

¹⁹ Werth was a very good friend of Saint-Exupéry’s and the dedicatee of *Le Petit Prince*. Confiding in Tonio, as he fondly called him, he writes, “Je suis vieux, quand vous n’êtes pas là. Où êtes-vous? Je ne sais même pas si vous êtes vivant. Je rêve parfois que votre avion a été touché, qu’il est tombé dans une catastrophe de ferraille et de feu” (Werth, Léon. *33 jours*. Paris: Éditions Magnard, 2002, 118-119).

Less a work of literature than a testimony that bears witness to the atrocities of war²⁰ – a result of this precise desire to be on the frontlines – *Pilote de guerre* was written in the United States during Saint-Exupéry's exile due to his anti-Gaullist stance,²¹ and published in 1942, two years after France's capitulation to Germany following the Battle of France. Though the entirety of the novel describes the defeat of France during this very battle, Saint-Exupéry's project is nonetheless patriotic, a glorification of his pilot comrades and of humanity more generally. Singing the praises of man and underscoring the need to protect humankind, he frequently turns, especially toward the end of the book, to the expression "the Cult of Man,"²² and describes in the text his wartime experience and unlikely survival. France had suffered great losses during the Battle of France, but Saint-Exupéry chooses to focus not on failure and defeat – though these facts are certainly mentioned – but rather on heroism, fraternity, tenacity, bravery, and the necessary sacrifice of his fellow soldiers.

Saint-Exupéry and Sacrifice

Among these soldierly values, sacrifice has an almost transcendent status in Saint-Exupéry's corpus: "Le sacrifice perd toute grandeur s'il n'est plus qu'une parodie ou un suicide. Il est beau de se sacrifier: quelques-uns meurent pour que les autres soient sauvés" (PdeG 83), the pilot-writer notes. Here, one part of a whole sacrifices itself to the advantage of the whole, a

²⁰ For more on the narrative stakes of a war testimony versus a simple piece of fiction about war, see Odaert, Olivier. "Une résistance littéraire: Les enjeux narratifs de *Pilote de guerre*." *Pilote de guerre: l'engagement singulier de Saint-Exupéry*. Paris: Gallimard, 2013, 67-84. Moreover, *Pilote de guerre* was meant to be the furthest thing from a moralizing account of WWII, since Saint-Exupéry was part of the battle. As Jules Roy writes, "Il refusait de n'être qu'un témoin: 'Que suis-je si je ne participe pas?'" (ÉdeG 262)

²¹ "Je n'aime pas plus aujourd'hui le général de Gaulle. C'est ça la menace de dictature. C'est ça le national-socialisme. Je n'aime pas la dictature, la haine politique, le credo du parti unique" (ÉdeG 272).

²² "culte de l'Homme": chapters XXVI and XXVII are particularly heavy on this turn of phrase. See, for instance: "Or ma civilisation a cherché à fonder les relations humaines sur le culte de l'Homme au-delà de l'individu, afin que le comportement de chacun vis-à-vis de soi-même ou d'autrui ne soit plus conformisme aveugle aux usages de la termitière, mais libre exercice de l'amour" (PdeG 199-200).

notion that echoes another passage from *Pilote de guerre*: “Chacun est responsable de tous. Chacun est seul responsable. Chacun est seul responsable de tous” (PdeG 191).²³ And although there are moments when Saint-Exupéry calls into question the concept of sacrifice when faced with the atrocity and cruelty of war, writing “[a]ucun sacrifice, jamais, nulle part, n’est susceptible de ralentir l’avance allemande”²⁴ (PdeG 83), he also glorifies sacrifice and France’s acceptance of it: “Il ne faut pas juger la France sur les effets de l’écrasement. . . . Il faut juger [favorably, we come to understand] la France sur son consentement au sacrifice” (PdeG 125). Overall, then, Saint-Exupéry extols death. As he affirms in a letter to Joseph Kessel, echoing the message of *Pilote de guerre*, “Il est beau qu’un individu se fasse tuer sur un rempart. Il s’agit là de sacrifice” (ÉdeG 330). And again, “Ma nation, je la sacrifierai au besoin pour l’ascension de l’homme” (ÉdeG 332). There is always a greater cause at stake and a sacrifice needed to ascend to it, according to the pilot; sacrifices are thus required to embrace and save humanist virtues: “l’Homme lui-même, le respect de l’Homme, la liberté de l’Homme, la grandeur de l’Homme” (ÉdeG 398). When the narrator questions, at the end of the first chapter of *Pilote de guerre*, why he must eventually die,²⁵ in this same chapter he seems to reply to his own inquiry, stating: “la guerre, . . . la mort, . . . le sacrifice, . . . la France” (PdeG 16): death in war is a sacrifice for France’s glory. In *Citadelle* too the beauty of sacrifice is underscored: “mes gendarmes, . . .

²³ Saint-Exupéry elucidates this idea in his correspondence: “Quand je dis que chacun est responsable de tous, je suis dans la grande tradition de M. saint Augustin” (ÉdeG 421), he writes to a certain General Z A similar line of thought is found in *Terre des hommes*. As the narrator states: “Être homme, c’est précisément être responsable” (TdesH 47). See Figure 1 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a photo of this quote engraved into a monument commemorating Saint-Exupéry in Lyon, the place of his birth, along with photos of the home in which he was born. The Lyonnais are quite proud of the pilot turned writer’s heritage, having also, fittingly, changed the name of their airport to L’aéroport de Lyon-Saint-Exupéry in 2000, the 100th anniversary of the birth of its eponym.

²⁴ From the first few pages of *Pilote de guerre*, the pilot expresses the futility of the reconnaissance missions of which he is a part, in addition to their murderous nature by noting: “Car d’abord elles sont futiles, les missions exigées de nous. Chaque jour plus futiles. Plus sanglantes et plus futiles” (PdeG 15). A similar thought is evoked in *Citadelle*: “j’oblige mes prêtres au sacrifice même si les voilà, ces sacrifices, qui n’ont plus de sens” (C 246).

²⁵ “J’attendrai la nuit, si je puis vivre encore, pour m’en aller un peu à pied sur la grand-route qui traverse notre village, enveloppé dans ma solitude bien-aimée, afin d’y reconnaître pourquoi je dois mourir” (PdeG 17).

sacrifiés à d'autres qu'eux-mêmes, ayant accepté le risque, la misère et l'injustice par amour de la liberté et de la justice, m'ont toujours apparu d'une beauté rayonnante" (C 268). That sentiment echoes the conclusion of *Pilote de guerre* in which the pilot develops a broader reason for dying: the recuperation of humanity at large. Saint-Exupéry thus sings the praises of sacrifice, equating offering one's life in war to the love of liberty and justice. Sacrifice is glorified, beautified, and applauded in Saint-Exupéry: in a word, it has value – in another, utility.

Economy et le reste

Utility – or the entire lack thereof – in addition to excess (a kind of remainder or *reste*), economy, and sacrifice are at the forefront of Bataille's thinking, which makes him an important if implicit interlocutor for Saint-Exupéry.²⁶ For Bataille, not all energy on the planet is productive or utilizable, which leads to his understanding of the notion of general economy, of the global system of exchange and production, as open and defined by an excess of this energy: "la vie humaine ne peut en aucun cas être limitée aux systèmes fermés."²⁷ Stressing that the excess of planetary energy needs to be lost, he writes in *La Part maudite* (1949), his seminal theoretical work,

²⁶ As Elisabeth Arnould-Bloomfield observes, "Jean-Luc Nancy has noted that sacrifice held an almost obsessive sway over Bataille's work. Bataille, he writes, 'sought not only to think sacrifice, but to think according to sacrifice. He willed sacrifice itself, in the act; at least he never ceased presenting his thought to himself as a necessary sacrifice of thought.' (Nancy ["The Unsacrificeable." *Yale French Studies* n.79, 20])" ("Sacrifice." *Georges Bataille: Key Concepts*. Edited by Mark Hewson and Marcus Coelen. New York: Routledge, 2016, 99).

²⁷ Bataille, Georges. *La notion de dépense*. Paris: Minuit, 2011, 37. Bataille's idea of "general economy" already goes back to Nietzsche, as underlined by Stuart Kendall: "Nietzsche . . . used the phrase 'general economy of life' to describe his doctrine of will to power as a physio-psychological mechanism of morphogenesis in *Beyond Good and Evil* (. . . § 23)" ("Expenditure." *Georges Bataille: Key Concepts*, op. cit., 77), whereas his notion of "sacrifice" was influenced by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss and their *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* (1898). Kendall notes: "In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille proclaims Mauss as the progenitor of his work: 'Let me indicate here that the studies whose results I am publishing here came out of my reading of *The Gift*. To begin with, reflection of potlatch let me to formulate the laws of *general economy*' (AS 1, 193). In an unpublished essay written almost twenty years earlier, Bataille had already linked 'the economic analysis of the *potlatch* and the psychoanalysis of monetary facts' to the notion of expenditure ([*Visions of Excess*], 82), admitting the influence of psychoanalysis alongside Mauss and Nietzsche on this area of thought" (*ibid.*, 77). Arnould-Bloomfield expands on this also in "Sacrifice."

Je partirai d'un fait élémentaire: l'organisme vivant . . . reçoit en principe plus d'énergie qu'il n'est nécessaire au maintien de la vie: l'énergie (la richesse) excédante peut être utilisée à la croissance d'un système (par exemple d'un organisme); si le système ne peut plus croître, ou si l'excédent ne peut en entier être absorbé dans sa croissance, il faut nécessairement le perdre sans profit, le dépenser, volontiers ou non, glorieusement ou sinon de façon catastrophique.²⁸

This idea of loss without profit, or unproductive loss – that is, expending energy that has no use, that does not do work – is already developed in *La notion de dépense* (1933), an essay that prefigures *La Part maudite* by 17 years. I quote the opening to the text's "Le principe de la perte" passage in full to get a coherent understanding of Bataille's notions of unproductivity, expenditure, and loss:²⁹

L'activité humaine n'est pas entièrement réductible à des processus de production et de conservation et la consommation doit être divisée en deux parts distinctes. La première, réductible, est représentée par l'usage du minimum nécessaire, pour les individus d'une société donnée, à la conservation de la vie et à la continuation de l'activité productive: il s'agit donc simplement de la condition fondamentale de cette dernière. La seconde part est représentée par les dépenses dites improductives: le luxe, les deuils, les guerres, les cultes, les constructions de monuments somptuaires, les jeux, les spectacles, les arts, l'activité sexuelle perverse (c'est-à-dire détournée de la finalité génitale) représentent autant d'activités qui, tout au moins dans les conditions primitives, ont leur fin en elles-mêmes. Or, il est nécessaire de réserver le nom de *dépense* à ces formes improductives, à l'exclusion de tous les modes de consommation qui servent de moyen terme à la production. Bien qu'il soit toujours possible d'opposer les unes aux autres les diverses formes énumérées, elles constituent un ensemble caractérisé par le fait que, dans

²⁸ Bataille, Georges. *La Part maudite*. Paris: Minuit, 2011, 49. And again, "À la surface du globe, pour la matière vivante en général, l'énergie est toujours en excès, la question est toujours posée en termes de luxe, le choix est limité au mode de dilapidation des richesses" (50).

²⁹ Although expenditure and excess are mentioned throughout Bataille's corpus, and perhaps most formalized and his theoretical works, these notions are certainly also present in his fiction. As David Wills summarizes, "Bataille is positing in his early fiction the double wager of a general economy, capable of expending itself by means of the hecatombs of war (wanton dissipation of the national body) as well as in the grimy excesses of sexual dissolution (wanton dissipation of lovers' bodies). Such a double economy comes to be articulated through the writer's two grand projects that are *Inner Experience* (1954) and *The Accursed Share* (1949); or within the larger version of *The Accursed Share* between the political economy of the first volume, and the works on eroticism and sovereignty that followed; or within that first volume, in the alternative that emerges at the end between a third World War and the Marshall Plan" (Wills, David. "Ecologies of Communion, contagion, &c, especially Bataille." *General Ecology: The New Ecological Paradigm*. Edited by Erich Hörl. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 238).

chaque cas, l'accent est placé sur la *perte* qui doit être la plus grande possible pour que l'activité prenne son véritable sens.³⁰

Already here, then, Bataille develops the idea that utility cannot account for all of the energy present on Earth, pointing to an impulse to expend the energy excesses of the general economy, the global system of life.³¹ As a result, he tries to account for Fascism and other violent regimes (catastrophic war, perverse erotic desires, social rituals, society's luxurious expenditure more generally, a "luxueuse dilapidation d'énergie"³²) by conceptualizing energy that gets used for destruction and counterproductive needs. Wars, for instance, occur for the reason that humans require a way of spending precisely these excesses of the general economy. Humans end up destroying each other if this energy is not destroyed through rites or other ritualistic means. As Bataille writes again in *La Part maudite*,

si nous n'avons pas la force de détruire nous-mêmes l'énergie en surcroît, . . . c'est elle qui nous détruit, c'est nous-mêmes qui faisons les frais de l'explosion inévitable. . . . Les sociétés anciennes . . . trouvèrent [la décongestion] dans les fêtes; certaines édifièrent d'admirables monuments, qui n'avaient pas d'utilité. . . . De nos jours, l'importance relative des conflits armés s'est même accrue: elle a pris les proportions désastreuses qu'on sait.³³

One form of expenditure to counteract this excess is sacrifice, for example an offering to the gods.³⁴ This both offsets society's excessive luxuries – through a loss: "les choses sacrées

³⁰ Bataille, Georges. *La notion de dépense*, *op. cit.*, 23-24.

³¹ As he writes, "les hommes se trouvent constamment engagés dans le processus de dépense" (*ibid.*, 37).

³² Bataille, Georges. *La Part maudite*, *op. cit.*, 42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

³⁴ Bataille defines sacrifice as a manifestation of the sacred through a ritual that counteracts the effects of the profane in *La Part maudite*. As he delineates in this text, "Le sacrifice restitue au monde sacré ce que l'usage servile a dégradé, rendu profane" (*op. cit.*, 78). But in actual fact, Bataille's understanding of sacrifice is varied. Arnould-Bloomfield explains: "There is a lot of continuity but also much difference between the 'Aztec revival' of the thirties and the ecstatic self-immolations of *Inner Experience*, written in the war years. There are also significant variations between these last atheological sacrifices and the archeological studies Bataille publishes after the war" ("Sacrifice." *Georges Bataille: Key Concepts*, *op. cit.*, 99). Bataille presents yet another kind of sacrifice in his envisioned *La Somme athéologique* (this is more commonly accepted to be an amalgamation of *L'expérience intérieure*, *Le Coupable*, *Sur Nietzsche*, *L'Alleluiah*, *Catéchisme de Dianus*, and *Méthode de méditation*) – both of figures of God and words themselves (the latter being a notion developed in *La Littérature et le Mal* as well), in a less literal and far more poetic fashion. As he writes: "The profound importance of poetry is of the sacrifice of words, of images, and by virtue of the misery of this sacrifice (in this respect the same is true of poetry as of any

sont constituées par une opération de perte”³⁵ – and manifests expenditure through an outpouring of blood – an excess in and of itself. Explaining sacrifice in *La Part maudite*, Bataille writes: “Le sens de cette profonde liberté est donné dans la destruction, dont l’essence est de consumer sans profit ce qui pouvait rester dans l’enchaînement des œuvres utiles. Le sacrifice détruit ce qu’il consacre.”³⁶ Here we once again come across this idea of something valuable that is *sans profit*, which gets to the heart of the paradox of sacrifice. In other words, sacrifice is a manner in which to offset the effects of society’s luxurious experience and, as a very form of such expenditure, it also offsets the excessive, useless energy on the planet. Sacrifice is thus a paradoxical near-counter expenditure: 1) a sacred ritual performed for the higher good whose 2) waste, excess, is what generates the very economy of the system. The former may be the expenditure of useless energy, but its end result, the latter, is useful, vital, necessary for the functioning of the system.

This necessity is underscored by Bataille’s use of the verb *exiger*, to demand: “Les cultes exigent un gaspillage sanglant d’hommes et d’animaux de *sacrifice*. Le sacrifice n’est autre, au sens étymologique du mot, que la production de choses *sacrées*.”³⁷ What is of note in this definition of “sacrifice” is the idea that this expenditure of animals and men be *bloody*. Moreover, because these beings are deemed sacred, venerable, sacrifice becomes specifically the bloody loss, expenditure, of life *that has value*. Though this emphasis on life’s value echoes Saint-Exupéry’s celebration of life, there are nonetheless obvious differences between Bataille’s sacrifice, that is, ritualistic oblations that are meant to counterbalance the effects of the Earth’s

sacrifice whatsoever), it causes a slippage from impotent sacrifice of objects to that of the subject” (Bataille, Georges. *Inner Experience*. Translated by Leslie Anne Boldt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, 208). Religion is also a central concern in Bataille’s corpus. Peter Tracey Connor’s *Georges Bataille and the Mysticism of Sin* (2003) and Allan Stoekl’s *Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability* (2007) are good places to start for more on the role of religious cultures, wars, and ecstasies in Bataille.

³⁵ Bataille, Georges. *La notion de dépense*, *op. cit.*, 24.

³⁶ Bataille, Georges. *La Part maudite*, *op. cit.*, 79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

surrounding celestial bodies and their unbridled production of energy, and Saint-Exupéry's notion of sacrifice that reveres the value of the human. In fact, we could go so far as to say that Bataille is in contradiction with a humanist project with his morbid thinking's fundamental "necro-erotics" which, as Wills explains, "begins as a relation to blood that is more vital for being shed, more highly charged when it overflows its bodily limits, more incandescent in its awful visibility."³⁸ Shed, overflowing, visible blood: this is a clear description of cruelty. But whereas Bataille celebrates the expenditure of blood – of cruelty – to account for the excesses of the general economy, Saint-Exupéry does not *celebrate* bloodshed itself, instead finding it a deep matter of concern. He attempts to justify bloodshed by equating it to a sacrifice of a very different kind, one that finds utility in lives lost at war. Whereas Bataille's near-necrophilism – "[t]he expenditure of energy in Bataille . . . involves an irreducible principle of destruction that is epitomized by death"³⁹ – celebrates the spilling of blood to appease the functioning of the global system, Saint-Exupéry attempts to recover the spilt blood of martial hecatombs through humanist ideals.⁴⁰

We should also bear in mind that Saint-Exupéry and Bataille operate in different registers. The former was perhaps an amateur philosopher, but certainly a solidly anchored novelist. Bataille, however, whose fiction is frequently deemed pornographic or even repulsive, was more recognized as an intellectual, though rather unconventional in many respects – with his founding of the secret society Acéphale, for instance, a community fascinated with performing

³⁸ Wills, David. "Ecologies of Communion, contagion, &c, especially Bataille," *op. cit.*, 237.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁰ A possible retort to the non-humanism in Bataille could come from Stoekl: "Expenditure, in other words, is not the denial of the human, its repression, but instead its affirmation to the point at which it falls: the sacrificial act, the recognition of an energy that does not do 'work' for the maintenance of the human, it is the affirmation of a God who is not the slave of the human. It is the impossible moment in which awareness doubles the unknowable loss of energy and the virulence of a God who disbelieves in himself" (*Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, xvii).

(though having never actually executed any) human sacrifices.⁴¹ And yet for both Bataille and Saint-Exupéry, sacrifice is not a mere act, but a structuring element to their reasoning. It is an omnipresent and productive, generative, facet in both. But another notion – admittedly obliquely, yet perhaps precisely there lies its interest – that can be seen as common to both is how they approach cruelty.

Noticeably, and perhaps we could go so far as to say that this is a blind spot in his oeuvre, Bataille does not explicitly or rigorously differentiate between different degrees or gradations of violence. This is quite striking for someone as invested in excesses and economies as he is. But although he does not spend a great of time discussing violence versus cruelty, Bataille does nonetheless address the latter notion in a three-page passage on war in *L'érotisme*. He writes the following in a subsection entitled “Cruelty and organised war”:

War was different in kind from animal violence and it developed a cruelty animals are incapable of, especially in that the fight, frequently followed by a massacre of the enemy, was as often as not a prelude to the torture of the prisoners. This cruelty is the specifically human aspect of war.⁴²

Here, Bataille discusses martial cruelty, using the term “cruelty” to designate the *specifically human aspect of war*, along with *a massacre of the enemy* and *the torture of prisoners*. He postulates that war is different from animal violence because it manifests a kind of cruelty that animals are not capable of. As claimed by him, animals do not participate in organized violence at the level of war or eroticism.⁴³ The passage quoted above is incredibly salient because it

⁴¹ See Connor’s *Georges Bataille and the Mysticism of Sin* for more on the intellectual lineage to which Bataille subscribes: “much of [Bataille’s] thinking . . . is . . . articulated in relation to a network that includes Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger as well as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Shestov” (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, 119). And yet Bataille himself stated that he was “not a philosopher but a *saint*, perhaps a madman” (Bataille, Georges. “Méthode de méditation” in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. V, 218, quoted in *ibid.*, 119). Connor also discusses Acéphale and the idea of performing a ritualistic human sacrifice (see especially 115-118).

⁴² Bataille, Georges. *Erotism: Death & Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, 78.

⁴³ According to Bataille, humans, unlike animals, have codified sexual activity into erotic activity (*ibid.*, 11).

pinpoints cruelty as a purely human characteristic. But, moreover, these especially “human” and cruel elements of war – total massacre and torture – do not function according to a principle of conservation. Said differently, where violence performs an economic function – animals killing animals for food or protection, armies conquering territory, seeking economic power, or promulgating religious doctrine through force in wars – cruelty no longer functions in the domain of this economy. I will expand on this momentarily, but for the time being let us consider cruelty as that which cannot be recuperated by the economic system but is essential to it. In other words, let us consider cruelty in the Bataillean sense of a mechanism that goes beyond the economy but is still always in negotiation with it; cruelty is excessive vis-à-vis the system but also a function of the system, what allows the system to function, what is necessary for (*utile à*) its functioning.

Saint-Exupéry and Cruelty

Keeping this in mind – both the “utility” of cruelty and its humanness – how can we, then, think sacrifice and cruelty – and humanism – in Saint-Exupéry’s oeuvre? There are two moments in *Pilote de guerre* on which I would like to focus to address this problematic. One directly questions cruelty,⁴⁴ while the other couples cruelty with the monstrous, articulating how these two notions inform one another and why this matters. To begin, I will focus on the first in detail, and will develop an exegesis of the second instance in the latter half of this chapter. The first case centers on a conversation Saint-Exupéry’s narrator imagines having with commandant Alias of the group 2/33. “Vous savez bien, mon Commandant, que le pilote . . .,” he envisions

⁴⁴ The word “cruauté” surfaces in the novel at two other moments: “Comment nous exalterions-nous sur ces charades un peu cruelles? . . .” (PdeG 44); “Le temps pour nous s’est gelé aussi. Nous sommes trois vieillards à barbe blanche. Rien n’est mobile. Rien n’est urgent. Rien n’est cruel” (PdeG 62-63). Here the word’s semantic weight is more colloquial, pointing less to a theoretical development.

saying in response to his commandant's pestering questions about how a given mission played out. "Voyons! Voyons! On aperçoit toujours quelque chose," he hears Alias respond. "Je . . . Ah! Des incendies! J'ai vu des incendies. Ça, c'est intéressant . . . – Non. Tout brûle. Quoi d'autre?" Suddenly, the narrator asks: "Pourquoi Alias est-il cruel?" (PdeG 161) How – and in what measure – *is* Alias cruel?

Alias is the one who commands his men's deaths, who orders soldiers to sacrifice themselves in reconnaissance missions, who condemns humans to sacrifice, that is, who inflicts the loss of life – from the Latin *damnare*, to inflict loss – onto them. "Je vous demande un peu s'il est sensé de sacrifier un équipage pour des renseignements dont personne n'a besoin et qui, si l'un de nous est encore en vie pour les rapporter, ne seront jamais transmis à personne . . ." (PdeG 28), writes Saint-Exupéry, referencing Alias who immolates an entire group for information. Alias orchestrates sacrificial bloodbaths where survival would be a miracle: "Il est inconcevable que nous soyons encore entiers" (PdeG 156). We imagine these deaths also being very gruesome, bloody: cruel with respect to the way in which those who are sacrificed die as well as the reason for which they *must die*.

Pourquoi Alias est-il cruel? The interrogative nature of these five words is intriguing. On the one hand, they can be seen as forming a rhetorical question that points to several others: aren't all wars bloody? Mustn't men die in battle? Isn't cruelty par for the course in exceptional martial circumstances? But on the other, this seemingly inconsequential question, *pourquoi Alias est-il cruel?*, underscores a desperate, anguished need to understand precisely why and how, ultimately focusing in on the complexity of the notion of cruelty. Indeed, there is more to Alias's excessiveness, to his cruelty. Though it is characterized by the bloody butchery, the *cruor*, that originates at his hands, it equally gives human value to the dead men, to the *sacrifices*, that is, the

dying for others that he coordinates. Though the men are dead, their deaths are valuable. Though the men died, they did so while defending their country and thus did not die in vain. Given the theoretical foundation that I have laid down thus far, I would like to understand these cruel sacrifices in two veins: first, economically – namely relating to excess – and, second, with respect to the human, thus articulating what I mean by “humanist cruelty.”

First and foremost, Alias is cruel because he orchestrates the sacrifice of his men: his cruelty is consequently ascribed to an act, specifically a loss, that generates a valorization of human life. There is thus a conversion at stake – the same transformation Elaine Scarry identifies in Carl von Clausewitz’s *On War* (1832) – from damages to sacrifices, allowing loss of death not to have been nugatory:

For any contestant in war, there is, as Clausewitz notes, an intensity and scale of damage more oppressive than the territorial or ideological sacrifices the other side is demanding. Each side begins the war by perceiving physical damage as acceptable and ideological and territorial sacrifices as unacceptable; through the war each side tries to bring about in the other the fundamental perceptual reversal – damage as unacceptable and sacrifices as acceptable.⁴⁵

In other words, calling a loss a sacrifice is an act of conversion where non-meaning becomes meaning. This generated meaning, moreover, has an additive quality. Such a notion is echoed in what the narrator of *Citadelle* expresses, summarizing the paradoxical net surplus of sacrifice: “il se trouve que j’ai compris le sens profond du sacrifice qui n’est point de t’amputer de rien mais de t’enrichir” (C 257). Though a sacrifice produces a loss of life, it is equally an enriching act, taking away less than it gives back.

There is thus a kind of incongruous utility to cruel sacrifice in Saint-Exupéry that echoes Bataille’s understanding of sacrifice as an expenditure of useless energy that is simultaneously a

⁴⁵ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 89.

useful surplus imperative to the functioning of the economy of which it is part. Such vocabulary, moreover, also evokes Primo Levi's description of wars as "useful."⁴⁶ Levi writes in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), his final book in which he continues exploring memories and stories of horror from the Nazi camps:

Wars are detestable, they are a very bad way to settle controversies between nations or factions, but they cannot be called useless: they aim at a goal, although it may be wicked or perverse. They are not gratuitous, their purpose is not to inflict suffering; suffering is there, it is collective, anguishing, unjust, but it is a by-product, something extra.⁴⁷

Here we once again come across not only the idea of utility but also of excess. I would further specify that it is less war itself that is *detestable* and *not gratuitous* than its cruel components. Cruelty is an excess, *something extra*, to an economy of warfare. But however much cruelty inhabits a space outside the limits of an economy of war, the fact is that cruel acts are not devoid of value, nor useless or gratuitous. Indeed, as already seen, things are quite the contrary.

By calling Alias – and by extension his sacrifices – cruel, Saint-Exupéry underscores how cruelty generates meaning, how cruelty acts as a conversion mechanism. Though cruelty is excessive, a remainder, it also further motivates its martial economy by adding this very value to it. Though it may not be appropriable, to return to Derrida's vocabulary used in Chapter 1, it is also not aneconomic. Cruelty can then also be conceptualized as the *part maudite*, the *accursed share*, that is, the structuring excess, of an economy of war. It rests outside of the economy, but it generates it too by converting deaths into sacrifices, thereby attributing value to them. But how

⁴⁶ It is impossible to mention the "usefulness" of violence without at least referencing Frantz Fanon, who, seeing himself as part of the vanguard of Leninism, speaks of the ethics and necessity of revolutionary violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). As he states: "colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence" (Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004, 23).

⁴⁷ Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2017, 91.

can we better understand this value and where does the notion of the human fit in? As Saint-Exupéry writes in *Citadelle*,

il convient de distinguer le sacrifice par amour, lequel est noble, du suicide par désespoir, lequel est bas ou vulgaire. Pour le sacrifice il faut un dieu comme le domaine ou la communauté ou le temple, lequel reçoit la part que tu délègues et en laquelle tu t'échanges. Quelques-uns peuvent accepter de mourir pour tous, même si la mort est inutile. Et elle ne l'est jamais. Car les autres en sont embellis et vont l'œil plus clair et l'esprit plus vaste (C 288).

Ideas of value and utility vis-à-vis sacrifice are clear in this passage also, but, furthermore, there is the mention of *communauté*, echoing the notions of responsibility and relation touched upon in my introduction to this chapter alongside Saint-Exupéry's patriotism. These terms – from duty to patriotic devotion – are precisely those that interest François Gerber. Discussing *Pilote de guerre*, he writes:

Saint-Ex décrit crûment un pays en déroute, avec un vocabulaire d'une réelle violence qui présente la France sous un aspect terrifiant, celui d'un corps démembré et sanglant, déjà dévoré par les vers. On est très loin de la "madone aux fresques des murs" décrite par Charles de Gaulle dans les *Mémoires de guerre*, des allégories d'Ernest Renan ou Maurice Barrès.⁴⁸

Gerber, here, underlines the less-than-typical nationalistic nature of *Pilote de guerre* insofar as Saint-Exupéry does not shy away from representing violence and France's defeat. For me however, although nationalism may be central to Saint-Exupéry's text, what informs the novel's structuring logic or genre is something beyond the borders or concept of France. At the heart of *Pilote de guerre* one finds this very notion of sacrifice, especially as a function of humanism and

⁴⁸ Gerber, François. "L'idée de nation chez Saint-Exupéry à travers *Pilote de guerre*." *Pilote de guerre: l'engagement singulier de Saint-Exupéry*. Paris: Gallimard, 2013, 137. For more on this subject, also see Gerber's chapter entitled "Itinéraires d'auteurs" in his work *Saint-Exupéry, écrivain en guerre* (Paris: Éditions Jacob-Duvernet, 2012, 175-186).

the relations between human beings, be they friends or enemies, *regardless* of their nationality: “cette communauté des hommes, ce réseau de liens” (C 53).⁴⁹

We return with this quote to community and the idea that for Saint-Exupéry, life ultimately finds its meaning through relationships and exchange. And yet – and here we find a reply to *pourquoi Alias est-il cruel?* – to preserve these bonds when they are threatened in times of violence, unfathomable acts need to be committed. Cruelty resolves that contradiction: cruel actions are atrocious, but they are imbued with a valorization of the human. Saint-Exupéry’s corpus and humanist ideology are thus paradoxically defined by this tension: the complete and utter destructiveness of war to the extent of its shattering of human ties, but its cruel utility in preserving peace and those very same relations. As a result, calling a death a “sacrifice” is a way of understanding the loss, of converting death into a beautiful ideal: *il est beau de se sacrifier*, as we recall from above. Consequently, when naming these sacrifices both valuable and cruel, Saint-Exupéry activates a humanist rhetoric and reclaims from the inhuman horrors of war the human value of life *through* cruelty. Cruelty is thereby a boundary that aids in situating the human, the limit of the human. And this is indeed not intuitive. Here, the narrator’s identification of Alias as cruel is not a condemnation of the individual nor just a simple use of the word. It is a term which, when considered from Saint-Exupéry’s humanist perspective, reinforces Alias’s efforts to value his dead men and their sacrifice. Alias may be abominably cruel as he sends men off into perilous, fatal situations, but he does so out of necessity and on account of his valorization of human life of the community called France, Europe, indeed *la terre des hommes*.

⁴⁹ There are many such examples as in: “tu es nœud de relations et rien d’autre. Et tu existes par tes liens. Tes liens existent par toi” (C 364). Indeed there is a kind of humanist ecology at play in Saint-Exupéry, with all humans being part of a humane ecosystem. Saint-Exupéry himself describes *Terre des hommes* in the following way: “J’ai écrit avec passion *Terre des hommes* pour dire à ma génération ‘vous êtes habitants d’une même planète, passagers d’un même navire!’” (ÉdeG 420)

What is at the very foundation of this community? Once again, we return to the human and a familiar quote: “Vous ne voyez pas que l’homme est en jeu? . . . Vous ne savez donc pas que vous êtes un des maîtres couples du navire? Histoire d’Europe? Non! Histoire de l’homme” (ÉdeG 53), Saint-Exupéry exclaims to his fellow Americans during his exile years. It is no exaggeration to say that all of the pilot-writer’s thoughts can be distilled to this notion of the human.

On the whole, then, in what I called the first example from *Pilote de guerre*, Saint-Exupéry engages with the question of cruelty to reach a humanist logic in his text, and to give meaning to death. Thus when Saint-Exupéry speaks of cruelty, he does not simply do so to name it. Instead, he revisits his comrades’ demises before France’s surrender and names them cruel – through his labelling of Alias as cruel – in order to value their deaths, to say that they were necessary. In the final analysis, the human is an order in which relations exist, and cruelty lives in that domain, in its extreme space, remaining wholly human albeit excessive.

Monstrosity

And yet is there another kind of extreme martial violence that is differentiated from cruelty? What do we make of atrocities that are excessive to the point of appearing as meaningless? For Saint-Exupéry, such acts take us into monstrosity, which is ascribed to the complete devalorization of human life, to the dehumanization of individuals. If cruelty engages with a questioning of the limits of the human and identifies the transitional zone between the human and inhuman, Saint-Exupéry’s use of the word “monstrous” references an act that is

entirely inhuman.⁵⁰ Let us then turn to my second example. While witnessing an exodus, the evacuation of a village ravaged by war, Saint-Exupéry states:

L'homme s'éponge le visage. Tout se délabre. Sa femme accouche au milieu de la rue dans les batteries de cuisine. *Rien de tout cela n'est cruel. C'est d'abord, avant tout, monstrueusement en dehors de l'humain.* Personne ne se plaint, les plaintes n'ont plus de signification. Sa femme va mourir, il ne se plaint pas. C'est ainsi. Il s'agit là d'un mauvais songe (PdeG 111, my emphasis).

This scene is explicitly labelled as non-cruel, *rien de tout cela n'est cruel*, and, moreover, specifically deemed monstrously beyond the human. Saint-Exupéry contrasts cruelty with monstrosity, putting them into opposition: nothing here is cruel, it is on the contrary monstrous, and precisely because it exists outside of the human, *en dehors de l'humain*. In the first *Pilote de guerre* example, I underscored the humanness of cruelty, its worth in spite of its required losses, its humanistic motive and dedication to preserving human bonds. But in situating the border of the human, cruelty and its atrocity also gesture to the other side of the human, to the inhuman. There is consequently this idea that when cruelty is enacted, it makes the human straddle a kind of border. Cruelty situates the boundary between the human and the inhuman; it remains human

⁵⁰ The word “monstrueux” (ÉdeG 459, 460, 478) comes up on several occasions when Saint-Exupéry speaks of Hitler in his essay “La morale de la pente.” Another questioning of the human versus inhuman divide is seen through the notion of technology and how it affects human relations, customs, and work conditions in a number of Saint-Exupéry’s texts (see TdesH 50, for instance.) Referring to his P-38 Lightning as a monster (ÉdeG 401), the pilot highlights the opacity of the human-inhuman divide through the literal war machine. Indeed, the phenomenon of inhuman military apparatuses was already born in 1850. As Achille Mbembe underlines, “C’est à partir des années 1850 que la technique des armements et la vitesse des projectiles ont commencé à transformer la confrontation militaire en ‘un processus véritablement inhumain.’ Aux canons, arquebuses, fortifications bastionnées et flottes de guerre des périodes précédentes viennent s’ajouter, pêle-mêle, l’artillerie à tir courbe et longue portée, les armes de soutien d’infanterie à tir rapide à l’exemple de la mitrailleuse, voire les véhicules automobiles et les avions” (*Politiques de l’inimitié*. Paris: La Découverte, 2016, 37-38). Saint-Exupéry equally writes, “Les progrès matériels des temps modernes ont certes relié les hommes par une sorte de véritable système nerveux. Les liaisons sont innombrables. Les communications sont instantanées. Nous sommes matériellement unis comme les cellules d’un même corps. Mais ce corps n’a point encore d’âme. Cet organisme n’a pas pris encore conscience de soi” (ÉdeG 400). Technological progress has amplified human relations, but by the same token has rendered them soulless.

and at the same time casts doubt on humanity even as it seeks to preserve it. The monstrous, by contrast, equates to an entirely inhuman act; it resides completely outside, beyond, the human.

Sa femme va mourir, il ne se plaint pas. Il s'agit là d'un mauvais songe. What should be understood as comprehensible complaints no longer make any sense, no longer have any worth. The exodus is monstrous because the villagers' grievances lose all value, the inhumanity of which is reinforced when the villagers yell: "– Vous êtes fous! Laissez-nous passer! Les enfants meurent!/ – Nous, on fait la guerre . . ./ – Quelle guerre? Où faites-vous la guerre?/ . . . / – . . . feriez mieux de nous recueillir! C'est inhumain!" (PdeG 118) If Alias's cruel sacrifices are necessary and valuable to war, in this scene, on the contrary – with its multiple question and exclamation marks indicating a growing confusion, desperation, and ultimate meaninglessness – we see the epitome of senseless dehumanization, echoing Jean Kaempfer's affirmation that "la guerre crée 'un univers déshumanisé.'" ⁵¹ Furthermore, if, as Pierre-Henri Simon writes, humanism for Saint-Exupéry is reflected in the fact that "l'homme surmonte la mort en créant des œuvres et des institutions qui lui survivent, de même qu'il surmonte le chaos originel en organisant un ordre et des cérémonies où la vie prend un sens," ⁵² this scene reveals in Saint-Exupéry a form of anti-humanism: a breakdown of institutions and objects – pure chaos – a gratuitous loss of meaning, and a sheer devalorization of human life. It thus parallels Schmitt's words on forms of irregular combat: "Men who use these weapons [of mass destruction] against other men feel compelled morally to destroy these other men, i.e., as offerings and objects. They

⁵¹ Kaempfer, Jean. *Poétique du récit de guerre*. Paris: Éditions Corti, 1998, 9.

⁵² Simon, Pierre-Henri. *L'Homme en procès*, *op. cit.*, 131.

must declare their opponents to be totally criminal and inhuman, to be a total non-value.”⁵³ For both Saint-Exupéry and Schmitt, therefore, inhumanity begins at the point of *non-value*.

Werth identifies this very same overlap of senseless violence, non-value, and the inhuman. In a kind of diary-memoir published posthumously in 1992 as *33 jours*, he describes his trip from Paris to the Jura at the moment of Germany’s occupation of France in 1940. A journey that was meant to take a few hours becomes an arduous 33-day exodus that echoes the description of that witnessed by Saint-Exupéry. As Werth states, “de la cour, on aperçoit des lueurs d’incendie en direction de Mignières. Ce sont sans doute des villages qui brûlent. On prépare le départ. Madame Delaveau met les matelas au plancher, prend des draps dans une armoire.”⁵⁴ He captures the senselessness he sees as follows: “Tout, depuis le départ de Paris, est inexplicable par les lois de la raison.”⁵⁵ He additionally describes the incoherence of these events – “Tout me paraît si absolument incohérent qu’il me semble désormais impossible d’y introduire un calcul ou une volonté humaine”⁵⁶ – once again emphasizing the lack of calculation, prediction, justification, and, namely, human drive or humanism dictating the extreme violence enacted during the war. The meaninglessness of warfare is underlined anew with Werth’s use of the word “stupid” when describing martial conflict. Notice how “stupidité” and “stupide” underscore the nonsensical nature of both the First and Second World Wars: “Je sens peser sur moi toute la stupidité de la guerre. Comme entre 1916 et 1918. Mais l’autre guerre stupide était nourrie de passions.”⁵⁷ Werth’s vocabulary is of further note when it shifts toward the inhuman to recount the combined atrocity and absurdness of the war, making explicit use of the word

⁵³ Schmitt, Carl. *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*. Translated by G. L. Ulmen. New York: Telos Press Pub, 2007, 94.

⁵⁴ Werth, Léon. *33 jours*, *op. cit.*, 28.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 156. The expression “stupidité de la guerre” is once again come across later on in the book (165).

“monstrous” in conjunction with the term “l’absurde”: “Je tente avec Abel Delaveau [Werth’s host] de donner un sens au mensonge et à l’absurde, d’y déceler un désir français ou une intention allemande. Les nouvelles, les bruits allégorisent de vagues passions politiques, tripatouillent le possible et l’impossible, fabriquent un monstre avec de lointaines analogies ([Paul] Reynaud levant une armée rouge).”⁵⁸ With a lack of intention or desire, the war has become meaningless, its violence – and the rumors surrounding it – gratuitous and monstrous. In this very same vein of rendering inhuman, Werth along with his compatriots also completely erase the humanness of the Germans by designating them as a sole impersonal third person pronoun: “‘Ils ont dit...’ Le ‘Ils’ mystérieux, le ‘Ils’ des guerres et des révolutions, le ‘Ils’ qui signifie les puissances et les grands de la terre, ce ‘Ils’ ne désigne plus que les Allemands.”⁵⁹ *They*, the Germans, are no longer men but *mysterious*, impersonal, unidentifiably human *Ils*.

Both exoduses described above, then, are so excessive as to be monstrous. This particular kind of monstrosity, one that is delineated by an overabundance, can be traced all the way back to an Aristotelean sense of the term “monstrous” as excess. Indeed, Saint-Exupéry’s (and Werth’s) use of “monstrous” – precisely as equating to the inhuman, to the beyond or outside human as a function of excess (unrestrained violence) and, by the same token, lack (of human values and virtues) – is not without a lengthy history. The idea of the monstrous as too much or too little was established by Aristotle, the authority on monstrosity until at least the 19th century, who believed that, as Kathleen Long summarizes, “both deficiency and excess are monstrous.”⁶⁰ This theory appears predominantly in Book 4 of *Generation of Animals*. A significant biological

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Long, Kathleen. “‘Nature Abhors Normality’: Theories of the Monstrous from Aristotle to *The X-Files* (1993-2002).” Edited by Caroline Joan S. Picart and John Edgar Browning. *Speaking of Monsters: A Teratological Anthology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 199.

treatise from the fourth century B.C., Aristotle's text focuses on embryology (both of human and non-human animals) and teratology. According to him, a monster is a being that does not conform to the physical norm of its category, or progeny that does not resemble its parents. In *Generation of Animals*, he highlights the following as manifestations of the monstrous: "the offspring is a human being yet bears no resemblance to any ancestor, sometimes it has reached such a point that in the end it no longer has the appearance of a human being at all, but that of an animal only – it belongs to the class of monstrosities, as they are called"⁶¹; "There are others [sorts of monstrosities] which qualify for the name in virtue of having additional parts to their body, being formed with extra feet or extra heads. . . . [A] monstrosity is really a sort of deformity"⁶²; "for monstrosities come under the class of offspring which is unlike its parents."⁶³ The monstrous thus lies in a lack or an excess – additional or missing limbs, for instance – apparent animal traits in human beings, or an insufficient resemblance to an ancestor. Although Aristotle's reflections on monstrosity focus on biological defects and are formulated through comparisons and contrasts to physical norms, they undeniably informed a genealogy of the term that gradually juxtaposed the physical to the spiritual, moral, and social in a plethora of disciplines – from theology to phrenology to medicine to criminology. Whatever its context may be, since Aristotle, the monstrous has systematically referred to an excess or lack, to the non-natural or something rule-defying and, ultimately, law-breaking.

Consider, for instance, Montaigne's use of the term. In his varied *Essais* (1580), which are nearly monstrous in themselves in their atypical nature,⁶⁴ he refers to the monstrous at several

⁶¹ Aristotle. *Generation of Animals*. Volume XIII. Translated by A. L. Peck. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942, 417.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 419.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 425.

⁶⁴ See Richard Regosin's *Montaigne's Unruly Brood: Textual Engendering and the Challenge to Paternal Authority*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996 and Philippe Desan, "Les *Essais* comme *Freak Show* ou

moments, notably in “De l’Amitié,” “De la Coustume et de ne Changer Aisément une Loy Receue,” and “Apologie de Raimond Sebond.” In these texts, Montaigne presents a polysemous monstrosity: it is no longer simply a question of physical deviance or of the monster as “defected,” but of behavior that trespasses into an illicit realm. Indeed, Montaigne uses the word “monster” to denote atheism (“L’Atheisme estant une proposition come desnaturée et monstrueuse”⁶⁵), an army (“Or ce grand corps, à tant de visages et de mouvemens, qui semble menasser le ciel et la terre; ce furieux monstre à tant de bras et à tant de testes, c’est tousjours l’homme foible, calamiteux et miserable”⁶⁶), and unnatural, non-God influenced ways of life (“Le trouble des formes mondaines a gagné sur moy que les diverses mœurs et fantasies aux miennes ne me desplaissent pas tant comme elles m’instruisent, ne m’enorgueillissent pas tant comme elles m’humilient en les conferant; et tout autre choix que celui qui vient de la main expresse de Dieu, me semble choix de peu de prerogative. Je laisse à part les trains de vie monstrueux et contre nature”⁶⁷). In the *Essais*, Aristotle’s terminology of the monstrous as a category of medical use gets contaminated by the social use of the word “monstrous.”

Aristotle’s theories of monstrosity spawned many others also, a fact observed by Bataille who, underscoring the history of fascination with – and history’s fascination with – the monster, wrote, “in one way or another, in one period or another, mankind cannot remain indifferent to its monsters.”⁶⁸ Monster as a sign of God, of the Devil, as prophecy, as a divine sign, as wrath –

Marie de Gournay tutrice d’un enfant monstrueux,” in *Le Visage changeant de Montaigne/The Changing Face of Montaigne*. Edited by Keith Cameron and Laura Willett. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003, 307-319 for more on this.

⁶⁵ “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,” II, 12, 446. *The Montaigne Project*. The University of Chicago.

<https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/montessaisvilley/navigate/1/4/13/>.

⁶⁶ II, 12, 475.

⁶⁷ II, 12, 516. The final line, which includes the word “monstrueux,” is omitted from the English translations of the *Essais*, and changes Montaigne’s conceptualization entirely.

⁶⁸ Bataille, Georges. “The Deviations of Nature.” *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*. Translated by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, 55. Bataille was speaking specifically of the lineage of the monster from Pierre Boaistuau in the 16th century to painter Henri Regnault’s illustrations of monsters in the 18th.

these were the varied interpretations of the monster even before Montaigne. Augustine's preceding, more felicitous understanding of monsters in the 5th century in *The City of God* attributed the origin of the word "monster" to the Latin *monstrare*, that is, a *demonstration* of God, a sign from God that is manifested in birth defects. But the more commonly recognized etymology of the word "monster" comes from the Latin *monere*, meaning to warn, thus emphasizing the doomsday, frightening, threatening aspect of the monster.⁶⁹ It is precisely this understanding of the monstrous – as dangerous, criminal and no longer imbued with religious meaning – that is associated with perpetrators of mass atrocity today, and it is the basis on which Foucault developed his own theories of monstrosity.

The figure of the monster, or of the abnormal individual or the other more generally – in relation, namely, to power and social institutions – is studied at large in Foucault.⁷⁰ By retracing the birth of the clinic and hospital in *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical* (1963) (and the four volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, 1976-2018), to the asylum in *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1972), to the prison in *Surveiller et punir* (1975), he considers various figures of insanity and criminality. Foucault's most explicit focus on the other as monster is found in his 1974-1975 lectures at the Collège de France. *Les Anormaux* was dedicated precisely to that: a categorization of and study of "monstrous" individuals in the 19th century and their perceived criminality. As he states on January 22, 1975, "The notion of monster is essentially a legal notion, in a broad sense, of course, since what defines the monster

⁶⁹ See Marie-Hélène Huet's *Monstrous Imagination* (1993) for more on the history and mutation of the term "monster."

⁷⁰ Georges Canguilhem worked extensively on the notions of norm, the normal, and normativity also. He writes in *Le normal et le pathologique* (1943): "Par normatif, on entend en philosophie tout jugement qui apprécie ou qualifie un fait relativement à une norme, mais ce mode de jugement est au fond subordonné à celui qui institue des normes. Au sens plein du mot, normatif est ce qui institue des normes" (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975, 77). Foucault undeniably relies on Canguilhem's thought. For more on the division between "normal" and "monster," see Duperrex, Matthieu, and François Dutrait. "Qu'est-ce qu'un monstre?" *Enfances & Psy*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2011, 17-24.

is the fact that its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature.”⁷¹ Foucault’s monster is thus a breach of both the norms of society and the norms of physical nature, a monstrosity designated by both behavior and physical deviance. As Alex Sharpe summarizes in her analysis of monsters and the “outsider” more generally in English law vis-à-vis Foucault’s theories of abnormality, “In short, the abnormal individual represents a condensation of concerns over the physical body, criminality and sexual deviance.”⁷² In short, the abnormal individual is not only a transgression of nature – an aberrant and abhorrent body – but that of law and reason, of social norm.

Foucault explains that this contamination of the physical and social has been an evolving practice, retracing the tradition of the monster from Aristotle to the 18th century, emphasizing the fact that monsters and their deformities frequently brought with them an assumed criminality.⁷³ And yet, in the 19th century, the direction of this understanding (physical deviance as monstrosity = criminality) changes. As Foucault continues on January 29, 1975:

Until the seventeenth or eighteenth century I think we can say that monstrosity as the natural manifestation of the unnatural brought with it an indication of criminality. Then, starting in the nineteenth century, the relationship is reversed and monstrosity is systematically suspected of being behind all criminality. Every criminal could well be a monster, just as previously it was possible that the monster was a criminal.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador, 2003, 55-56.

⁷² Sharpe, Alex. *Foucault’s Monsters and the Challenge of Law*. London: Routledge, 2010, 56.

⁷³ Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, *op. cit.*, 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-82. This can be further contrasted to an early modern tradition of advocating for sympathy for the monster, most notably through medical discourse that argues that just because a monster does not conform to our sense of what is “normal” does not mean that it does not have a soul, nor does it mean we should be afraid of it. Boaisiuau and his *Histoires prodigieuses* (1560) and Ambroise Paré try to show compassion for the deviant body in their medically informed texts. In *Des monstres et prodiges* (1573, augmented edition 1585), Paré uses the category of the monstrous to catalogue deformities and “abnormal” physical attributes as medical conditions and not signs of evil.

If pre-1800, physical defects seen as monstrous reflected criminality, in the 19th century, all criminals were assumed to be monsters. Foucault goes on, in detail, to explore this transition, this reversal, why it occurs, and its outcome: in brief, the birth of the modern conceptualization of the criminal. “What is the criminal after all?” he asks and responds in the following way:

A criminal is someone who breaks the pact, who breaks it from time to time whenever he needs or wants to, when his interest dictates, when in a moment of violence or blindness the motive of his interest prevails despite the most elementary rational calculation,⁷⁵

Here, Foucault once again underscores the legal, social violations that teratology entails, but also strikingly echoes Saint-Exupéry’s interpretation of monstrosity as senselessness, as the neglect of *the most elementary rational calculation*.

Codes, the Partisan, and Martial Irregularity

Saint-Exupéry’s use of the term “monstrueusement en dehors de l’humain” to signify a violence that is inhuman and valueless, senseless, both inscribes itself into a certain tradition of the monstrous – monsters as criminals, as inhabiting a beyond of their supposed being – but also offers a different understanding of the monstrous. First, in contrast to Foucault, Saint-Exupéry’s described monstrosity completely eschews physical deformity and focuses solely on breaching law and social norm. Second, regarding a more traditional understanding of monstrosity, if the monster historically was meant to demonstrate or frighten – and thus seemed imbued with meaning, presumed to be exemplary in some way – with Saint-Exupéry, the monstrous equates to non-value. But this lack of value is not only derived from the fact that monstrous acts efface any and all humanity from their targets and enactors, but also for the reason that they do not

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

follow the codes, or rules of war; to retrace Foucault's terminology, they are a *violation of the laws of society*, they *break the pact*.

WWII certainly exhibited partisan elements in the Schmittian sense of the term – or irregular martial acts more generally that do not follow the “rules of war” as I alluded to in my Introduction. Evoking WWI, Freud states, “Elle rejette toutes les limitations auxquelles on se soumet en temps de paix et qu’on avait appelées droit des gens. . . .”⁷⁶ But WWII rejected the rights of civilians just as much as the Great War, with Werth comparing the two and in fact underscoring the growing irregularity of WWII vis-à-vis WWI: “La guerre de 1914 était timide, en ses buts, modestement territoriale, modestement économique. L’enjeu, cette fois, c’est la totalité de l’homme et la totalité des hommes.”⁷⁷ Werth characterizes the Second World War as complete and utter destruction that takes aim at not only all of human capital – *la totalité des hommes* – but of the human itself as a concept: *la totalité de l’homme*. Totality is once again evoked in Werth’s further elucidations on WWII: “Hitler c’est la guerre elle-même,”⁷⁸ he affirms, Hitler and the monstrous associations the name entails thus acting as a metonym for the monstrosity of the war. From the use of gas to torture in the World Wars, partisan elements abounded and were demonstrated repeatedly in both conflicts. In the Second World War, concentration and extermination camps were an expulsion of humanity that annihilated any and all rules of war. As Achille Mbembe writes, “le camp a été, dans la foulée de l’Holocauste, envisagé comme le lieu d’une radicale déshumanisation; l’espace où l’homme fait l’expérience de son devenir-animal dans le geste par lequel il réduit d’autres existences humaines à l’état de

⁷⁶ Freud, Sigmund. *Notre relation à la mort*. Translated by Pierre Cotet, André Bourguignon, and Alice Cherki. Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1981, 23.

⁷⁷ Werth, Léon. *33 jours*, *op. cit.*, 74.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

poussières.”⁷⁹ Other partisan elements of WWII included resistance movements and the Gestapo on which I will elaborate in Chapter 5, as well as the unprecedented act of atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nakasaki.

But we cannot say that monstrosity automatically and immediately subsumes all irregularity, all criminality. As we have seen thus far, it is not only monstrosity that engenders a breach of the law and norm, but cruelty also. Indeed, irregular acts of war, that is, martial actions that occur beyond sanctioned violence, are twofold. A military act may be performed beyond the limits of the rules of war, residing outside the system of “just” or “classical” or “rule-abiding” war, but still be dictated by a reasoning, by a certain code. This is an act of cruelty, a violent *something extra* that is *not gratuitous*, in Levi’s terms from earlier in this chapter, as opposed to monstrous conduct said to be wholly gratuitous as in the case of Saint-Exupéry’s witnessed exodus and Werth’s similarly lived experience. Such a description of cruelty is in fact not unlike what Bataille articulates in *L’erotisme*, to return to the three pages on cruelty found in that text.

As he explains,

Violence, not cruel in itself, is essentially something organised in the transgression of taboos. Cruelty is one of its forms; it is not necessarily erotic but it may veer towards other forms of violence organised by transgression. Eroticism, like cruelty, is premeditated. Cruelty and eroticism are conscious intentions in a mind which has resolved to trespass into a forbidden field of behaviour.⁸⁰

On the one hand, we understand by way of this quote something that we have already come to know: cruelty is not only a form of violence, but one that is forbidden, which occurs within an illicit realm, and points to notions of excess and beyond. On the other hand, echoing what Kathleen Taylor explains, and as I underlined in Chapter 1, we see that cruelty is organized; one

⁷⁹ Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l’inimitié*, op. cit., 99.

⁸⁰ Bataille, Georges. *Erotism*, op. cit., 79-80.

conscientiously chooses to behave cruelly toward another before doing so and premeditates the act in a way that makes it organized, legible, imbued with meaning. When cruelty is enacted for Saint-Exupéry, blood is spilt and sacrifices are consummated *for a reason*, that is, by following a certain code.

As Saint-Exupéry asks in “La morale de la pente,” an unfinished essay from 1939 referring to various events including the invasion of Finland by the Soviet Union and describing his vision of war as a way of preserving the very essence and substance of man: “Qu’est-il, ce nœud qui fait la France . . . ? Voilà ce dont j’ai besoin pour me passionner et pour accepter de mourir. . . . Le code qui me donne un sens. Voulez-vous autrement m’expliquer la possibilité de sacrifice consenti?” (ÉdeG 490)⁸¹ Here we do not simply see a reiteration of the importance of sacrifice, but specifically this idea of *code*. To the pilot turned writer, France is a set of codes that makes fighting and dying in war a consented sacrifice. And this in fact enriches the analysis of sacrifice that I presented above. A sacrifice does not only infuse a death with value and meaning, but also allows the death to subscribe to some kind of greater system of understanding. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, for Saint-Exupéry, war, and especially irregular war, is atrocious for the reason that it destroys human relations, the very foundation of mankind, independent of geography or political partisanship. Life is defined by, is meaningful because of these relationships, exchanges, this sense of community and having responsibilities toward someone or something: truly humanist ideals. And, as the narrator of *Terre des hommes* summarizes, “ce qui donne un sens à la vie donne un sens à la mort” (TdesH 176). In this humanist vein, sacrifices, though cruel, are at least understandable within *le code qui me donne un sens*.

⁸¹ See also ÉdeG 462.

(An)Economies

With this understanding of code, we can start to systematize forms of excessive, unsanctioned, irregular martial violence as either economic – subscribing to a code, enacted for a reason – or aneconomic – completely gratuitous and senseless. Saint-Exupéry’s thought, though perhaps far from explicitly theorizing (an)economies of war, does nonetheless through the notions of cruelty and monstrosity, as I have underlined, point to such structures in an innovative and striking way. He can even be seen to prefigure, for instance, Mbembe’s notion of necropolitics, a kind of biopower but governed by death, or the precarity of only certain lives in military imaginaries as postulated by Judith Butler.⁸² For both Mbembe and Butler, in times of war, some lives are troublingly valued more than others. Consequently, non-valued lives, that is, lives that do not add to or takeaway from an economy of war, can be understood as aneconomic, echoing back to Saint-Exupéry’s use of the term monstrosity (in contrast to cruelty). For Mbembe, in governments of terror, that is, administrations governed by instilling terror, there are individuals whose sole purpose is to live on the edge of death, whose life has “aucune équivalence marchande.”⁸³ These nullified lives deemed valueless reside outside of the economy in much the same way as the lives constituent of the exodus described by Saint-Exupéry. As Mbembe articulates, “Le pouvoir nécropolitique opère par une sorte de réversion entre la vie et la mort, comme si la vie n’était que le médium de la mort. Toujours il cherche à abolir la distinction entre les moyens et les fins. C’est pour cette raison qu’il est indifférent aux signes objectifs de la cruauté.”⁸⁴ Necropolitical power does not care if it is cruel when it deals with lives of non-value,

⁸² Butler argues that “there is no thinking of life that is not precarious – except, of course, in fantasy, and in military fantasies in particular” (*Frames of War*, *op. cit.*, 25).

⁸³ Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l’inimitié*, *op. cit.*, 55.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

ultimately supporting what has been developed in this chapter thus far: cruelty's value versus monstrosity's gratuitousness.⁸⁵

Similarly, Butler in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009), like in her *Precarious Life* (2004),⁸⁶ considers which deaths – and thus lives – actually count in war and are not simply considered to be numbers or statistics: “whose life *is* a life, and whose life is effectively transformed into an instrument, a target, or a number, or is effaced with only a trace remaining or none at all.”⁸⁷ By asking which lives are not considered as living in the first place, she considers which lives are not precarious, not even worthy of a recognized death, as in the case of a civilian killed simply because she finds herself within the radius of a drone strike or when bodies are used as human shields:

We are asked to believe that those children are not really children, are not really alive, that they have *already* been turned to metal, to steel, that they belong to the machinery of bombardment, at which point the body of the child is conceived as nothing more than a militarized metal that protects the attacker against attack.⁸⁸

This necropolitical example, to harken back to Mbembe's vocabulary, is another form of aneconomic violence as the life/death that it describes – *the body of the child is conceived as nothing more than a militarized metal that protects the attacker against attack* – does not add or

⁸⁵ For more on necropolitics and necropower see Mbembe's “Necropolitics.” Mbembe summarizes the essay as follows: “I have argued that contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror. I have demonstrated that the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death. Moreover, I have put forward the notion of necropolitics and necropower to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*. The essay has also outlined some of the repressed topographies of cruelty (the plantation and the colony in particular) and has suggested that under conditions of necropower, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred” (Translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture*, 15.1 (2003): 39-40).

⁸⁶ See *Frames of War*, *op.cit.*, ix-x for more. She eloquently summarizes her earlier book as follows: “I considered the question of what it means to become ethically responsive, to consider and attend to the suffering of others, and, more generally, of which frames permit for the representability of the human and which do not” (63).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xxvii.

take away from the system: the life was never even considered to be a life to begin with, therefore the death does not produce or expend any value. Butler goes on to explain that “[w]e might think of war as dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not. An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all,”⁸⁹ thus underscoring how specifically grief and its lack can be thought of as a commodity that structures a martial (an)economy. Saint-Exupéry’s described exodus is an example of precisely this kind of non-grievable aneconomy where “lives . . . are not quite lives, cast as ‘destructible’ and ‘ungrievable.’ Such populations are ‘lose-able,’ or can be forfeited. . . .”⁹⁰ The lives are deemed to be completely valueless and are the simple ramification of a bombing: *they have already been turned to metal, to steel, . . . they belong to the machinery of bombardment.*

Strikingly, at another moment, Butler describes these kinds of ungrievable losses as “not quite human.”⁹¹ But this simultaneous aneconomy and inhumanity is already captured with Saint-Exupéry’s use of the term “monstrueux.” “Monstrous” martial acts are gratuitous (irregular to the point of not following a code), aneconomic – precisely those that devalue life to nothing or take the lives of certain groups of people as having no value to begin with – and wholly dehumanizing and disparaging. Monstrous acts render their perpetrator completely inhuman, nullifying the value and very humanness of their victims. But this is not the only significance of Saint-Exupéry’s thought. The aviator’s denomination of the exodus as an act that is both monstrous *and* not cruel is also salient. As we have seen, if this example tells us what monstrosity is, it also tells us what cruelty is not.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

Limitations

Up until now, I have underscored how cruelty gains further conceptual rigor through its comparison to monstrosity in the work of Saint-Exupéry. For the latter, cruelty is clearly not the monstrous, though it is intimately related to it. Both cruelty and monstrosity are thus terms used to describe irregular war, each pointing to a system or lack thereof for valorizing human life. The monstrous is a much more obvious, clear-cut designation of purely inhuman and gratuitous acts, which is why cruelty and its presumed humanity are better clarified when compared and contrasted to the latter notion. Cruelty is strictly human, of the order of human relations, bonds, and reasonability that thus makes it meaningful albeit bleakly atrocious in its apparent bloody necessity. If monstrosity is the beyond, cruelty is the near indescribable beyond that still resides within the realm of the human, of human value, meaning, and relations. Cruelty remains a human act, but one that finds itself dramatizing the limits of the human up to and including where that human is conjectured to be distinguishable from something presumed to be inhuman, or monstrous in this case.

This chapter has thus offered a literary and historical understanding of cruelty and monstrosity. By the same token, my analysis has also endeavored to underscore Saint-Exupéry as a notable literary and historical figure. The pilot-writer's reflections on cruelty help us understand humanity in times of violence – providing a glimpse into the mindset of WWII Europe – as well as demonstrate how to possibly find solace in loss through sacrifice: perhaps the most humanist, humanizing, human aspect of his work. Saint-Exupéry unequivocally sings the praises of cruel sacrifice. And indeed, for this very reason, there are in fact limitations to his clear-cut thoughts on war. For instance, the idea that the human is in constant disavowal of its constituent cruelty as developed in Chapter 1 is not critically present in Saint-Exupéry. And

“humanist war,” whereby cruelty gets subsumed within a humanist purpose, is in reality a continuity of Schmitt’s classical conception of conflict within the concept of the political – a theory, which as seen in my Introduction, is limited and limiting in terms of understanding warfare. Furthermore, can one actually say that an act of irregular war is only cruel *or* monstrous? If we are to follow Saint-Exupéry’s line of thought, how should we understand Foucault’s then seemingly oxymoronic “human monster,” the first of the three figures of monstrosity that he studies in *Les Anormaux*?⁹² In parallel ways, can certain martial acts be deemed both cruel *and* monstrous, further complexifying how we categorize that which overflows, that goes beyond the bracket defined by the rules of war? In other words, can some acts, crimes, of war be economic first but then become aneconomic? Indeed, the post-WWII martial examples of the following chapters will uncover far more complex human ontologies and categories of war.

What more can thus be said about the labelling of extremely violent acts as both cruel and monstrous? Consider, for instance, Levi speaking of a “useless cruelty”⁹³ when describing at length the “useless” procedures that prisoners were subjected to in the camps. He remembers how

the German authorities, for a journey that might last as long as two weeks (as was the case with Jews deported from Salonika) literally did not provide anything, neither foodstuffs, nor water, nor mats, nor straw to cover the wooden floor, nor receptacles for bodily needs, nor did they bother to alert the local authorities or the directors of the collection camps (when they existed) to provide these in some way or other. A notice would not have cost anything:

⁹² The other two figures are the “individual to be corrected” and the masturbating child. As Foucault explains vis-à-vis this latter category: “At the end of the nineteenth century the masturbator has overlaid the other figures, and most of the problems concerning abnormality are concentrated on this figure” (Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, *op. cit.*, 62). Foucault clearly and succinctly describes these three figures in the closing notes of his lectures. See his “Course Summary.”

⁹³ Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*, *op. cit.*, 93, 95.

rather, this systematic negligence became a useless cruelty, a deliberate creation of pain that was an end in itself.⁹⁴

This is noticeable because I previously quoted Levi as discussing a “usefulness” of war which produces a by-product, something extra that is not gratuitous. I named this something extra cruelty, yet here Levi’s discussion of uselessness revolves entirely around, precisely, cruelty. Levi also underscores the following ambiguous qualification of the “torturers” in the camps: “they were not monsters, they had our faces, but they were reared badly.”⁹⁵ The tensions that can be identified in this sentence are similar to those produced by the phrase “useless cruelty.” *They were not monsters, they had our faces* is a statement that not only speaks to the fact that the people who orchestrated the Shoah were not “deviant,” but goes so far as to humanize the perpetrators with the insertion “they had our faces.” Levi suggests that these were not individuals who could be labelled as “monsters,” further insinuating humanness by way of the determiner “our” before “faces.” In both examples, then, there is some kind of muddling of the notions of cruelty and monstrosity, value and gratuitousness, human and inhuman. I mention it here, and the next chapter underscores torture in this light through the oeuvres of Salim Bachi and Maïssa Bey.

Responsibility, Revisited (Limitations, Continued)

In addition to this possible intersection of cruelty and monstrosity, there is also a question of the stakes and consequences of Saint-Exupéry’s thought – which will make us consider his humanism much more critically in just a moment. I quoted Butler at the beginning of this chapter as well as more recently above when discussing contemporary aneconomies of war alongside Mbembe and would like to revisit her line of thinking one last time. As she writes, underscoring

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

her motivation for considering the frames through which wars and the loss of life they cause are represented:

My interest here is guided by a normative principle that the radical inequality that characterizes the difference between grievable and ungrievable lives is something that we must all struggle to overcome in the name of an interdependent world and within the terms of a more radical and effective form of egalitarianism.⁹⁶

Butler argues that the frameworks through which we visualize these lives and losses – media portrayals, for instance⁹⁷ – and the power and hold of these frames are a big part of how we come to understand the worth of certain lives. There is thus a need to change our existing frames, to alter our depictions of atrocity, and to continue to bring an increasingly critical eye to martial representations so that, ultimately, *all* lives are seen as precarious.⁹⁸ Needless to say, such a project is noteworthy and consequential, even more so when Butler continues: “it is necessary to consider how responsibility must focus not just on the value of this or that life, or on the question of survivability in the abstract, but on the sustaining social conditions of life – especially when they fail.”⁹⁹ Here – fittingly given that this has been a trope in this chapter – she addresses the general moral notion of responsibility. There is a difference between the abstract idea – beyond which we must go – of whether or not a person deserves to live or die and the concrete social

⁹⁶ Butler, Judith. *Frames of War*, *op. cit.*, xxii. She explains at another moment, “My point, though, is not to paralyze judgement or to undermine normative claims, but to insist that we must devise new constellations for thinking about normativity if we are to proceed in intellectually open and comprehensive ways to grasp and evaluate our world” (144-145).

⁹⁷ Butler writes: “Television coverage of war positions citizens as visual consumers of a violent conflict that happens elsewhere, at least in the United States where geographical distance from our so-called enemies allows us to wage war without close domestic scrutiny of our actions” (*ibid.*, xv). The frames that she analyzes in the text are summarized as follows: “the frame of the photograph, the frame of the decision to go to war, the framing of immigration issues as a ‘war at home,’ and the framing of sexual and feminist politics in the service of the war effort. I argue that even as the war is framed in certain ways to control and heighten affect in relation to the differential grievability of lives, so war has come to frame ways of thinking multiculturalism and debates on sexual freedom, issues largely considered separate from ‘foreign affairs’” (26).

⁹⁸ As Butler notes, “Whether we expand our existing frameworks or allow them to be interrupted by new vocabularies will determine, in part, how well we consult both the past and the future of our present-day critical practices” (*ibid.*, 162).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

conditions of what this life will look like if it is not taken away. In other words, in addition to rethinking frames of war, we must think about what kinds of life these “ungrievable” individuals are going to have if they are not killed. If we return to Saint-Exupéry, we can understand that given his proximity to battle, the pilot-writer does not – and perhaps cannot even – shift frames of war and describe martial combat differently. As a result, he does not push his reflection as far as Butler: he does not discuss what happens to the lives of the exodus, for instance, if they are not annihilated.

Problems

But there are not just limitations to Saint-Exupéry’s works, there is something very obviously disturbing about the humanist question in his thought. In short, subscribing to humanism as a kind of religion – “qu’appelons-nous une religion noble, sinon celle qui exalte l’homme” (ÉdeG 499) – is highly problematic. To conclude, I would like to underscore a troubling moment in Saint-Exupéry’s *Carnets*, five notebooks in the style of Pascal’s *Pensées* that he kept from 1935 to 1940. He writes in his journal:

Colonisation. Je puis partir de points de vue a priori, d’axiomes sans lesquels ma pensée politique, comme ma pensée géométrique, ne s’organise pas.

- a) Priorité de l’homme sur l’animal
- b) Priorité du blanc sur le noir

Il m’est impossible d’établir rationnellement ce choix (Ca 84-85).

This passage, undated but most likely written in 1935, hierarchizes humans above animals and white people above people of color, suggesting, in essence, that people of color are exploitable and, by extension, have less valuable lives. How can someone who, at all other moments, speaks so highly of respect, relation, and value state something so blatantly racist? How can he believe, as he expresses here, that some men are superior to others whereas his corpus in general supposedly reveres and admires all men? In all of his other works, Saint-Exupéry supports the

following pristine ideal, best summarized in his *Écrits de guerre*: “Il faut que chaque homme à la fois fasse partie de son empire, de sa nation, de sa patrie spirituelle, mais qu’en même temps il fasse partie de l’ensemble des hommes et défende chacun contre la masse” (ÉdeG 95).¹⁰⁰

Although such a principle is unrealistic, it precisely seeks to obliterate hierarchies and prioritize the unison of mankind. Did Saint-Exupéry’s opinion then evolve from his *Carnets* to other works? Do the pilot’s racist comments disqualify his other thoughts?¹⁰¹ Though there are no clear answers to these questions, I would like to reiterate that my focus on Saint-Exupéry is designed to show how he situates the questions of cruelty and violence within the confines of a humanist ideology. Unfortunately, however, humanism has its historical errors. Humanism has always presupposed a human essence that functions by way of exclusion; thus it has never precluded racism. Moreover, the fact that the pilot reveals himself in his journal – which was not meant to be published – in way that is in seeming contradiction to what his fiction says is troubling, but not unlike other examples of blind spots that were characteristic of his generation, his formation, and his aristocratic elitism.

¹⁰⁰ In other words, the “masse aveugle” (ÉdeG 95) that is Hitler’s army.

¹⁰¹ This echoes the Schmitt and Heidegger (too a member of the Nazi party) controversies. Notably, it is Bataille who labels Heidegger’s philosophy a “philosophy of fascism” (“une philosophie du fascisme”), the subtitle of his “La Critique de Heidegger” (see Bataille, Georges, and Stefanos Geroulanos. “Critique of Heidegger.” *October*, vol. 117, 2006, pp. 25-34). Geroulanos argues that “politically, [to critique Martin Heidegger] can also mean that one wants to evade or go beyond Heidegger’s Nazism, beyond the philosophical anthropology that his political theology entailed, beyond the stigma associated with it. I want to demonstrate that in the mid-1930s, Georges Bataille did exactly this” (Geroulanos, Stefanos. “The Anthropology of Exit: Bataille on Heidegger and Fascism.” *October*, vol. 117, 2006, 3), further explaining that “[t]hrough Bataille flirts quite openly with fascism [in this text], for the first and perhaps only time he also explicitly *advocates* an exit from homogeneity, indicating that fascism paradoxically reinforces the profane uniformity it purports to overcome” (*ibid.*, 4). Indeed Bataille himself was accused of having ties to Nazism, since, for instance, as Geroulanos states, “[s]ome argue that Bataille’s claims on heterogeneity evince a hidden pro-Nazism that is supposedly part and parcel of postwar critiques of liberal humanism” (*ibid.*, 4) (see also Wolin, Richard. *The Seduction of Unreason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, Chapter 4, Blanchot, Maurice. “Les Intellectuels en question.” *Le Débat* 29 (March 1984), 19-20, and Connor, Peter Tracey. *Georges Bataille and the Mysticism of Sin*, *op. cit.*, 147, too quoted in Geroulanos 4n5, 5n12). I mention all of this to acknowledge the historical context of the questions, and political inclinations of the intellectual figures – as well as the philosophical debates surrounding them – studied in this chapter.

Such an unequivocal racialized celebration of man – humanism flirting with right-wing nationalism, which Saint-Exupéry was paradoxically so wary of in his critique of de Gaulle – which also completely reduces the animal with respect to the human, is extremely derogatory. A philosophy, indeed religion, that is founded on exclusions is seriously reductionist and dangerous. Although Saint-Exupéry accurately recognizes the smallness of the human within a larger landscape, as I suggested at the very beginning of this chapter, I fear that within the context of the above comments, this amounts more to his anxiety toward, rather than acceptance of, a non-(white)anthropocentric world. Saint-Exupéry's reflections raise moral and ethical concerns more generally, and, indeed, his humanism does not finally amount to a satisfying account of cruelty. In many ways it is too optimistic and reductionist; humanism obfuscates some of the more troubling questions surrounding violent conflict. In the final analysis, we have followed Saint-Exupéry's schema as best we could in order to understand how his distinctions function, and the light that his work sheds on boundaries between the human and the inhuman. Here, though, it has been revealed to us that his thought can reduce to massively hierarchical distinctions; it would seem that there is something obviously wrong with the theory that his work lays out. Let us now, then, in Chapter 3, turn to writers who engage in increasingly critical and complex ways with the human-inhuman divide through cruelty – and monstrosity.

CHAPTER 3

SALIM BACHI'S AND MAÏSSA BEY'S CRUEL ALGERIA

C'est l'humain même que la torture tue.
— Pierre Vidal-Naquet¹

The Algerian War – the insurrection launched by the FLN, the Front de libération nationale, against the French colonists – began on November 1, 1954. Raging for 7 years, 4 months, 2 weeks and 4 days, the fighting concluded on March 19, 1962 with the signing of the Évian Accords after a referendum conducted in both countries determined, by large majority, Algeria's status as independent nation.² The war³ encompassed what was labeled, by the French media, as the Battle of Algiers (lasting nearly a year from September 30, 1956 to September 24, 1957): the FLN's guerilla operation in the capital and the French paratroopers' response to it. It is this battle in particular that is regularly studied when the focus is torture, a practice of non-conventional combat eternalized in Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *La Bataille d'Alger*, and in the figure of the fictionalized French Colonel Mathieu. The latter was in fact an amalgam of the infamous General Jacques Massu, military officer Marcel Bigeard, and Organisation armée secrète (OAS) leader Charles Lecheroy, against the backdrop of the ideologies of counterinsurgency theoretician Roger Trinquier and his treatise *La Guerre moderne* (1961), as Marie-Monique Robin explains in her text, and film by the same name, *Escadrons de la mort, l'école française* (2004). The FLN's Saadi Yacef, who played himself in *La Bataille d'Alger*

¹ In an interview with Jean-Paul Monferran, November 3, 2000 (Silvestre, Charles, editor. *La torture aux aveux: Guerre d'Algérie, l'Appel à la reconnaissance du crime d'État*. Vauvert: Au diable Vauvert, 2004, 27). Silvestre collects a number of documents – from *l'Appel des Douze*, a petition signed by 12 lawyers and academics urging the French government to address its resistance to recognize and acknowledge that torture used during the Algerian War constituted a State crime, to excerpts from testimonies and interviews with French politicians.

² This followed a referendum on Algeria's right to self-determination already carried out in 1961 also in both French Algeria and Metropolitan France.

³ It is only on October 18, 1999 that Law n° 99-882 was passed, changing the wording of France's colonial conquests in North Africa from “opérations effectuées en Afrique du Nord” to “la guerre d'Algérie ou combats en Tunisie et au Maroc.”

under the name El-hadi Jaffar too supported such a description of the Colonel. Mathieu, when discussing how to crack what he calls the pyramid structure of the FLN where each member knows only two others, is shown in *La Bataille d'Alger* as stating: “La base de ce travail est le renseignement. La méthode est l’interrogatoire. Et l’interrogatoire devient une méthode lorsqu’il est conduit de façon à toujours obtenir une réponse.”⁴ Mathieu’s interrogation insinuation is far more clear than that: the way in which the paratroopers *always* obtain an answer is through the use of torture.

Terrorism was equally practiced during this battle: the FLN planted bombs, as did the OAS.⁵ This right-wing French organization, chanting the slogan “*L’Algérie est française et le restera,*” was born in the eleventh hour of the war, in February 1961, after a failed coup d’état known as the Algiers putsch against President de Gaulle and his belief in Algeria’s right to self-determination. Years later, within the context of the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s, Maïssa Bey’s narrator in *Bleu blanc vert* (2006) compares the radical violent extremists of the FIS, the Front Islamique du Salut, to the OAS. When a young FIS supporter threatens her for her liberal mindset – “il a craché par terre, accompagnant son geste des mots suivants: ‘Que la malédiction de Dieu soit sur celles qui ne respectent pas Sa volonté’” (BBV 278) – it immediately reminds

⁴ *La Bataille d'Alger*. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Casbah Film, 1966, 59:38-59:54. There are other references to torture in the film. The opening scene, 10 minutes in length, presents an interrogation *in medias res*. The torture itself has concluded once the scene begins, but its lasting effects are clearly visibly. On the screen we observe an Algerian man shivering and blankly staring at a wall. It is clear that he has been violently questioned and it is indeed his answers given under torturous techniques that lead to the discovery and death of FLN revolutionaries Ali La Pointe, Hassiba Ben Bouali, and Mahmoud Bouhamidi as well as Yacef’s 13-year-old nephew le Petit Omar on October 8, 1957. At another moment in the film (1:13:57-1:14:33), torture is explicitly shown, including techniques such as waterboarding and the *parilla* method, a form of electric shock.

⁵ As Kamel Daoud’s narrator, Haroun, the brother of the deceased “Arab,” explains to his interlocutor: “à cette époque-là on tuait beaucoup et dans le tas – l’OAS mais aussi des *djounoud* FLN de la dernière heure” (Daoud, Kamel. *Meursault, contre-enquête*. Arles: Actes Sud: 2014, 90). Furthermore, in Maïssa Bey’s *Bleu blanc vert*, the narrator describes an OAS killing spree as follows: “Le matin, en ouvrant la porte, on a trouvé une inscription sur le mur juste à côté de chez nous: ‘À mort les Arabes.’ En lettres rouges. À minuit, l’OAS a tiré sur notre appartement. Les tireurs étaient dans la petite rue juste derrière l’immeuble. On peut voir encore aujourd’hui les traces de balles sur la façade arrière, celle qui donne sur la cour. Douze trous” (BBV 33-34).

the narrator of a similar incident thirty years earlier when a neighbor of hers is terrorized by the OAS: “Presque au même endroit, . . . Mohamed . . . avait croisé un Français, militant de l’OAS. . . . Celui-ci s’était arrêté, l’avait saisi par le bras et l’avait violemment apostrophé en ce termes: ‘Nous aurons ta peau, graine de fellaga!’” (BBV 276) During the Algerian War, moreover, European civilians took up arms in both city centers and rural towns to create militias on the basis of Robert Lacoste’s 1956 edict to kill any “suspect” Algerian.⁶ *La Bataille d’Alger*, once again, underlines the double-sided terrorism rampant in mid-1950s Algiers. A French police chief by the name of Lucien is first seen planting a bomb in the Casbah as a reaction to the killing of French police officers by the FLN to seize weapons,⁷ an act referencing André Achiary’s bombing of the Casbah in 1956 that killed 73 individuals. The FLN retaliates with a trio of bombs placed by women: Samia Lakhdari at the Café rue Michelet,⁸ Zohra Drif at Milk Bar – later captured with Yacef Saadi (both were eventually pardoned and released from prison) – and Djamila Bouhired at Air France, who planted a faulty bomb that never went off. Nevertheless, the bombings combined resulted in 3 deaths and four dozen injured.⁹

What these examples of both torture and terrorism highlight are two important realities: first, the martial irregularities witnessed during the Algerian War (and Algerian Civil War, as we will also see in what follows), and second, the sheer extent to which atrocity took place during these conflicts. With such a presence of transgressive violence, a vocabulary of the cruel, the monstrous, the in-human becomes an inevitable element of any discussion of these wars, and that

⁶ For more on these militias and their creation, see Frantz Fanon’s chapter “On Violence,” in which he quotes at length the newspaper *Résistance Algérienne*, no. 4 (March 28, 1957) on the topic (Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004, 48n7).

⁷ *La Bataille d’Alger*, *op. cit.*, 35:55-39:57.

⁸ In the film it is actually Hassiba Ben Bouali who is incorrectly shown as undertaking the bombing.

⁹ See William Hitchcock’s *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945 to the Present*. New York: Anchor Books, 2004 for more, especially p. 186.

is especially so when it comes to treating their torturous elements. In this chapter, I will consider precisely this lexicon by studying representations of torture in the work of Algerian writers Salim Bachi and Maïssa Bey. Such an analysis follows the previous chapter fittingly for two reasons. First, the violence in Bachi's and Bey's texts – descriptions of the Civil War haunted by images of the War of Independence¹⁰ – echoes the violence of World War II in Saint-Exupéry's writing. Indeed, it is important to recall that if May 8, 1945 marks the victory of the Allies over Nazi Germany, it is also the date of the Sétif, Guelma, and Kherrata massacres in Algeria. The contemporary Algerian literary landscape, to which Bachi and Bey belong, inserts itself within a genealogy of works that speak to the Algerian War and to what is referred to as *la décennie noire* of the 90s. Bachi's and Bey's works – rich in both masculine and feminine¹¹ reflections on colonization, civil war, and political turmoil – grapple with representations of crime, disappearances, rape, and death, and offer a plurality of perspectives on cruelty.

Second, Bachi and Bey problematize Saint-Exupéry's understanding of cruelty vis-à-vis monstrosity, further shedding light on the notion of the human in times of violence. By focusing

¹⁰ This layering of time is captured well in Bachi's *La Kahéna*: "les temps se superposaient comme les différentes strates d'un sol, puis, au fil des ères, se contaminaient, s'épousaient pour ne plus former qu'un seul corps, unique et multiple" (LK 284).

¹¹ For more on the representation of Algerian women and the works of Algerian women artists and writers (like Assia Djebar), see Ranjana Khanna's *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007), a text that focuses on how Algerian women – and namely their reactions to injustices such as marginalizing laws (the Family Code of 1984, for instance) – *cut* into dominant (xvi), masculine (xv), political, legal, social, and artistic (7) frameworks. According to Khanna, we need to seek justice outside of "virile wars" (242) and look to the margins, to supplements and liminal figures for guidance in and ways of understanding Algerian society, and indeed society at large (*ibid.*). Strong women also abound in Bey's texts. As Bey's narrator of *Puisque mon cœur est mort* states, reflecting on what it means to be a woman in 1990s Algeria, "Toute ma vie pourrait se résumer dans l'effort qu'il me fallait faire pour jouer sans fausse note mon rôle, celui que m'assignaient ma naissance, mon statut de femme. . . . Quelle énergie ai-je dépensé pour ajuster mon sourire, mesurer mes paroles, surveiller mes gestes et mes réactions!" (PCM 179) A similar line of thought is echoed in *Bleu blanc vert*. Ali notes about his mother, "Elle porte en elle le poids de toutes les générations de femmes qui l'ont précédée" (BBV 148), also explaining how she participated in the Revolution: "Ma mère a aidé la Révolution, elle aussi. Elle a transporté des armes pour les moudjahidine. Elle a même tenu tête à des militaires français pendant les rafles" (BBV 49-50). Lilas too, an exceptionally resilient and strong woman, in the latter text states: "je me suis fixé un but. Réussir. Pour ne pas avoir à dépendre des autres. Être libre et indépendante. C'est possible, puisqu'on continue la Révolution" (BBV 67).

on Bachi's Cyrtha trilogy – comprised of *Le Chien d'Ulysse* (2001), *La Kahéna* (2003), and *Les douze contes de minuit* (2007) – and Bey's *Puisque mon cœur est mort* (2010), *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre* (2008), and *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .* (2002), I argue that Bachi and Bey delineate torture as cruel *and/or* monstrous, in turn destabilizing Saint-Exupéry's clear-cut distinctions between the two notions and rendering the notion of the human a much more complex construct. In other words, Bachi and Bey trouble the rigorous partition between cruelty and monstrosity seen in Chapter 2, a separation that is possible in a humanistic context but that turns out to be artificial without the confines of this ideology. To begin, moreover, I will illustrate cruelty in archival finds and, more generally, will interweave legal statutes documenting conflict in Algeria and torture throughout the chapter, addressing how we see the imbrication of the categories of the cruel and monstrous, and thus the human and inhuman, in a variety of documents. Consider the wording alone of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." We observe, from this quote alone, a system of equivalence or at least of comparison – in either case, of relation – whereby torture, cruelty, inhumanity, and degradation function within the same structure. Indeed, the examples that I will analyze here – both literary and juridical – underscore that the inhuman, elucidated by the notion of the monstrous, is an integral part of the human, and it is precisely the notion of cruelty that points to this. Before addressing torture as cruel *and/or* monstrous and consequently further uncovering the complexities of human ontology, however, it is necessary to historically contextualize these lines of inquiry within a French-Algerian frame of reference.

Cruelty, Torture, and the Archive

Consider how Djamila Bouhired bears witness to torturous methods in the following passage:

[J]’ai été, du 9 au 26 avril sans interruption, interrogée et torturée à l’Hôpital Militaire Mailloy, et dans deux villas où des parachutistes m’ont séquestrée.

Mise nue devant des Officiers, j’ai été frappée et humiliée par des gestes obscènes. Sous les coups de poings reçus, ma blessure au sein s’est rouverte, alors que la plaie provoquée par la balle que j’ai reçue dans le dos s’était déjà cicatrisée.

Trois jours durant, les 17, 18 et 19 avril écoulés, j’ai subi le supplice de l’électricité. Des électrodes m’ont été placés dans le sexe, les narines, les oreilles, la bouche, sous les aisselles, sur les bouts de mes seins qui sont encore brûlés, sur mes cuisses qui portent encore des marques. La première séance dans la nuit du 17 au 18 avril a duré de 21 heures à 3 heures du matin, jusqu’à ce que je m’évanouisse en délire,¹²

writes Bouhired to a judge from the Prison civile d’Alger, today the Serkadji, formerly Barberousse, Prison, on May 17, 1957, underlining her severe mistreatment at the hands of French paratroopers. If my literary examples provide a thematics of cruelty incorporating blood, monstrosity, in-humanity, such notions are of course first and foremost reflected in the archive, in testimonies such as the one above.

As I discovered, there is an overabundance of instances of cruelty – in their various manifestations and from multiple perspectives, from the FLN’s to the Organisation Armée secrète’s to the French government’s – in documents pertaining to Algeria, including Bouhired’s letter, stored in the Hoover Institution Archives.¹³ *Genocide in Algeria . . . The Resettlement*

¹² Paillat (Claude) papers, Box 183, Folder 4 “Research Materials: Algérie – Bataille d’Alger, Tortures,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/Letter from Djamila Bouired to a judge, May 17, 1957, 1. See Figures 4 and 5 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

¹³ The Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University has a vast and unique collection of materials from the late 19th and early 20th centuries to today relating to the Maghreb – from correspondences, manuscripts and newspaper articles to sound recordings and photographs to government and military issued reports. Many documents regard Algeria’s colonization by the French in the 19th century, the Algerian War, the country’s independence in 1962, and French-Algerian ties more generally. It does not, however, house many records regarding the Algerian

Camps, a 1960 publication by the Algerian Republic's Ministry of Information, a branch of Algeria's 1958-1962 government in exile (Gouvernement provisoire de la République Algérienne), is another such example. "[O]ne million – one tenth of the Algerian population – dead, tortured or massacred by French bombs and bullets,"¹⁴ reads the pamphlet, which also depicts traumatized children: "In a village where 900 children were counted, about one dies every day (Soummam Valley)."¹⁵ Furthermore, the Hoover Archives house both French and FLN publications depicting atrocity that when juxtaposed bring to the forefront striking resemblances. One needs only to compare *Paris Match*'s three-volume retrospective on the Algerian War, filled with vivid photographs and published in 1972, to the FLN's *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution* from the 1950s, also stocked with images, to notice parallels in how cruelty is represented: explicit pictures, gripping captions, and descriptions of situations that elicit in its readers distress and empathy are found in both. In one and the other, children, trauma, and shocking death tolls are put into focus.¹⁶ In *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*, the FLN equally identifies quotidian

Civil War. Out of this rich assortment and wide variety of available documents, I worked predominately with the Ashford (Douglas Elliott) papers 1955-1972, Rossfelder (Andre M.) collection 1957-1962, Paillat (Claude) papers 1863-2000, Godard (Yves Jean A. N.) papers 1929-1974, Delavignette (Robert Louis) papers 1949-1960, and Cooley (John K.) papers 1952-2008.

¹⁴ Ashford (Douglas Elliott) papers, Box 17, "FLN Documents," Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/*Genocide in Algeria . . . The Resettlement Camps*, Algerian Republic Ministry of Information, 1960, 3. See Figures 6 and 7 in the "Archival Photographic Appendix" at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

¹⁵ *Genocide in Algeria . . . The Resettlement Camps*, *op. cit.*, 25. See Figures 8 and 9 in the "Archival Photographic Appendix" at the end of this work for a copy of the original document. This statistic is the first of many in the publication's "Children dying daily" report.

¹⁶ See Figures 10-17, inclusive, in the "Archival Photographic Appendix" at the end of this work for a copy of the original documents. Interestingly, the FLN published *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution* in English to reach a wider audience and it is one of the few documents I found in English pertaining to Algeria in the Hoover Archives. Whereas in Figure 12 two victims of the Milk Bar and Cafeteria bombings are displayed, in *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*, the two perpetrators are also represented as victims: "Two Young Algerian girls who were tortured by French parachutists, then sentenced to death by the French Military Tribunal of Algiers" (Figure 13: Cooley (John K.) papers, Box 2, "Collected Algerian Material – Miscellaneous FLN Releases: *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*," Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/*Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*. The National Liberation Front-The National Army of Liberation, undated, c. 1955, 70). Figures 14 and 15 both bring into focus physically and mentally traumatized children, while Figures 16 and 17 are compelling in their sheer quantity of displayed death. Rows of dead men are photographed, yet the messages in both publications are unsurprisingly different: "C'est la terreur: le FLN a lancé son ordre de guerre totale et sans merci" (Figure 16: Godard (Yves Jean

instances of cruelty translated by separation: “This Algerian has been wrenched from his wife and children. Why?... It will never be known”; destruction: “In support of the FLN, the Algiers tradesmen observed the order to strike. General Massu’s parachutists break into the shops and the European population loots them. ‘Pacification’ is following its due course”; and subjugation: “Algerians are carefully searched at street corners and must submit quietly to this action.”¹⁷ All in all, graphic descriptions and images of extreme violence, linguistic and visual testaments to cruelty abound in the Hoover Archives.

Other examples of what constituted cruelty in the time leading up to, during, and shortly after the Algerian Revolution include Claude Paillat’s report on torture, “Témoignages et vérités sur les tortures,” in which the journalist underscores precise details pertaining to various torture techniques – such as waterboarding and psychological methods – and the materials they call for, including water, fire, and rope, finally concluding with a plea to his readers: “Au lecteur, qui que tu sois, quelles que soient tes convictions politiques, religieuses ou philosophiques, quelle que soit ta race ou la couleur de ta peau, tu ne peux rester insensible à l’évocation de tant de faits révoltants.”¹⁸ Overall, many instances of torture are described in the Hoover Archives, this being

A. N.) papers, Box 7, “Algeria and France: News Clippings – 1972,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/“La guerre d’Algérie,” vol. 1. *Paris Match*, n. 1197, April 22, 1972, 32-33), reads *Paris Match*’s caption, while *Aspects of the Algeria Revolution* highlights the French media’s militarization of the Algerian public and the French military’s hypocritical “pacification” techniques of Algerian civilians: “The French journalist who took this photograph placed the cartridge holder on the dead body. The [French] ‘Pacification’ forces attack mainly civilians because it is so much easier” (Figure 17: Cooley (John K.) papers, Box 2, “Collected Algerian Material – Miscellaneous FLN Releases: Aspects of the Algerian Revolution,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/*Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*. The National Liberation Front-The National Army of Liberation, undated, c. 1955, 66).

¹⁷ Cooley (John K.) papers, Box 2, “Collected Algerian Material – Miscellaneous FLN Releases: *Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/*Aspects of the Algerian Revolution*. The National Liberation Front-The National Army of Liberation, undated, c. 1955, 60. See Figure 18 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

¹⁸ Paillat (Claude) papers, Box 183, Folder 4 “Research Materials: Algérie – Bataille d’Alger, Tortures,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/Paillat, Claude. *Témoignages et vérités sur les tortures*, c. 1956-1957, 7. See Figures 19-25, inclusive, in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

the main manifestation of *cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment* registered in these historical documents. Perhaps this is best summarized by the FLN who precisely uses the word “cruautés” to label a variety of atrocities, notably torture and summary executions:

Tortures! Gestapo! Fours crématoires! Oradour! Exécutions sommaires! . . . Le monde libre d’après-guerre, la conscience universelle, le monde civilisé, après le cauchemar de la dernière guerre, crut nécessaire, afin que de telles cruautés ne réapparaissent plus sur terre, de les punir comme “crimes de guerre” au nom de la Morale universelle et de l’Humanité tout entière. La FRANCE, pays des Droits de l’Homme, s’associe, comme l’ensemble des nations, à la condamnation de telles atrocités. Plus que toute autre nation, elle se devait, à cause de son Histoire, de son passé, de ses souffrances, de ses principes, de condamner et de réprouver de telles cruautés.

Et pourtant! C’est en son nom que furent ressuscitées pour le peuple algérien toute une gamme de tortures et de cruautés que la Gestapo envierait à la France.¹⁹

Here, the FLN endeavors to highlight the hypocrisy of France and the atrocity committed in its name on Algerian soil. Recalling France’s violent history and the bloody, most recent, World War, the passage makes use of six exclamation marks and the emphatic all-caps of the word “FRANCE” signaling exasperation and anger while also repeating the word “cruautés” three times.

History and Its Dehumanizing Practices

“Ce conflit a duré plus de sept ans. Il a été d’une cruauté terrible”.²⁰ it is also by way of cruelty that historian Benjamin Stora describes the Algerian War in *La guerre d’Algérie expliquée à tous*.²¹ Though cruelty comes up only once more in the entirety of his text: “C’est un

¹⁹ Paillat (Claude) papers, Box 183, Folder 4 “Research Materials: Algérie – Bataille d’Alger, Tortures,” Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University/*Témoignages sur les tortures*, Front de Libération Nationale, c. 1956-1957. See Figure 26 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

²⁰ Stora, Benjamin. *La guerre d’Algérie expliquée à tous*. Paris: Seuil, 2012, 117.

²¹ In this short text, Stora replies to a variety of “common” questions concerning the war in Algeria – from inquiries regarding the FLN and terrorism (*ibid.*, 59-60) to torture (see, especially, 61-67), from questions on the collapse of the Fourth Republic (72-76) to films made about the topic (120-125). Stora provides lucid and brief responses, summarizing the events that occurred during the Algerian War, concentrating on the divisions and escalating

conflit particulièrement meurtrier et cruel, qui fait des milliers de victimes en Algérie pendant toute la durée de la guerre,”²² the bloodiness of the war is underlined throughout: “on peut dire que, bien souvent, les conflits qui opposent des frères, des habitants d’un même pays ou d’un même peuple sont les plus sanglants.”²³ As seen in the archival materials above, torture was one of these cruel, brutalizing practices. On June 20, 2000, in an interview with Florence Beaugé for *Le Monde*, Louisette Ighilahriz, an Algerian, stated that she was tortured by French paratroopers from September 28 to December 26, 1957, outlining a sequence of events that had become far too common during the war: severe pain inflicted on naked bodies for indefinite durations of time.²⁴ Torture was notably still not denounced by French figures in power in 2000. Indeed, l’Appel des douze, a letter signed by 12 intellectuals and published in *L’Humanité* on October 31, 2000, urged then French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin to acknowledge and condemn the torture used by the French in Algeria during the Algerian War. Moreover, in polls conducted at the end of November 2000, 66% of the French once again asked both figures to reproach the torture used during the war;²⁵ and on November 23, 2000, General Jacques Massu confessed to its use and supported its condemnation. But even the Mémorial national de la guerre d’Algérie et des combats du Maroc et de la Tunisie, erected in Paris in 2004, does not mention the use of torture during the Algerian War.²⁶ And though in 2018 President Emmanuel Macron admitted to France’s methods of torture during the war when

tensions within Algeria and France during this time (between the FLN and Messali Hadj, for instance, and the OAS and the French army) (24-25, 55-56, 78; 87, 92-93, 98-99, 102, 107).

²² *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²³ *Ibid.*, 57. And again: “Ces derniers mois de la guerre sont marqués par de véritables bains de sang, car le FLN multiplie lui aussi les actions violentes” (*ibid.*, 99); “Comme si un conflit aussi long et aussi sanglant ne pouvait s’éteindre du jour au lendemain” (*ibid.*, 114).

²⁴ See https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2000/06/20/torturee-par-l-armee-francaise-en-algerie-lila-recherche-l-homme-qui-l-a-sauvee_3612185_1819218.html.

²⁵ See Silvestre, Charles. “Le travail de vérité.” *La torture aux aveux: Guerre d’Algérie, l’Appel à la reconnaissance du crime d’État*, op. cit., 7-19.

²⁶ See Figure 2 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for photos of this monument.

discussing the fate of Maurice Audin, an anticolonial activist living in Algeria, at the hands of French paratroopers, for the most part progress in France toward recognizing its role in Algeria is still slow – be it with respect to torture specifically or its colonial past more generally.²⁷

I bring up colonialism here because it is imperative to acknowledge this trauma when articulating the legacy of violence in Algeria, but also because torture and colonialism are related by the processes of dehumanization that both entail.²⁸ Such a thought was already supported by Henri Alleg. The latter was a Frenchman in Algeria who served as the director of the *Alger Républicain* from 1950 to 1955 and who in 1958 wrote *La Question*, a narrative that recounts his torture, notably by waterboarding, by the French Army in Algeria,²⁹ and in which he summarizes the mentality of colonialism (and by extension torture) as “‘les autres’ n’étaient pas des hommes et que l’on pouvait donc leur infliger des traitements inhumains.”³⁰ As Fanon too asserts, explaining the ideology of colonialism,

[the colonized subject] is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the “native quarters,” to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary.³¹

²⁷ See <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/emmanuel-macron-acknowledges-torture-algeria/570283/>. As mathematician Laurent Schwartz asserted in 2000, “Nous sommes en tout cas à l’époque des aveux sur le passé dans ce contexte, une réévaluation historique et politique de ce qui s’est passé durant les années sombres de la guerre d’Algérie est inévitable” (Silvestre, Charles, editor. *La torture aux aveux: Guerre d’Algérie, l’Appel à la reconnaissance du crime d’État*, op. cit., 61). To this day this era continues.

²⁸ “la torture touche à la question de la colonisation (et de la décolonisation),” states Madeleine Rebérioux, professor emeritus at Paris VIII (*ibid.*, 70). In this same vein Henri Alleg writes, “ce qui a donné naissance à la torture, c’est-à-dire le régime colonial” (Alleg, Henri. *La Question*. Paris: Minuit, 2008, 77), equating torture with the colonial regime.

²⁹ Interestingly the ideas that Alleg upholds – friendship, fraternity, solidarity, and courage (see these emphasized in Alleg, Henri. *La Question*, op. cit., 14 and 77 especially) – echo those of Saint-Exupéry in his works. “Mais j’étais exalté par le combat que j’avais livré sans faillir, par l’idée que je mourrais comme j’avais toujours souhaité mourir, fidèle à mon idéal, à mes compagnons de lutte” (*ibid.*, 79), states Alleg, a passage that could have just as easily been taken from a text by the pilot turned writer of Chapter 2.

³⁰ Silvestre, Charles, editor. *La torture aux aveux: Guerre d’Algérie, l’Appel à la reconnaissance du crime d’État*, op. cit., 33.

³¹ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., 7.

Such terminology – that is, an emphasis put on the zoological within the context of colonialism – is already seen in Fanon’s fourth chapter, “Médecine et colonialisme,” of *L’An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959). He quotes colonial doctors discussing the indigenous population by comparing them to animals: “la douleur chez eux est protopathique, mal différenciée, diffuse comme chez l’animal,”³² Fanon paraphrases, highlighting yet another comparison made by the colonizer between the colonized subject and a non-human being. The character Mahmoud in Bachi’s *La Kahéna* laments a similar colonial doctrine when addressing the hypocritical lack of humanism brought about by French subjugation and exploitation. As he states, “Au nom de l’humanisme nous avons été colonisés. Ils voulaient nous apporter leurs lumières, ils nous ont apporté la guerre et l’humiliation, la famine et la mort” (LK 291). Mahmoud’s sardonic comments in fact echo Aimé Césaire who, going one step further, affirms that “out of all the colonial expeditions that have been undertaken, out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value.”³³ With their utter lack of human value, colonial projects strip their colonies and subjects of humanity, that is, of the state of being human, of the very notion of the human. Indeed, in a colonial setting, the colonized is always seen as the lesser other of the colonizer. And in actual fact, the idea of the other, the inhuman, the subhuman – of dehumanization in general – is not only *not new* within the colonial context but also still propagated in postcolonial settings. Indeed, Edward Said noted how in contemporary academic traditions colonial ideologies persist: “the region [of the Arab or Islamic

³² Fanon, Frantz. *L’an V de la révolution algérienne*. Paris: La Découverte, 2011, 115.

³³ Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Robin D. G. Kelley. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000, 34.

Orient] and its people [are] conceptually emasculated, reduced to ‘attitudes,’ ‘trends,’ statistics: in short, dehumanized.”³⁴

The ideologies of torture and colonialism, founded on the erasure of the human, thus go hand in hand, with Nigel Gibson and Roberto Beneduce postulating in *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics* (2017), a recent work that primarily focuses on Fanon’s psychiatric publications, that “the objectification and dehumanization that produce and reproduce racism and colonization remain essential to torture.”³⁵ As Pierre Vidal-Naquet, author of *La Torture dans la République* (1972), discussing torture during the Algerian War, states, “Ce qui est effrayant dans la torture, c’est le rapport individuel qui s’établit entre le tortionnaire et le torturé. Il y a, d’un côté, un homme à qui l’on essaie d’arracher sa vérité, et, de l’autre côté, un homme qui le regarde dans les yeux et qui le fait souffrir. C’est le summum de la relation inégalitaire.”³⁶ Torture, like colonialism, is the epitome of power abuse that rids the victim of their humanity. Vidal-Naquet continues: “Par son ‘aveu,’ en effet, la victime fait beaucoup plus que donner un ‘renseignement,’ elle reconnaît son bourreau comme maître et possesseur de sa parole, c’est-à-dire de son humanité.”³⁷ But torture is a double bind. It not only dehumanizes the victim through relations of unequal power; it renders the *perpetrator* inhuman, monstrous, too, a reality echoed by Gisèle Halimi, a French lawyer and signatory of l’Appel des douze: “la torture est ce qu’il y a de plus immonde – un homme essaie d’en déshumaniser un autre en se déshumanisant lui-même.”³⁸ In this vein Simone de Bollardière, the wife of a French paratrooper who refuses to

³⁴ Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979, 291.

³⁵ Gibson, Nigel C., and Roberto Beneduce. *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017, 16.

³⁶ Silvestre, Charles, editor. *La torture aux aveux: Guerre d’Algérie, l’Appel à la reconnaissance du crime d’État*, *op. cit.*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

torture Algerians, even uses the word *monstre* when designating combatants forced to practice war against a people in place of an army, acutely explaining the long-term effects of torture on a nation and its inhabitants as follows:

Deux générations de jeunes ont été perverties: ils ont été contraints de voir la torture, de la côtoyer et parfois eux-mêmes de la pratiquer. Les militaires sont faits pour faire la guerre contre des militaires, mais pas contre un peuple. Quand on mène la guerre contre un peuple, on s'expose à devenir des monstres: on suspecte et on tue le jeune berger ou la grand-mère. L'armée a été dévoyée, détournée de sa mission par le pouvoir politique de l'époque.³⁹

There are thus two key takeaways that I would like to underscore following this historical contextualization and, in particular, this quote. First is the fact that torture dehumanizes, rendering both victims and perpetrators of torture less clearly human and as a result destabilizing the border between the human and inhuman; in other words, the human begins to encapsulate the notion of the inhuman, on one side of it when tortured, on the other when torturing. Second is the martial irregularity of torture, that is, torture does not abide by the rules of war, notably for the reason that it predominantly has civilians as its victims, as seen in Bollardière's quote above and already gestured to with my examples of tortured "everyday" people like Louissette Ighilahriz and Henri Alleg.

Torture Within a(n Irregular) Martial Context

Thus far in this dissertation, I have been considering cruelty and monstrosity with respect to war and such a frame is without doubt just as relevant to the question of torture. Elaine Scarry in fact supports the hypothesis that torture and war are intimately related: "The most obvious analogue to torture is war. . . . War and torture have the same two targets, a people and its civilization. . . . Whereas the object of war is to kill people, torture usually mimes the killing of

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

people by inflicting pain, the sensory equivalent of death, substituting prolonged mock execution for execution.”⁴⁰ Though war does indeed target a people, their religious, cultural, and linguistic difference, in addition to land and economic resources, I would instead assert that the most obvious analogue to torture, an irregular practice of war, is *irregular* war itself. Both torture and irregular war have the same target: not simply a people and/or a civilization – notwithstanding this word’s origin and loaded nature – but specifically the human. As Austrian philosopher Jean Améry, a member of the Belgian resistance who was tortured by the Gestapo and subsequently sent to Auschwitz, writes,

Anyone who has been tortured remains tortured. . . . Anyone who has suffered torture never again will be able to be at ease in the world, the abomination of the annihilation is never extinguished. Faith in humanity, already cracked by the first slap in the face, then demolished by torture, is never acquired again.⁴¹

Torture is not like death in war, the sanctioned killing of soldiers, but a double death, a double annihilation. Whereas torture in practice is at first, if we follow Scarry, a mock execution equated in feeling to death, its secondary effects instill a continuous obliteration of the human: not only is faith in humanity destroyed, the haunting memory of the attempts at wiping out the fabric of the human persists throughout the existence of the tortured individual. A human being thus “dies” twice over when tortured, or else actually dies from the brutality of the torturous techniques. Indeed, torture can just as easily be a prolonged mock execution that in actual fact ends in execution, recalling Albert Camus’s double death (penalty) lived through the wait to death (by analogy the torture) and the execution itself (death as a consequence of torture): “En règle générale, l’homme est détruit par l’attente de la

⁴⁰ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 61.

⁴¹ Améry, Jean quoted in Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2017, 15.

peine capitale bien avant de mourir. On lui inflige deux morts, dont la première est pire que l'autre, alors qu'il n'a tué qu'une fois."⁴² Though the circumstances of death by capital punishment and martial torture are different, in the final analysis, a double death invested in annihilating the very notion of the human, regardless of its context, is evidentially excessive, irregular vis-à-vis death itself.

Torturing civilians, furthermore, is certainly not war by the book, not a practice of military individuals going to war with other individuals of the military, but a clear case of irregular, unsanctioned violence; indeed "[i]nformation is a key resource in irregular war."⁴³ Once again drawing parallels between torture and colonialism, this time specifically through the lens of irregular war in *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), Fanon describes guerilla warfare, or unconventional battle, as "that instrument of violence of the colonized"⁴⁴ and states that it was already employed – if not discovered at a substantial scale – by the Spanish against Napoleon during the Peninsular War (1807-1814) for the Iberian Peninsula, an "authentic colonial war":

during the Peninsular War, which was an authentic colonial war, Napoleon was forced to retreat, despite having mustered the massive figure of 400,000 men during the 1810 spring offensive. . . . Confronted with the enormous resources of the Napoleonic army, the Spanish, buoyed by an unshakeable national fervor, discovered guerrilla warfare, which twenty-five years earlier the American militia had tested on the British troops.⁴⁵

According to Fanon, colonial war is irregular war, with torture being an irregular element of the irregular combat of the colonizer. Torture, as Fanon asserts, "n'est pas un accident, ou une

⁴² Camus, Albert. "Réflexions sur la guillotine." *Réflexions sur la peine capitale*. Paris: Gallimard, 2002, 171.

⁴³ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 175. Indeed various forms of information extraction exist and Kalyvas identifies three such sources: "material indices, violent extraction, and consensual provision" (*ibid.*). "Material indices" come in the form of photographs, for instance, or reports and documents, while "violent extraction" includes varied methods: "[i]ntimidation, blackmail, and bribes" (*ibid.*), for example, and, of course, torture. "Consensual provision" identifies anonymous tips and denunciation (*ibid.*, 176).

⁴⁴ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

erreur, ou une faute. Le colonialisme ne se comprend pas sans la possibilité de torturer, de violer ou de massacrer. La torture est une modalité des relations occupant-occupé.”⁴⁶ If above I underscored how torture and colonialism are linked by their dehumanizing ideologies, here we see them related by their very practice, that is, the irregularity of extreme unsanctioned civilian violence in the one case goes hand in hand with the unconventional violence of interrogating civilians in the other.

It is only natural here, then, to refer to Stathis N. Kalyvas – his *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2000) first mentioned in my Introduction – who focuses on civilian violence and for whom the term “civil war”⁴⁷ encompasses “most revolutions, sustained peasant insurrections, ‘revolutionary’ or ethnic insurgencies, anticolonial uprisings, and resistance wars against foreign occupiers.”⁴⁸ These wide-ranging conflicts pit civilians against armies, or civilians against each other, with Bachi in *La Kahéna* underlining precisely this idea of fellow inhabitants violently clashing during the Algerian Civil War – “des hommes et des femmes s’entre-tuaient avec la dernière des sauvageries” (LK 256) – and underscoring the daily civilian atrocity of the war, “le quotidien violent d’une guerre innommable” (LK 257). Indeed, both the Algerian War of Independence with its guerrilla liberation fighters – or *maquisards* (who hid in the *maquis*, scrublands or underground hiding spots) also known as *mujahideen* (those who engage in *jiḥād*) or *djounoud* (freedom fighters) – and the 1992 coup resulting in the cancellation of the second round of the country’s elections that deteriorated into the Civil War are certainly instances of unconventional, irregular civil warfare. Though I will not insist in this chapter on the technical

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Pour la révolution africaine. Écrits politiques*. Paris: La Découverte, 2001, 73.

⁴⁷ Kalyvas defines “civil war” as “armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities” (Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, *op. cit.*, 5).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19. There is an additional extensive body of literature that develops this categorization of wars. See *ibid.*ⁿ⁴ for a detailed summary of these works.

details of the categorization of different kinds of war, nor on the purely civilian aspect of war in and of itself, what is of interest in such a classification is that both the revolutionary, anticolonial Algerian War and the Algerian Civil War can be understood as civil wars and, as Kalyvas notes, “‘civil war’ . . . is a term that conveys a sense of violent division, often used as a metaphor for extreme conflict and widespread brutality.”⁴⁹ Even more saliently, Kalyvas underscores the cruelty of civil war in all its irregularities, respectively quoting warfare scholars Arno Mayer, Adam Roberts, and Claude Petitfrère as follows: “[c]ivil war is ‘often the bloodiest and bitterest kind of war’; ‘cruelty is the steady companions of civil wars,’ and ‘naked brutality’ is ‘inherent in any full-fledged civil war.’”⁵⁰ It is this cruelty – *bloody, bitter, naked brutality* – in both conflicts that I will analyze next in my chosen literary examples.

Bachi

Born nine years after Algerian independence, Salim Bachi was only 20 when the Algerian Civil War officially began. Since then he has published an abundance of texts – from his first novel *Le Chien d’Ulysse*, winner of the Prix Goncourt du Premier roman, to his most recent *Un jeune homme en colère* (2018), by way of a narrative on the 9/11 terrorist attack in *Tuez-les tous* (2006) and a reflection on the prophet Muhammad in *Le silence de Mahomet* (2008). As Bachi explains, describing the genesis of *Le Chien d’Ulysse* and echoing the violence observed in his other works, “Je cherchais à saisir une situation particulière, la violence et la guerre civile en Algérie dans les années 90, et à la mettre en scène à travers une fiction que je voulais à la fois informative et littéraire.”⁵¹ The Cyrtha trilogy is indeed a literary, fictionalized, yet informative and evocative, account of atrocity in Algeria in the 90s. How, then, does Bachi

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵¹ Bachi, Salim. “À la recherche d’Ulysse.” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:4 (June 2009), 385.

point to the increasingly indistinguishable frontier between the human and inhuman, to the paradoxical inhumanity and monstrosity of the human, through the notion of cruelty?

“Le vent brûle,” the first story of *Les douze contes de minuit*, the third installment of the Cyrrha cycle and a collection of short texts, begins with a “classic” – because etymologically linked – conception of cruelty: gushing blood. A woman has had her throat slit and a man watches over her.⁵² She had saved his life and he would like to bring her back to her home, even though the prospects of her husband and children still being alive are quite slim (DCM 16). After mentioning the woman’s blood, the narrator continues to describe her red coat, “Ce manteau rouge ressemblait maintenant à un long drapeau dont les plis et le drapé mimaient les vagues et les houles qui nous rudoyaient depuis des mois” (DCM 11). Indeed from the very beginning of the text, there is an emphasis put on the color red, evoking bloodshed and consequently *cruor*. As Derrida states in his interview with Élisabeth Roudinesco, “[t]oute cruauté n’est pas sanglante ou sanguinaire, visible et extérieure certes. . . . Mais *cruor* désigne bien le sang versé, l’épanchement et donc une certaine extériorité, une visibilité du rouge, son *expression* au dehors, cette couleur qui inonde tous les textes de Victor Hugo contre la peine de mort, depuis le rouge que fait couler la guillotine. . . .”⁵³ Like Hugo, Bachi is a writer of red, of an outpouring of blood – notably human blood, which only reinforces the human quality of this more “traditional,” etymologically-inspired, cruelty. From the outset of *Les douze contes de minuit*, then, we are met with a deluge of red. But the color follows us throughout the text – often describing blood, other times reddened faces, red objects, and also, red ants, deployed as follows: *sang* (DCM 33), *sang* (43), *sang* (44), *sang* (103), *sang-froid* (124), *rouge sang* (161), *rouge* (163), *rouge* (163), *rouge*

⁵² “La pauvre femme avait eu la gorge tranchée: son sang avait imbibé sa robe” (DCM 11).

⁵³ Derrida, Jacques, and Élisabeth Roudinesco. *De quoi demain: dialogue*. Paris: Flammarion, 2003, 229. Derrida makes this comment while discussing the death penalty. He underscores Hugo’s abolitionist stance vis-à-vis capital punishment, referencing the latter’s *Écrits sur la peine de mort* and *Le dernier jour d’un condamné*.

(164), *sang* (165), *sang* (167), *ensanglantée* (169), *sang* (169), *rougi* (175), *cramoisi* (176), *fourmis rouges* (180), *sangs* (183), *lois sanglantes* (185), *sang* (185), *sang* (189). Bachi's *La Kahéna*⁵⁴ – the trilogy's second book and an account of the genealogy of a villa that French colonist Louis Bergagna accidentally calls "La Kahéna," after a Berber queen and warrior from the 7th century who led the Berber resistance to the Muslim conquest of Numidia⁵⁵ – also makes use of a sanguinary vocabulary. Nested stories, haunted by past generations, weave a tale of Algeria's colonization by the French in the mid-19th century, its supposed liberation after the Algerian War, the October 1988 riots, and the Algerian Civil War or Black Decade. From subjugation to torture, from massacres to deportations, bloody events and acts are described in all their cruelty.⁵⁶ In *La Kahéna*, as in *Les douze contes de minuit*, the word "sang" and its variations and associated words ("*sanglant(e)*," "*cruel(le)*," "*rouge*," "*sanguinaire*," "*sanguine(e)*") are

⁵⁴ In the novel, embarking on a "quête des origines" (LK 181), Hamid Kaïm recounts the bizarre life of Bergagna, the first owner of the villa in 1930, and the second proprietor, Kaïm's father. The stories are told to a female narrator who we later find out is Samira, a journalist and Bergagna's illegitimate daughter with his Algerian mistress Ourida. The home's legacy is recounted over three nights in the style of *Les mille et une nuits* (LK 64), underlining the *conte* quality of *La Kahéna* like all of Bachi's writings, on the edge of myth and reality, with the truth of the narrative constantly being put into question: "Rien ne garantissait son récit" (LK 67). Indeed, in a meta-reflexive moment, the narrator states, with respect to Hamid Kaïm but referencing Salim Bachi just as easily, "Les histoires chez lui, ne suivaient jamais des lignes droites; elles serpentaient, suspendues entre vérité et mensonge, empruntaient des chemins de traverse pour ouvrir sur des perspectives inconnues" (LK 155-156). Jane Hiddleston too explains how, in general, "[m]any of Bachi's works draw extensively on myth as well as on a range of literatures" ("Writing World Literature: Approaches from the Maghreb." *PMLA*, 131:5 (October 2016), 1391), a quality that Ilaria Vitali has labeled the presence of Bachi's "bibliothèque personnelle" in his works ("Shéhérazade ne s'arrête jamais" Entretien avec Salim Bachi." *Francofonie*, 55 (Fall 2008), 99). Hiddleston goes on to explain how Bachi's *Amours et aventures de Sinbad le Marin* (2010), specifically, "is replete with references to European and Arabic mythology and literature" ("Writing World Literature: Approaches from the Maghreb," *op. cit.*, 1391), and as a result "associat[es] contemporary experience in Algeria with the histories of other epochs and places" (*ibid.*, 1394), though this is true of virtually all of Bachi's works.

⁵⁵ When the child in Bey's *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre* hears madame Lafrance discuss France's history, he thinks about the stories his mother and grandmother had shared with him about powerful women, the warrior queen Kahina being one of them.

⁵⁶ See LK 30, 60, 146, 176, 177, 185, 186, 215, 222, 223, 226, 228, 257, 274, 275, 290, 298.

repeated frequently throughout, once again highlighting classic cruelty.⁵⁷ Like Hugo, then, Bachi is quite clearly a writer of *cruor*.⁵⁸

But beyond a red *cruor*, a bloodthirsty violence, Bachi pointedly also problematizes cruelty as a question of the in-human. Indeed, the award-winning first version of “Le vent brûle,” published in *Le monde diplomatique* in 1995 as Bachi’s first-ever publication, is striking in this respect. Different in descriptive content from *Les douze contes de minuit*’s “Le vent brûle” quoted above, it particularly invokes the inhuman in conjunction with *cruor*, using a vocabulary of the monstrous when describing how the woman’s blood stains her coat:

La pauvre femme avait une gorge tranchée qui s’était déversée sur sa robe, si doucement que son sang avait eu le loisir de la recouvrir jusqu’aux pieds. Ce manteau rouge ressemblait à un long drapeau qui avait dû flotter dans ses veines avant de s’épanouir monstrueusement sur ses vêtements.⁵⁹

Here, blood is shed *monstrueusement*, an elucidation that juxtaposes monstrosity to *cruor*, inhumanity to *rouge* and *veines*. Such a narrative event is conspicuous because it troubles the clear distinction between cruelty and monstrosity that we saw in the case of Saint-Exupéry.

Instead it illustrates, as discussed in Chapter 1 via Marcel Hénaff and Montaigne, the “propriété

⁵⁷ See LK 21, 37, 39x3, 40x3, 41, 42, 53, 77, 96, 97, 98, 129, 163, 164, 171, 186, 188, 189, 190, 194, 206, 226, 227x2, 235, 236, 257, 258, 267, 268, 295, 304, 307x2, 309x2. Incidentally, the words “monstre,”

“monstrueux(euse),” “inhumain(e)” also occur quite frequently. See LK 42, 43, 53, 68, 77, 85, 93, 146, 216, 304.

⁵⁸ Cruelty that accentuates its etymological relation to blood, can also be poignantly represented by visual means. Born of both textual and visual registers, the graphic novel specifically may be one of the best equipped artistic forms for the authentically emotional representation of such acts. Daeninckx and Mako’s graphic novel *Octobre Noir* (2011), for instance, depicts what should have been a pacifist protest against the Algerians’ curfew in Paris (with individuals coming from Nanterre and Saint-Denis among other communes to protest) on October 17, 1961 but what became a very violent encounter when the French police started attacking protesters. Some were shot, others beaten to death, others yet drowned in the Seine; by some estimates up to 200 Algerians were killed: “la seine rougissante n’a pas cessé les jours suivants de vomir à la face du peuple de la commune ces corps martyrisés” (Daeninckx, Dider, and Mako. *Octobre noir*. Anthy-sur-Léman: Editions AD libris, 2011, 54), reads a quote from Kateb Yacine’s poem “Dans la gueule du loup” at the very end of the graphic novel. *Octobre noir* – more accurately, perhaps, *octobre rouge* – depicts extreme cruelty: panels, particularly those representing the French police force, are tinted red, and represent “crânes ouverts, bras and mains brisés, yeux crevés, blessures par balles” (*ibid.*, 51. See also, p. 20, 40-44, 48).

⁵⁹ Bachi, Salim. “Le vent brûle.” *Le Monde diplomatique*, 1995. <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1995/01/BACHI/6009>.

d'inhumanité . . . au cœur de l'humanité"⁶⁰ and "l'inhumanité même, pourtant constitutive de l'humanité"⁶¹ that cruelty captures, the ontological destabilization of the human in the face of extreme violence to which this concept gestures.

Questions of cruelty and its in-humanity are described elsewhere in Bachi's work, appearing in other stories from *Les douze contes de minuit* also – specifically in the case of torture. "Le bourreau de Cyrtha" reveals the life of an unnamed police officer, specifically a member of the BRB (Brigade de répression du banditisme/Banditry Repression Brigade) from the perspective of that police officer. He tells the tale of his fight against the Front Islamique du Salut, something he chooses to do even when it means interrupting his studies. As he clarifies in a previous story, "Enfers": "Ils . . . se baladaient sur le campus avec des haches, et ne me dis pas que tu ne t'en souviens pas. Ils nous menaçaient. . . . [Q]uand ils [the violent radical extremist Islamists] ont annoncé qu'ils flinguerait les étudiants qui continueraient à aller en cours, je me suis engagé" (DCM 93). But his position in the police force degrades into acts of torture – both commissioned and not. Indeed, the BRB officer eradicates members of the FIS in an atrocious manner with the entire police force itself engaging in unlawful acts. The preferred pastime of the brigade's chief, Mahmoud, is to interrogate the first bearded man they encounter on the street. The police officer explains it in the following way:

Sa marotte, la nôtre ensuite, était de réquisitionner une voiture, de faire un tour en ville et de ramasser le premier barbu qui passait à notre hauteur. Nous descendions de la voiture, capturons notre proie et l'enfouissions dans le coffre sans nulle autre forme de procès. Au commissariat, il s'agissait d'humilier le misérable, de la manière la plus fine, la plus sournoise. Nous ne le relâchions qu'en fin de soirée, la figure à moitié rasée (DCM 122).

⁶⁰ Hénaff, Marcel. *Violence dans la raison?: conflit et cruauté*. Paris: L'Herne, 2014, 167.

⁶¹ Desan, Philippe, editor. *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*. Nouvelle éd. Paris: Champion, 2007, 272.

Later on, he describes how he tortures Mahmoud's assassin by forcing him to undress before using a baseball bat to strike him. The police officer almost seems to enjoy the task when he remarks on the usefulness of the tool: "Mais lorsqu'il s'agit de briser les membres d'un être humain rien ne remplacera jamais cette bonne vieille batte américaine" (DCM 134), enthusiastically giving a list of other commonly used torture techniques also: "Des mecs à qui il fallait brûler la plante des pieds, saupoudrer de poudre et faire flamber comme des crêpes. Des types qu'on plongeait dans leur merde. Des hommes qu'on électrocutait sur des chaises en acier" (DCM 135-136). As the police officer explains, "Commandez à un homme de se désaper devant vous et il perdra toute dignité. Une autre mathématique. Imparable et cruelle, elle aussi" (DCM 135). Asking someone to undress, another codified formula of torture that accompanies hitting someone with a bat, eliminates all of one's dignity and leaves an irrefutably *cruel* mark.

This torturous act, the loss of dignity that it forces onto the victim, then, is explicitly labelled as cruel. And perhaps this is because torture involves a set of practices, hence following a code and subscribing to an economy as I developed in Chapters 1 and 2. As Scarry summarizes when identifying a chiasmus at play between torturer and victim, "the absence of pain is a presence of world [for the torturer]; the presence of pain is the absence of world [for the victim]. Across this set of inversions pain becomes power."⁶² A rigorous mathematics of victimization and world-destruction is frequently seen in the execution of torture. Indeed, torture is used to extract information while humiliating, debasing, and dehumanizing the victim. And though torture does not always provide accurate information since those subjugated to torturous techniques will frequently share any information in desperation – "[t]he French reached negative

⁶² Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, op. cit., 37.

conclusions about its efficiency in Algeria”⁶³ – Kalyvas also rightly observes that “if torture always failed it would never be used.”⁶⁴ Indeed, for the BRB, torturing a victim is indeed worth something – information, vengeance, a theater of superiority – and accordingly the victim’s life, this human life, is valorized for the information it can provide, echoing Kathleen Taylor’s insistence on the fact that “much cruel behaviour is rational, that is, it is done for reasons which seem good to the perpetrator at the time.”⁶⁵ Such a description points to an act that is governed by reason, thus torture is cruel insofar as it is codified and creates (human life) value. Consequently cruelty is at the helm of a tension: both excessive, transgressive, but nevertheless also following a logic, a reason. Cruelty resides outside the rules of war, outside of sanctioned violence, but adheres to a code, subscribes to an economy of violence. Cruelty, as we recall from Chapter 2, is “the specifically human aspect of war”⁶⁶ even to the extent of being barbarically inhumane, of questioning the humanity of both the instiller and the receiver of the act.

Consider the United Nations General Assembly’s “Convention against Torture” that too codifies torture:

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.⁶⁷

⁶³ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, *op. cit.*, 174.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶⁵ Taylor, Kathleen. *Cruelty: Human Evil and the Human Brain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 6-7.

⁶⁶ Bataille, Georges. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, 78.

⁶⁷ United National General Assembly, “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,” Article 1, December 1984. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>.

This definition appears quite pragmatic, systematized, and though it denounces torture, it also in a way seems to rationalize the act: it is used to extract information or to establish a dominance of power through intimidation. In short, torture is excessive, irregular, and paradoxically both rule-defying and regulated – all characteristics which qualify it as cruel. And yet, as Christopher Tindale notes, the definition above “may exclude acts of dehumanizing torture,”⁶⁸ that is, torture performed for the pure sake of dehumanizing an individual: “a type of torture that is clearly not interrogational and has no obvious deterrent effect.”⁶⁹ Such an instance of torture, using the vocabulary that I have been developing in this dissertation, is an unnecessary, gratuitous act that offers no value: in a word, it is monstrous.

Indeed, the BRB officer in Bachi’s short story does not use the word “cruel” to describe himself or his actions; for that he relies on the term “monstrous.” Men, albeit cruel, perform violent acts like torture in *Les douze contes de minuit*, but the BRB officer is described as something beyond human, something veering toward the inhuman. “Il [Rachid] m’offrit sa compagnie et sa chambre d’étudiant. En retour, eh bien, en retour je lui offris une part non négligeable de ma monstruosité” (DCM 129), says the officer. He already hints at his other nature in “Enfers” when he tells Rachid and Poisson that *they* remain humans: “Vous restez des hommes. Des êtres humains. Jamais vous ne ferez ce que j’ai fait” (DCM 93). It is understood that the officer does not. In a nearly identical scene to the one above, the character Seyf is also described as monstrous in Bachi’s *Le Chien d’Ulysse*. This may come across as unsurprising, since both the novel and Bachi’s short stories recycle characters and similar, if not identical, episodes and events. *Le Chien d’Ulysse*, however – which tells the story of Hocine, a student and

⁶⁸ Tindale, Christopher W. “The Logic of Torture: A Critical Examination.” *Social Theory and Practice* 22.3 (1996), 354-355.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 351.

modern-day Ulysses⁷⁰ wandering the streets of Cyrtha on June 29, 1996,⁷¹ and reflecting on his life and the society around him through dreams and myths, and narratives from other friends or acquaintances⁷² – is more detailed in its descriptions of Seyf,⁷³ a member of the BRB and Hocine's friend.

Comparing himself to his colleague Mahmoud, Seyf remarks: “Même Mahmoud, le grand et solide Mahmoud, me regarda bientôt avec crainte. . . . Je lui ressemblais de plus en plus, au brave et colossal Mahmoud. Je devenais plus que Mahmoud. Je devenais moi-même, le résultat n'était pas très beau à voir” (LCU 167). Seyf notices that he becomes something more than simply intimidating and colossal. There is something of both an excess and a beyond (*plus que*) in this description of and comparison with his colleague who congratulates him when he kills his first man: “Au commissariat, pendant plusieurs jours, on raconta à tous comment Seyf avait abbatu son premier homme. Mahmoud est venu le féliciter” (LCU 165). Seyf consequently undergoes a transformation – “Seyf acquit de l'expérience. Il s'endurcit” (LCU 166) – and the end result, as we see in a familiar quote, this time attributed to the novel's narrator, is monstrous: “À la même période, en février 1996, Seyf rencontrait Rachid Hchicha, qui lui offrit sa

⁷⁰ The form of the novel also reflects Joyce's *Ulysses*: “it describes the peregrinations of a group of friends around a mythical Algerian city on a single day, echoing James Joyce's *Ulysses* in its structure” (Célestin, Roger. “Entretien avec Salim Bachi.” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13.3 (2009), Taylor and Francis+NEJM, 367). Bachi himself states: “Je me suis aussi très vite plongé dans Faulkner à cause de Kateb Yacine et dans Joyce à cause de *L'Odyssée* . . . J'ai dû relire cinq ou six fois *Ulysse*, qui a été pour moi avec *Absalon! Absalon!* de Faulkner le grand livre de ma jeunesse” (Crowley, Patrick. “Myth, Modernism, Violence and Form: An Interview with Salim Bachi.” *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 4.1 (Spring 2013), 6).

⁷¹ LCU 23. This is precisely four years after Mohamed Boudiaf's assassination (LCU 76, 255). As Hocine recounts, “Un speaker lobotomisé annonça sur un ton monocorde l'assassinat de Mohamed Boudiaf. Dans les rues, des sympathisants islamistes se congratulaient. . . . Je crois bien, si mes souvenirs ne me trahissent pas, je pleurai, Mourad aussi. . . . Depuis, je n'ai cessé d'être en colère contre le monde entier, en rage. Qu'ils sombrent, ce pays, cette ville, comme un songe creux! Qu'ils s'écroulent et ensevelissent leurs habitants sous une lave épaisse” (LCU 243-244).

⁷² These include Seyf, Hamid Kaïm, Mourad, Hocine's professor Ali Khan, and his wife Amel (friends Rachid and Poisson, and Kaïm's ex-fiancé Samira are also mentioned).

⁷³ It is interesting to note that Bachi reclaims the name Seyf in *Tuez-les tous* and attributes it to the protagonist, a 9/11 terrorist who recounts the last twenty-four hours of his life.

compagnie et sa chambre d'étudiant. En retour, Seyf lui légua une part non négligeable de sa monstruosité" (LCU 168).

Thus unlike the cruel damages that amount to sacrifices commanded by Alias in *Pilote de guerre*, Seyf's killings and actions are monstrous like those of the exodus described by Saint-Exupéry. "Ouvre les yeux, bon sang!" implores Seyf as he speaks to Hocine; "les lois humaines sont caduques" (LCU 188), the former continues. Here, as in the villagers' scene evoked by the author of *Le Petit Prince*, the monstrous is invoked because human values and laws no longer hold: *les lois humaines sont caduques*, that is, principles entrenched in the notion of the human are null and void.⁷⁴ But there is no conversion of damages into sacrifices in the scenes in which Seyf appears as there are in the cruel scenes of *Pilote de guerre*. Consequently, the dehumanization attributed to Seyf's killings and actions only serves to underline the monstrosity of the officer's behavior. After all, he is the one who at one moment gratuitously tortures a 14-year-old, knowing this boy will not be able to withstand the techniques nor provide him with any information: "Sur ce désert du corps, le tortionnaire apposera son sceau. La marque du fer, du poinçon, ou le choc électrique" (LCU 174).

Moreover, as seen in Chapter 2, a monster in the Aristotelian sense is something that does not fit its category. As we recall and as Kathleen Long writes, recapitulating definitions of monstrosity in Aristotle and Pliny: "In short, monstrosity is that which calls into question the conformity of the individual to a type."⁷⁵ Indeed Seyf, in his severity, aggression, and excessive violence, can be labelled as a monster insofar as his horrific acts go beyond the accepted "police-

⁷⁴ "[L]es lois humaines sont caduques" (DCM 95) is also precisely what the BRB officer of *Les douze contes de minuit* asserts in "Enfers."

⁷⁵ Long, Kathleen. "'Nature Abhors Normality': Theories of the Monstrous from Aristotle to *The X-Files* (1993-2002)." Edited by Caroline Joan S. Picart and John Edgar Browning. *Speaking of Monsters: A Teratological Anthology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 198.

force type,” even beyond what is presumably appropriate for a member of the BRB. As an Amnesty International Report (2000) on the Algerian Civil War summarizes, “Tens of thousands have died since the current conflict began in 1992, thousands have ‘disappeared’ after being taken away by the security forces and thousands have been abducted and killed by armed groups and their bodies never found.”⁷⁶ The report also underlines the *excessiveness* and brutality of various police officials:

In May 2000 officials in the Ministry of Justice informed the visiting Amnesty International delegation that between 1993 and February of this year, 348 members of the security services or state-armed militias had been brought to justice for what the authorities termed “excesses” in the course of duty. . . . The “excesses” included a variety of crimes such as threatening people with death, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of detainees and murder.⁷⁷

This report is noteworthy since we may imagine the fictionalized Seyf as one of these 348 officials. We see him *threatening people with death, arbitrarily detaining, torturing, and murdering*, ultimately devalorizing lives to the level of meaninglessness for no apparent reason. If he is monstrous because he engages in these gratuitous and senseless acts of violence, he is equally monstrous for the reason that these excesses deform his role as BRB officer – and his very self – beyond recognition.

From the analyses above, then, we have come to understand that in Bachi torture appears to be both cruel and monstrous, both human and dehumanizing. These double designations make it increasingly difficult to draw distinctions between the human and the inhuman and by the same token force us to consider the inhuman constituent of humanity. In what follows, we will see that Bey continues to complicate the border between human and inhuman by persisting to imbricate

⁷⁶ *Algeria: Truth and Justice Obscured by the Shadow of Impunity*. New York: Amnesty International USA, 2000, i.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

once with the other. Indeed, the cruelty-monstrosity overlap, marking the nebulous limit between human and inhuman, is also seen in her oeuvre.

Bey

Maïssa Bey, the pen name of Samia Benameur, was born in Ksar El Boukhari, Algeria in 1950, and has written prolifically in the last two decades: from the publication of her first novel *Au commencement était la mer* (1996) to essays, collections of short stories, and poetry. Currently residing in Algeria after a lifetime of violence – notably the loss of her father to torture during the Algerian War, the basis for her novel *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . – she offers a poignant perspective on atrocity in her corpus, exploring, for instance, France’s colonization of Algeria in *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre*, addressing the aftermath of the revolution in *Bleu blanc vert*, and chronicling the *décennie noir* in *Puisque mon cœur est mort*.⁷⁸ *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre*, which depicts tragic massacres and displaced families through a metaphorical relationship between a child and a figure named madame Lafrance, begins in 1830 with the latter arriving in Algiers and embarking on a “humanizing mission” of the indigenous population. Described as justice that is not only blind but also deaf to the pleas of the ones who need justice most, she is

la liberté guidant le peuple. . . . Elle n’entend pas les cris des hommes, des femmes et des enfants enfermés dans les grottes enfumées. Elle n’entend pas les supplications, les sanglots et les râles. . . . [S]ur cette terre sauvage, elle vient, généreuse, souveraine, dispenser ses lumières (PSPC 23-24).

Blindly bringing about supposed enlightenment, madame Lafrance changes street names, closes schools and opens new “proper” ones, and, in reality, ushers in nothing but an era of cruelty,

⁷⁸ In Bey’s *Surtout ne te retourne pas* (2006) atrocity of another nature is presented: natural disaster in the form of a destructive earthquake.

defined by forced assimilation, amplified by retaliatory revolts and further bloodshed.⁷⁹ In what can be seen as one of her key narrative strategies, Bey systematically lists atrocities in her works, the sheer quantity of which – by creating a sense of excessiveness inundating the page with horrors – speaks to their cruelty. Inventories of blood and death are remarkable in *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre*, as Bey indexes with an anaphoric *quand* the various atrocities committed by madame Lafrance – from ears cut off to summary executions (PSPC 107) – and focuses on the child’s blank stares and tearless eyes watching over it all:

Quand les siens ont été bannis parce qu’ils avaient offert l’hospitalité à des guerriers poursuivis par les troupes françaises, . . . quand tous les membres de la tribu ont été expulsés des terres sur lesquelles ils vivaient depuis toujours, . . . quand . . . on a obligé les habitants du douar à se dépouiller de tous leurs biens, . . . quand, sur la place du village, des soldats français ont exhibé des dizaines d’oreilles coupées, . . . l’enfant hébété n’a même pas pu pleurer (PSPC 62-66).

On the one hand, Bey, like Bachi, too is a writer of *cruor*, alluding in *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre* to the bloody 1957 Melouza massacre during which time the FLN murdered the 374 inhabitants of Melouza for supporting the Algerian National Movement. In other passages of the novel she explicitly focuses on the word “blood” – “des bulles de sang,” “le linge blanc ensanglanté” (PSPC 158), “sangs mêlés,” “odeur de sang” (PSPC 159) – as the only successful outcome of reactionary violence. But on the other, she is also a writer of the monstrous in the way that this word has been understood here. As Bey’s narrator states in *Pierre Sang Papier ou Cendre*, underlining the gratuitousness of violence, the inutility of war: “Les uns s’enfoncent dans la violence, une violence aveugle; les autres, pressés d’en finir avec une guerre meurtrière et ‘inutile,’ tentent de faire face au déchaînement de cette violence dont, chaque jour, ils sont

⁷⁹ Judith Butler summarizes: “as Adorno cautioned us . . . violence in the name of civilization reveals its own barbarism, even as it ‘justifies’ its own violence by presuming the barbaric subhumanity of the other against whom that violence is waged” (*Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* New York/London: Verso, 2016, 93).

l'une des cibles" (PSPC 157). One can just as easily read hesitancy toward the usefulness of war, consequently underscoring its senselessness, in *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . when a young man's doubtful internal thoughts are summarized as follows: "Toutes les guerres sont terribles aux yeux de ceux qui les font . . . et quel que soit le côté où l'on est, il faut toujours se convaincre que c'est le bon côté, la bonne cause, et que la violence, les violences sont parfois nécessaires" (EVDM 56). In this passage riddled with ellipses and rhetorical questions, as well as statements such as, "Ne pas se poser trop de questions" (EVDM 56) and "dans toutes les guerres, l'ennemi a toujours le même visage. Le visage de notre propre mort" (EVDM 57), the young man's position on the necessity of violence is unconvincing. He is far from reassuring himself, or the reader, of the need for violence, instead gesturing toward the gratuitousness of martial conflict and foreseeing his own death in this subjective fight "for a good cause."

These preliminary examples already point to a conjugation of cruelty with monstrosity insofar as they collocate *crucor* with gratuitous and senseless violence. Other works by Bey do the same – especially within the explicit context of irregular war. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter when I focused on non-conventional combat and Kalyvas's conceptualization of civil war, warfare that has civilians as its victims is more often than not irregular. And indeed, civilian deaths are frequently a point of discussion in Bey's works. *Puisque mon cœur est mort* revolves around one such death. In this text, a mother decides to write to her deceased son,⁸⁰ a civilian victim of the violence Algeria witnessed in the 90s, "le déferlement furieux et sanglant de l'histoire" (PCM 127). She pens letters to him, underlining the necessity of writing, noting "[t]u es dans le geste de ma main qui sur la page trace les lettres" (PCM 141), while trying to put

⁸⁰ As she writes, "Un fils unique! Et disparu dans de telles circonstances!" (PCM 24) "Je n'ai plus rien à perdre puisque j'ai tout perdu. Puisque mon cœur est mort" (PCM 102), she continues.

into words her unnamable sorrow and making mention of the oppressive social regime – with its near-curfews and violent extremist religious radicalism – in which she lives. Bey notes other instances of civilian demises in the novel too, with references made to violence against non-combatants throughout the book: from the “femme dont le fils et le mari ont été assassinés dans l’enceinte de l’école des Beaux-Arts, à Alger” (PCM 84) to “l’histoire de cette mère qui continue à préparer et à compléter avec une constance inébranlable le trousseau de sa fille morte dans un attentat ” (PCM 84) to “la mort de la sœur de Farid dans l’attentat à la bombe à la fac centrale d’Alger” (PCM 106). Indeed, the whole of *Puisque mon cœur est mort* is a description of cruel acts and their consequences within the frame of irregular war. Though the word “cruel” may not be uttered, there is an abundance of irregular bloodshed, of degrading treatment referenced in the text as already seen above: “[l]es massacres, les attentats, les têtes coupées, les enlèvements, une litanie de l’horreur” (PCM 129). In Chapter 6, “Mots I,” for instance, Bey once again makes use of short, anaphoric, emphatic sentences and juxtaposes atrocities to descriptions of landscapes and people’s expressions, emphasizing the faces of mothers furrowed so deep they begin to bleed. She chronicles forms of excessive violence as follows:

On me parle de clémence. De concorde. D’amnistie. De paix retrouvée, à défaut d’apaisement. À défaut de justice et de vérité. Alors je cherche. Je cherche partout. Dans la trace des sillons sanglants sur les joues des mères. Dans leurs mains refermées sur l’absence. Dans le regard des filles violentées. . . Dans les silences grevés de cris étouffées. Dans les ruines calcinées qui parsèment nos campagnes. Mais je n’entends que le bruit sec des armes que l’on recharge et le crissement acide des couteaux qu’on aiguisé (PCM 32-33).

In this passage, the classic sounds of war – the recharging of a machine gun – occur within non-classically defined war, highlighted, here, with the indirect mention of rape as a form of warfare: *le regard des filles violentées*.⁸¹ Rape is again referenced later on in the text when the

⁸¹ Indeed, rape will be identified for the first time ever as a war crime following the Rwandan genocide: “The ICTR is the first ever international tribunal to deliver verdicts in relation to genocide, and the first to interpret the

narrator mentions meeting a woman planting flowers around her daughter's grave: "dix-sept ans, enlevée, violée puis jetée dans un ravin où elle a été retrouvée plusieurs jours après" (PCM 127), only further reinforcing the irregularity of the war. Consider how Bey's narrator describes the Algerian Civil War more generally:

Si cela avait été une guerre, une vraie guerre, avec des affrontements que l'on pourrait qualifier de réguliers, contre des ennemis visibles, identifiés, identifiables, j'aurais été à présent, sans que cela n'atténue en rien ma douleur ni ma révolte, la mère d'un héros tombé au champ d'honneur (PCM 186).

And yet the war is *not* regular, as the only wishful *si* encapsulates; the fighting is without visible, identifiable enemies, and as a result the narrator's son is not a war hero, but simply a lost civilian life, an innocent bystander killed in guerilla combat. Chapter 29 of the novel, "Sangs," further explains how the narrator was named Aïda in honor of Eid al-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice, which commemorates Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son only then to have God provide a sacrificial lamb in his place. As she elucidates,

Le choix de mon prénom a été déterminé par les hasards de notre calendrier religieux. C'est parce que ma mère a accouché le jour de l'Aïd el Kebir, jour du sacrifice propitiatoire d'Ibrahim, que l'on m'a appelée Aïda. Je suis donc née sous le signe du sacrifice. Le sacrifice de ce que l'on peut avoir de plus cher au monde: un fils. Je ne veux pas penser, je ne veux pas penser que c'est un nom prédestiné (PCM 124-125).

This passage harks back to Saint-Exupéry and the value of sacrifice in war. And yet, does the narrator's son's life constitute a sacrifice in *Puisque mon cœur est mort*? Is there value in his death, is it cruel in the same way that we came to understand this word in the work of Saint-

definition of genocide set forth in the 1948 Geneva Conventions. It also is the first international tribunal to define rape in international criminal law and to recognise rape as a means of perpetrating genocide" (<http://unict.unmict.org/en/tribunal>). Rape is in fact seen as the worst crime in Rwanda, graver than the killings themselves, and is the only trial that happens behind closed doors (with no public testimony). This is further explained in the 2015 documentary *The Uncondemned*, where lawyers and human rights activists explain how Rwanda established rape as a war crime, another "genocide first." Most recently (2019), rape has been used as a weapon by the army against civilians in pro-democracy protests in Sudan. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48634150>.

Exupéry? Here once more, a seemingly cruel act invokes the monstrous because in all its evident cruelty, a bloody loss and a function of the excess of war, Bey's narrator's son's death is also devoid of meaning. Indeed, he dies not an honorable death, not a cruel, meaningful death, but a monstrous death, emptied of value or reason. In this same passage, Bey's narrator has recourse to the exclamation point to underline her shock at the gratuitousness of these civilian deaths:

“Saluez la cohorte invisible des sans-nom, des sans-visage, des morts-pour-rien!” (PCM 187) she cries, calling this aporetic moment saturated with pointless deaths “[un] blanc de l’histoire!”

(PCM 187) At another moment yet, Bey's narrator highlights the *bourreaux*'s lack of remorse and guilt:

Encore faudrait-il qu'ils puissent prendre conscience de leur culpabilité!
Comment le pourraient-ils quand on leur a certifié que tuer un mécréant n'est pas tuer? Que c'est simplement combattre le mal en accomplissant un acte voulu et récompensé par Dieu, un acte qui permet de graver les premières marches menant à Son Royaume (PCM 144-145).

This additional exclamation – underlined by Bey's narrator herself: “cette femme qui ponctue ses révoltes d'autant de points d'exclamation” (PCM 180), she writes about her style – points to her exasperation; her sarcastic religious critique exposes the hypocrisy of resorting to killing in order to combat supposed apostates and be granted divine salvation. And indeed, the form of *Puisque mon cœur est mort*'s very narration – with its aggravated interjections and rhetorical interrogations – underscores the senselessness witnessed in the text. Bey opens the twenty-fifth chapter of the novel, “Quarantième jour,” marking the fortieth day of the mourning of her son, with a series of declamatory questions:

Que te dire, que te raconter? Que chaque jour meurent des innocents? Que d'autres mères sont confrontées à une douleur semblable à la mienne? Que les échos de leurs cris parviennent jusqu'à nous sans réussir à ébranler le silence et l'indifférence de ceux qui n'ont pas été touchés dans leur chair? (PCM 97)

It is as though the form of the rhetorical question is a means through which to underline the insoluble situation of Bey's protagonist, a grief that erases all bearings, even the mark of time: "Que leur répondre? Que le temps n'existe plus?" (PCM 99) Every day innocent civilians die, every day mothers are inexplicably pained and misunderstood by those who have been fortunate enough to have not experienced the same. Bey's project in *Puisque mon cœur est mort* is in fact to try to make sense of that which is completely senseless, a kind of violence that Bey too explicitly labels as nothing other than a "*monstrueuse réalité*" (PCM 170, my emphasis).

But beyond reflecting on the an-economy of violence, that is, violence that alternates between cruelty, or sacrificial and valued death, and senseless monstrosity, a staggering passage in *Puisque mon cœur est mort* demonstrates how cruelty and monstrosity are key ontological terms that can shed light on the human and inhuman, or rather the integral inhumanity of humanity. Indeed, the narrator of *Puisque mon cœur est mort* specifically uses the word *monstre* to describe her son's killer, offering with this term a reflection on the murderer's being: "cet être-là, que tous vos rêves vous ont cent fois, mille fois, présenté comme un monstre redoutable, cet être-là, à qui vous déniez jusqu'à l'appartenance au genre humain" (PCM 154). The perpetrator, an ambiguous, foreboding entity, *cet être-là*, is denied any likening to a human, completely excluded from the category of the human. And yet immediately after, the narrator asks, "qui peut expliquer la haine dévastatrice des massacreurs d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants? Qu'est-ce qui a pu transformer des centaines de jeunes gens – et moins jeunes – en bourreaux s'acharnant sur des victimes?" (PCM 154) Underlining a transformation from *gens* (humans) to the ontologically ambiguous *bourreaux*, Bey problematizes her clear labelling of her son's killer as monster. Is he so simply a monster or something much more complex, a deformation of the human that has become unrecognizable? The book does not provide clear answers to this

question. It does, however, reinforce the terms of the problematic by explicitly focusing on a vocabulary of the in-human when describing perpetrators of atrocity in the passage below.

Though the narrator notes that it is the domain of *human* behavior specialists to study these acts and those who carry them out, she equally underlines a lack of humanity in these war-time humans. As she states:

Il ne resterait plus aux psychologues, psychanalystes, psychiatres et autres spécialistes du comportement humain qu'à se pencher sur leur cas pour établir enfin l'étiologie de la folie meurtrière qui s'est emparée d'eux. À condition qu'ils veuillent bien se laisser examiner, c'est-à-dire qu'ils soient amenés à accepter l'idée qu'une réparation est nécessaire. Aussi bien pour eux que pour les victimes. Cela leur permettrait peut-être de recouvrer leur humanité (PCM 144).

In this excerpt, the narrator underscores the necessity of reparations in the aftermath of extreme violence. Moreover, Bey's use of the possessive adjective "leur" is noticeably indefinite; it is unclear whether she is referring to victims or perpetrators, thus encapsulating the two when proposing reconciliation as a possible way of recuperating some of the humanity lost, on both sides, during the war. But by underscoring that victims and/or perpetrators need to reclaim their humanity, she by the same token also gestures to the fact that they are, prior to this rectifying process, dispossessed of humanity, lesser-than-human, in-human.

In addition to the irregular forms of war – civilian death and rape – described above, Bey in her corpus regularly alludes to torture. Though it is surprisingly absent from *Puisque mon cœur est mort*, torture is indeed mentioned in *Bleu blanc vert*:⁸²

⁸² In this text that covers the years between the War of Independence and the Civil War (the text is indeed divided into three parts: 1962-1972, 1972-1982, 1982-1992), Bey's two leading characters – Lui, Ali, and Elle, Lilas – focus on the personal hardships of daily familial life and societal evolution after Algerian independence: "maintenant on est des Arabes à 300%" (BBV 17) Ali states as a child. The short, direct sentences of *Bleu blanc vert* too pierce the narrative of everyday life and identify precise instances of extreme societal violence as the backdrop to the quotidian: "Attentats. Embuscades. Gendarmes tués. Officiers de police. Attaque d'une caserne. Des dizaines de morts. Tout Alger ne parle que de ça. Encore une fois, des mots qui disent la violence, la guerre, la mort" (BBV 201-202), one passage reads.

Le sang a coulé. Une fois encore. Et nous avons appris, abasourdis, la violence de la répression. Mais, fait nouveau, les victimes ont parlé. Et les journaux, d'abord timidement, ont relayé l'information. Des hommes, des jeunes gens pour la plupart, ont été torturés. Il ne se passe pas de jour sans que des clients viennent me voir avec des traces de sévices visibles sur le corps. Les récits sont effrayants. J'ai l'impression d'être revenu près de trente ans en arrière, lorsque les rescapés des prisons coloniales décrivaient dans les journaux les tortures qu'ils avaient subies dans des lieux tristement célèbres (BBV 254-255).

Here, the unsanctioned atrocity of the Algerian Civil War echoes the War of Independence, both conflicts irregular, among other things, in their use of torture. Though the passage above is a description of the physical effects of torture and their cruelty/*cruor* – bloodshed, traces of electricity on bodies – Bey does not further contemplate the practice in this text, instead most notably focusing on torture and its perpetrators in *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .* Bey's personal ties to the Algerian War are brought to fullest light in this latter text, her most autobiographical fiction, in which she describes her father's arrest and death by torture when she was six years old. Before the written text even begins, we already anticipate the personal nature of *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .* by seeing a photograph entitled "La seule photo du père de Maïssa, été 1955" (EVDM 10) at the beginning of the book. There is equally a small archive at the end of the text, which joins the photograph from the beginning, accentuating the authenticity of the story. "Elle a souvent essayé de reconstituer le visage de son père. Fragment par fragment. . . . Non, rien, ni sa voix, ni son odeur, ni sa façon de marcher, elle ne se souvient de rien" (EVDM 20), states the narrator of *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes . . .*; indeed, efforts to remember her father haunt Bey throughout her corpus.

In sober terms, Bey had already acknowledged the torture of her father in 1998 in a short text entitled "Mon père, ce rebelle," the descriptor qualifying his activity with the FLN as seen

by the French.⁸³ As Bey writes, “il avait été longuement torturé par un adjudant de gendarmerie célèbre dans la région pour le raffinement et la cruauté de ses méthodes et qui s’acharna sur lui pendant toute une nuit” (ACS 80). When her father is taken from his home, shortly before his death, Bey reflects on what must have been going through his mind, stressing his final, shattered beliefs in and hope for justice:

il a certainement cru ou espéré, sans tenir compte du fossé qui séparait, à ce moment-là, des principes pourtant inaliénables et garantis par la constitution du pays des droits de l’homme – de simples mots sur du papier – de la sanglante réalité algérienne. . . . Mais il fut torturé. Puis exécuté sans jugement (ACS 90).

These concluding words underline France’s hypocrisy in the face of human rights during the bloody reality – the word *sanglante* is once again used – that was the Algerian War. The supposedly guaranteed rights mentioned in the passage, that is, rights to treatment as a human being and egalitarianism as promulgated in Article I of the Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen de 1789, “Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits,” are clearly not upheld. The presumption of an inalienable humanity, then, is estranged, replaced by torture and summary executions. The supposedly human, here, is rendered inhuman. Later, in *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . , Bey, referencing Algeria, affirms, “Mais dans ce pays il y a des hommes. Dans tous les pays, il y a des hommes. Ce sont eux qui en font une patrie. Qui en font un enfer. Ou un pays où il fait bon vivre” (EVDM 35). Here, she once again contaminates the human with the inhuman by designating those responsible for creating martial hellscapes and wreaking havoc – through cruel, even monstrous, inhuman acts – as *des hommes*; questionably human, ostensibly inhuman, humans, then, make up a nation in just the same way as those whose

⁸³ “La leçon de lecture,” an autobiographical short story included in the anthology *À contre-silence* (1998), also takes as its subject Bey’s father and his death.

humanity is not challenged. And so, how does Bey continue to draw the line between human and inhuman, or rather displace it, in the face of torture?

The narrative of *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . recounts a trip by train in France and offers reflections on war, post-war politics, memory/amnesia, and trauma. The story is told by a woman fleeing her native Algeria, escaping quotidian horror and threat during what we infer to be the era of the Civil War. She finds herself in a compartment, a kind of *huis clos*, with a middle-aged woman, a younger woman named Marie, and an older man. After some time, the individuals start a fragmented, difficult discussion about the Algerian War. We discover, only with certainty at the very end of the book, that the older man, a doctor named Jean, was involved in torturing the narrator's father and then disposing of his body.⁸⁴ Torture in the text is first identified as a way of extracting information from a prisoner. As Jean presents it, torturous methods are simply interrogation techniques: "C'était des interrogatoires . . . poussés, certains disaient . . . musclés. Obtenir le maximum de renseignements" (EVDM 72). Here we once again witness a justification of the utility of torture in the light of its supposed value for extracting information. Jean additionally attempts to substantiate torture by reiterating the exceptional circumstances that war presents, but the emphasized atypicality of the situation only further underlines the irregularity of the act, its questionability, its fallaciously enlightening purpose: "Il y avait des sections spéciales dans les services de renseignements. C'était la guerre . . ." (EVDM 71), he recalls, the ellipsis following the word "guerre" indicative of the ambiguity of what is and is not permitted in times of war. "Ceux qui étaient amenés chez nous étaient des suspects. Il fallait prendre le temps de les . . . de les interroger . . . pour les besoins de l'enquête" (EVDM

⁸⁴ "En moins d'un quart d'heure, tout est terminé. Jean a déchargé les huit corps qui gisent maintenant sur la terre" (EVDM 74).

70), he recapitulates before breaking down: “Personne n’est sorti indemne de cette guerre! Personne!” (EVDM 70) This emotional outburst, a clear manifestation of guilt, renders the rationalization of torture as a practice for gathering information uncertain. Jean also has flashbacks to the torture scene, to procedures that seem less tasked with finding out information than inflicting severe pain: “un hurlement terrible venu d’une pièce voisine les fait tous tressaillir” (EVDM 67), he recalls. On the one hand, torture is deemed valuable for supposedly providing insight; on the other, the difficulty of defending it and its priority with paining victims underlines its complete violation of martial law and frequent gratuitousness (we recall Seyf’s torturous acts in Bachi’s works). Jean’s comments, then, not only put into crisis the supposed usefulness of torture and the blatant liability of torturers even when trying to justify their acts, but also compel us to contemplate and question the latter’s in-humanity: are beings human or other by engaging in such acts? Does the human become other when torturing?

While Jean speaks of torture in disguised terms, the narrator of *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . uses far less circuitous language while describing the method by which her father dies. “Il a été torturé. Avec ses compagnons. Pendant une nuit. Une nuit entière. Puis exécuté . . . de plusieurs balles” (EVDM 72), she asserts, trying to grapple with the nature of his slaughter in two different scenes, in fact providing answers to the two questions I posed above in the process. These particular moments are therefore essential for conceptualizing torture in Bey’s work as well as understanding how we can perceive perpetrators of extreme violence as cruel and/or monstrous. As seen in Bachi, with Bey also torture straddles both cruelty and monstrosity, troubling the presumed limit of the human. Whereas it is simple to identify torturers as “monsters” as a way of distancing such offenders from socially-accepted human behavior, torture – like other irregular martial acts that we have seen in this chapter – reveals the

classification of such perpetrators to be far more complex and multi-faceted than that. Indeed, this is what Bey's and Bachi's works capture: an in-humanity that forces us to reconsider how we define the human.

The first torture scene comes at the midpoint of *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* . . . , before the narrator has gotten to know Jean. Envisioning her father's demise, she ponders:

Elle a souvent imaginé LA scène. . . . Toute petite déjà, elle essayait de donner un visage aux hommes qui avaient torturé puis achevé son père avant de le jeter dans une fosse commune. Mais elle ne parvenait pas à leur donner un visage d'homme. Ce ne pouvait être que des monstres . . . comme ceux qui aujourd'hui, pour d'autres raisons et presque aux mêmes endroits, égorgent des enfants, des femmes et des hommes. Elle voyait alors des hommes encagoulés, entièrement vêtus de noir pour mieux se fondre dans la nuit, un peu à l'image des bourreaux représentés dans les livres et les films d'histoire. Des hommes sans visage qui longtemps avaient hanté ses rêves. Plus tard, riche de ses certitudes, elle ajoutait: des hommes qui n'avaient rien d'humain (EVDM 41-42).

This passage references a variety of martial atrocity. In fact, it traces a genealogy of trauma, the violence of the War of Independence and its legacy of torture – the temporality of *LA scène* – replicated during the Civil War with its brutality and murderers: *ceux qui aujourd'hui, pour d'autres raisons et presque aux mêmes endroits, égorgent des enfants, des femmes et des hommes*. Its most striking moment is the narrator's explicit designation of her father's perpetrators as monsters: *ce ne pouvait être que des monstres*. Devoid of a human face, the malefactors are inhuman both through their monstrous acts, which emphasize their psychic deviance, their moral abnormality, as well as inhuman in the Aristotelian sense of monstrosity as a physical lack: a face with no recognizable human traits as envisioned by the narrator, *elle ne parvenait pas à leur donner un visage d'homme*. And yet this identification becomes less clear as the text progresses, even less certain already at the end of this passage. Indeed, the descriptor *riche de ses certitudes* appears to be doubtful as the narrator wavers between labeling the

perpetrators as monsters and *des hommes qui n'avaient rien d'humain*. Though they may be devoid of humanity and in absence of a human face, these men are simultaneously precisely that: *des hommes*.

At the very end of the novel, in the second scene, the narrator further reflects on torture and more clearly articulates the difficulty in categorizing the being of torturers. Referencing Jean, she asserts:

Que ce soit lui ou quelqu'un d'autre, peu importe. Elle se dit que rien ne ressemble à ses rêves d'enfant, que les bourreaux ont des visages d'homme, elle en est sûre maintenant, ils ont des mains d'homme, parfois même des réactions d'homme et rien ne permet de les distinguer des autres. Et cette idée la terrifie un peu plus (EVDM 75).

If the torturers were previously monstrous because faceless, here they are explicitly identified as having *des visages d'hommes*, even human hands and human reactions and emotions. Such a realization – that presumed monstrous beings are in fact still human – is frightening to the narrator, as she can no longer *les distinguer des autres*. As these juxtaposed scenes then illustrate, a *bourreau* is represented as both inhuman and human in *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* Though torture questions the humanness of the perpetrator, defacing the individual to an unrecognizable monster, there is uncannily an element of humanity in the act. This not only reinforces the reality that “regular” humans can commit atrocities, recalling Taylor’s statement that “much cruel behaviour is . . . done by people like you and me,”⁸⁵ but further supports the fact that torture itself is not simply cruel or monstrous.

Indeed, torturers cannot merely be relegated to the realm of the monstrous, of the purely inhuman, which in practice would exclude them from governing human laws and morals. In

⁸⁵ Taylor, Kathleen. *Cruelty: Human Evil and the Human Brain*, *op. cit.*, 6-7.

other words, a linguistic, social, even legal ostracization that identifies torturers – and perpetrators of violence more generally – as monsters no longer delineates offenders as humans who commit atrocities but as inhuman beings who are expected to do atrocious things. Calling a torturer purely monstrous even opens a certain degree of permissibility: atrocity seems much more permissible, even possibly understandable and acceptable, for a monster rather than a human being. But in actuality, torture is both cruel and monstrous, both human and inhuman as my analyses above have shown, rendering the border between these two limits opaque, bringing to light these fault lines as more of a porous membrane. This in turn is significant not only for the language that we use to discuss perpetrators and torturers – *rien ne permet de les distinguer des autres*, and thus it is actually not so straightforward to call them “monsters” – and how we understand their crimes, but additionally for how we understand the notion of the human, much less *purely* human than presumed. Encapsulating the in-human, the imbrication of human and inhuman exposes why it makes sense to articulate cruelty alongside the terms *inhuman* and *degrading*, as seen at the beginning of this chapter when I quoted Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bachi and Bey show us how specifically cruelty uncovers the excesses that are already inscribed into the human, how cruelty pushes its human enactors to its outer limits, in some cases deforming it beyond recognition but, in the final analysis, still remaining human.

In-Human

In my previous chapter, I examined Foucault’s study of correlations between monstrosity and crime. Such a genealogy continues to be drawn to this day and there have been many instances in recent memory – in literary representations and the media – of calling perpetrators of mass atrocity “monsters” in order to distance the offender from the rest of humanity. Maya

Barzilai, for instance, in an effort to analyze “the monstrosity of war,”⁸⁶ turns to one such monstrous example with the golem, an animated figure made of clay, in *Golem: Modern Wars and their Monsters* (2016). The golem has over centuries alternated between “its typical portrayal as an inhuman, all-too-powerful figure, susceptible to transmogrifying into a destructive, even evil, monster,”⁸⁷ “a heuristic device and a narrative tool used to address the military implications of cybernetics and computer technologies,”⁸⁸ and even “a cyborg that veers from its creator’s plans not by becoming less violent but by desiring to participate in its society as a human and a Jew.”⁸⁹ The golem is thus a creature embodying the juncture of technology, the inanimate, the monster, but also the human. It is thus precisely an in-human creature, a notion reflecting perpetrators of cruel atrocity as both human and inhuman.

In a different context though along the same lines, in *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and The Great War of Africa* (2011), Jason Stearns urges his readers to think of the actors of the Congo Wars not as villains or monsters, but as regular human beings prompted by centuries of political instability: “It is not . . . helpful to personalize the evil and suggest that somehow those involved in the war harbored a superhuman capacity for evil. It is more useful to ask what political system produced this kind of violence.”⁹⁰ He summarizes his characterization of various martial antagonists in the following way:

In Cambodia, there was the despotic Khmer Rouge; in Rwanda once could cast the genocidal Hutu militias as the villains. In the Congo these roles are more difficult to fill. There is no Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin. Instead it is a war of the ordinary person, with many combatants unknown and unnamed, who fight for

⁸⁶ Barzilai, Maya. *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*. New York: New York University Press, 2016, 21.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Stearns, Jason K. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and The Great War of Africa*. New York: Public Affairs, 2012, 6.

complex reasons that are difficult to distill in a few sentences – much to the frustration of the international media.⁹¹

I do not believe that Stearns is advocating for identifying the Khmer Rouge, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin as purely inhuman monsters as opposed to the ordinary men of the wars in the Congo. The distinctions are far more subtle than that, and instead his main focus appears to be on the difficulty of attributing responsibility to a *group* of militants as opposed to a single, easily identifiable tyrannical figure. What is of note in this passage, though, is precisely this idea, once again, of the ordinary person, of the everyday human, as the perpetrator of inhuman, monstrous crimes. This entire chapter has been such a reflection. Indeed, Bachi and Bey have helped us navigate this liminal distinction between, or rather intersection of, human and inhuman, ultimately pointing to the fact that perpetrators of violence are in-human. And it is specifically through the notion of cruelty, conjugated with monstrosity, that this in-humanity has gained clarity.

In Chapter 2, judging an act, either morally or legally, as cruel *or* monstrous changed our perception of the perpetrator from a cruel human to a purely inhuman figure. Rigorous distinctions between cruelty and monstrosity in Saint-Exupéry through a humanistic lens thus also completely isolated the category of the monstrous from the human. The pilot's reasoning rested on the idea that we, as humans, are not the monstrous and thus do not engage in gratuitous, senseless, extreme acts of violence: a comforting feeling. Ultimately, then, calling something purely monstrous is a disavowal of human capacity. Here, we have seen Bachi and Bey complicate this understanding, exposing perpetrators of crime as cruel and/or monstrous, human-inhuman, in-human. The overlap of cruelty and monstrosity thus makes us rethink

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

categorizations as well as denotations and their various effects. As Talal Asad states, “I am trying to think . . . about the following questions: ‘What does the adoption of particular definitions of death dealing do to military conduct in the world?’”⁹² Judith Butler asks a series of similar questions with respect to comparing and contrasting forms of violence including: “which vocabulary – or set of vocabularies – would have to be available for . . . new judgments to emerge?”⁹³ My insistence, here, on the importance of definitions and categories, and especially the subtleties between them, entirely reflects such questions. And if this chapter, the chapters that came before it, and the ones that will come after it show us anything, it is that certain extreme acts such as torture, and namely their designation as cruel and/or monstrous in literary representations, in fact help us define human ontology precisely through that which is presumed to be inhuman. With Bachli and Bey, the notion of the human was imbricated with that of the monstrous; in the following chapter, the in-human will emerge vis-à-vis animality.

Postscript: “Le sang de l’écriture”

As Assia Djebar writes, invoking a vocabulary of the cruel with her emphasis on blood in her final chapter “Le sang de l’écriture – Final –” of *Vaste est la prison* (1995),

Écrire, les morts d’aujourd’hui désirent écrire: or, avec le sang, comment écrire? . . . Comment inscrire traces avec un sang qui coule, ou qui vient juste de couler?/Avec son odeur, peut-être/Avec son vomi ou sa glaire, aisément/Avec sa peur qui lui fait halo/Écrire certes même un roman/de la fuite/de la honte.⁹⁴

Here, writing is a way to transcribe the traces left behind by bloodshed, to capture and respond to fear, fright, shame, and, certainly, cruelty. Similarly, for Bey, as for the narrator of *Vaste est la*

⁹² Asad, Talal. *On Suicide Bombing*. Columbia: University Press, 2007, 20.

⁹³ Butler, Judith. *Frames of War*, *op. cit.*, 156. A bit later on she affirms that “[t]he point is . . . to consider more closely the conditions and terms under which . . . inversions of discourse take place, in order, finally, to make better judgements” (158-159).

⁹⁴ Djebar, Assia. *Vaste est la prison*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2002, 346.

prison, writing is a technique for describing the devastating truths of the war and revolution, a yearning to make sense of and overcome this trauma, even find an alternative to further bloodshed. Emphasizing the importance of writing to her existence, her very being defined and saved by a continuous writing act, Bey states in a 1993 interview with Martine Marzloff:

Lorsque la réalité autour de soi échappe à toute logique, qu'elle devient insupportable, trouver les mots, construire avec ces mots des phrases, créer un monde imaginaire mais proche, si proche du monde réel, avoir le pouvoir de le structurer, s'attacher à la cohérence et pas seulement à la cohérence narrative, mais aussi à celle qui n'existe plus autour de soi, c'est se sauver, et je pense que je dois mon salut . . . à la mise en mots de toutes mes angoisses, de toutes les interrogations qui ne cessent de me tourmenter (ACS 35-36).

At a different moment, in a piece called "Dire," she further affirms:

Je découvre les titres des journaux, plus violents encore qu'un coup de poing. Ils dansent autour de moi une ronde infernale, tous ces noms que mon dictionnaire qualifie de communs: carnage, massacre, tuerie, boucherie, auxquels, comme pour creuser encore plus profond dans nos plaies, viennent s'accoler des adjectifs: effroyable, terrible, horrible, insoutenable, inhumain, et bien d'autres . . . jusqu'à épuisement de synonymes. On peut tout dire, mais on ne peut pas tout entendre, tout supporter. Même si ce ne sont que des mots. C'est que derrière chacun de ces mots il y a des visages, des cris, il a des mains tendues, des corps . . . non, je ne peux pas continuer . . . Mais ces mots existent. Parce que la barbarie existe et qu'il faut bien la nommer. Il ne suffit pas d'effacer les mots pour faire disparaître ce qui est (ACS 59).

We once again witness, with this passage, Bey's use of the list; violent, cruel, monstrous events – *carnage, massacre, murder, butchery* deemed *appalling, terrible, horrible, unbearable, inhuman* – are enumerated, with the chronicle representing not only the sheer excessive atrocity of the quotidian, but also the putting into words for which Bey advocates. Though I may have begun this chapter with archival materials, as we have seen in this chapter and as I underlined in my Introduction, literature is a collection of fact and fiction that offers a plurality of perspectives that bear witness to atrocities, their internalization, and their consequence in an emotive and illuminating way. The way in which horrors are recapitulated and represented in narrative, in art,

is essential to our understanding of these traumatic events. In the final analysis, narrative, *le sang de l'écriture*, registers events and reactions to their occurrence, piecing together a memory that has become “enfouie, . . . disjointe, écartelée” (PSPC 168), galvanizing individuals to search for the truth, not simply to condemn the horrors of war but to better understand who commits them.

CHAPTER 4

THE “ANIMAL QUESTION”: GILBERT GATORE AND THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Some people think we should not be affected. They
think we are like animals . . .
— Paul Kagame, 1997, Kigali, Rwanda

Each bloodletting hastens the next as the value of
human life is degraded and violence becomes tolerated . . .
— Bill Clinton, March 25, 1998, Kigali, Rwanda¹

The year is 1994. Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin inaugurate January with the signing of the Kremlin accords, the People’s Republic of China gains permanent access to the Internet in March, and on the 21st of that same month, Schindler’s List wins 7 Oscars at the 66th Academy Awards. Other events, including South Africa holding its first multiracial elections which lead to a democratic victory for Nelson Mandela, and Nigeria becoming the first nation in Africa to have a population of more than 100 million, occur that very same year. 1994 marked the epitome of heightened tensions and violence in Algeria’s Civil War. It is also in 1994, precisely on April 6th, that Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were assassinated. The operation is believed by some to have been an act orchestrated by the RPF,² the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the reigning political party in Rwanda since 2000, led by president Paul Kagame. Following this catalyzing event, and the intensifying agitations between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority on the rise well before 1994, April 7, 1994 marked the

¹ This quote is taken from what has come to be known as the “Clinton apology,” former president Bill Clinton’s speech in Kigali acknowledging the lack of assistance offered by the US and in the fact the entire global community during the genocide. See Samantha Power’s article “Bystanders to Genocide” (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/09/bystanders-to-genocide/304571/>) for more on this.

² This is still disputed. The U.S. State Department, for instance, supports the assassination having been carried out by extremist Hutus. As Philip Gourevitch writes, “Although Habyarimana’s assassins have never been positively identified, suspicion has focused on the extremists in his entourage – notably the semiretired Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, an intimate of Madame Habyarimana, and a charter member of the *akazu* and its death squads, who said in January 1993 that he was preparing an apocalypse” (*We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. New York: Picador, 1998, 113).

beginning of the Rwandan genocide. In the span of 100 days or a little over three months in the spring of 1994, at least eight hundred thousand people – by some estimates closer to one million – were killed in Rwanda.³

Nigerian writer Femi Osofisan addresses in his play *Reel, Rwanda* (1999) the possible causes and aftermath of the Rwandan Civil War and the genocide against the Tutsi. As the character named Alain, a Belgian lawyer, affirms,

I know that we Belgians are largely responsible for the ethnic animosity that has destroyed this lonely country. Before we came here, these people, Hutus and Tutsis, had lived together for centuries. . . . They spoke the same language, had the same traditions. . . . And then in [1933] [*sic.*], for the purposes of our own colonial exploitation in order to use the Tutsis effectively as our agents we brought division here. . . . And to reinforce this division, we gave each one an identity card.⁴

Jean-Baptiste, another character, explains how “[i]f you’d stopped anywhere, and stepped into the bush, even just a couple of steps, you’d have stumbled against the mounds of human bones and decapitated heads in the long grass.”⁵ Indeed, with such horrific descriptions of bodily remnants, it is clear that the Rwandan genocide abounded with a staggering number of cruel instances. The killings were extremely bloody, frequently executed by a machete, and hence can be understood, to start with, as cruel in the etymological sense of the term.⁶

³ See <https://unictr.irmct.org/en/genocide>.

⁴ Osofisan, Femi. *Reel, Rwanda* in *Recent Outings II Two Plays*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Readers, 1999, 207-208 quoted in Ajidahun, C. O. “Femi Osofisan’s discourse on Pan-Africanism and Reconciliation in *Nkrumah-Ni . . . Africa-Ni* and *Reel, Rwanda*.” *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, No. 49 (2) (2012), 93. Also see Figures 27-31, inclusive, in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for more on some of the ways in which the Rwandan genocide and the history of Africa more broadly are memorialized in Belgium.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 202/94.

⁶ As Julianne Okot Bitek writes in *100 Days*, a compilation of 100 poems organized in reverse chronological order from “Day 100” to “Day 1” of the 100-day Rwandan genocide: “machete hangs in a museum in Ottawa/a machete hangs perpetually/in a museum/in Ottawa” (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2016, 10), referencing the machete photographed below. Okot Bitek’s moving collection offers a reflection on the representations of atrocity, the limits of witnessing, and the documentation of survivorship with a narrator who appears, as a result of his/her quotidian narration beginning with the end of the massacres, to have remained alive during the genocide.



Machete and hoe on display at the Canadian War Museum “Genocide in Rwanda/Génocide au Rwanda” exhibit, artefacts 19950076-005, 006 (personal photograph)

As I have been developing throughout this dissertation, cruel actions bring to light the opacity between the human and inhuman because their perpetrator, oscillating on the human-inhuman divide, remains human while simultaneously overstepping this categorization. In this chapter, we will continue to witness the power of cruelty to reconfigure human ontology by focusing on the Rwandan genocide and Gilbert Gatore’s portrayal of it in his novel *Le Passé devant soi* (2008). Like the senseless exodus described by Saint-Exupéry or the gratuitous torturous moments in Bey and Bachi (enacted by Seyf, for instance, in the latter’s works), the Rwandan genocide as seen in Gatore’s text too is aneconomic; that is, it is extreme violence to which the attribution of value, as the term has been understood in Chapters 1 through 3, is impossible. In other words, it embodies the breach signified by the dash between the *im-* and

possible of Derrida's "l'impossible même"⁷ of a seemingly impossible beyond, an *au-delà*, already inscribed into what it exceeds, consequently incorporating the inhuman within the human – and, as we shall see, vice versa. "Ce qui se passe . . . dépasse en horreur et en cruauté ce que peut envisager l'esprit le plus imaginatif" (LPDS 157-158), observes the narrator of *Le Passé devant soi* when evoking the genocide. In the study that is to follow, it is precisely cruelty that will once again stage the problematic of the beyond-within, of the human-inhuman. And, most notably, if the inhuman was articulated as the monstrous in my last few chapters, here it will come to be defined as both monstrosity and non-human animality.

Throughout this chapter I will analyze various examples of humans depicted as animals as well as the metamorphosis of humans into monsters through monstrous acts and the relationship between these two distinctions (monster and non-human animal). I will refer to histories of victim dehumanization, but specifically I will argue that where the Tutsi were debased and devalorized by being associated with insects, the perpetrator in *Le Passé devant soi* is strangely humanized and valorized through his association with animals, namely primates. This is a remarkable phenomenon since when atrocities are committed – markedly human acts insofar as they are organized and systematized, notes Dominick LaCapra in his *History and its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (2009) – the actions themselves are more often than not labeled as "bestial" and the perpetrator as a "beast" or an "animal." As LaCapra asserts,

when humans behave in ways that appear to be distinctively human – indeed in ways that may suggest certain differences between them and other animals of a less self-serving kind, for example, with respect to all-too-human practices of victimization, torture, or genocide – humans, in a self-serving paradox, are said to be bestial or to regress to mere animality.⁸

⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *États d'âme de la psychanalyse: l'impossible au-delà d'une souveraine cruauté*. Paris: Galilée, 2000, 89, a notion developed in Chapter 1.

⁸ LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009, 156.

In the above quote, being compared to an animal appears as a degradation from the status of human. We, on the contrary, by the end of this chapter will come to recognize “animalization” as a kind of valorization of the perpetrator Niko in *Le Passé devant soi*.

As I see it, then, there is in fact a series of ontologies that comes into play in the case of Niko in Gatore’s text: human, animal, monster. It will therefore be a question of understanding which category, or rather imbricated categories, Niko fits into and why: at times he is seen as a monster in line with Aristotle’s thinking and the tradition of interpreting the category of the monstrous as a lack or overabundance of human attributes; at others, he is seen as an animal; at still others he appears *almost* human. To understand these differences, I will proceed by analyzing the permeable states inhabited by Niko before the genocide, during the genocide, and after the genocide, and show how his ontological porosity problematizes the very idea of the border between human and inhuman, whether the inhuman be animal or monster. There is thus a paradox at play in *Le Passé devant soi*: the text dehumanizes Niko by comparing him to an animal and a monster, generally erasing his human attributes, but it also renders him human through animalization. This incongruity is undeniably linked to the very irregularity of the genocide itself which I will be examining here in light of the previous chapters’ focus on cruelty emerging out of shifts into new frames and forms of war.

Irregular War

As Achille Mbembe writes, “À peu près partout, le champ traditionnel des antagonismes a donc éclaté. À l’intérieur des frontières nationales, l’on a assisté au développement de nouvelles formes de regroupement et de lutte.”⁹ As discussed in my Introduction, the Rwandan

⁹ Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l’inimitié*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016, 79.

Civil War and genocide are prime examples of irregular warfare, a *nouvelle forme de regroupement et de lutte* overflowing any conception of traditional battle or classically-defined war in ways similar – through guerrilla warfare, rogue extremists, and rebel fighters – to the revolutionary war of independence and civil war in Algeria discussed in Chapter 3. Notably, 1962 marked the year that Algeria, Uganda, the Kingdom of Burundi, and Rwanda gained independence from their French, British, and Belgian colonizers, respectively, after multi-year violent resistance movements against colonialism. Indeed, the 60s in Africa in general were a time of upheaval: 34 colonies became independent nations – many through uprisings, revolutions, and wars. Most of these same countries, however, were plagued again by conflict, internal this time, twenty to thirty years later.¹⁰ In order to capture the “rule-breaking” nature, and also tragic breadth, of the Rwanda genocide, it is perhaps best to start with the world’s disinterest in Rwanda when the killings began – and continued to unfold.

The “irregularity” of what was occurring in Rwanda in April 1994 was for long left unaddressed by the peace-keeping United Nations; indeed the Rwanda genocide is largely considered the UN’s most failed humanitarian mission. Roméo Dallaire, a Canadian Lieutenant General who served as Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), states the following in his memoir of the genocide, the cause of his publicly known post-traumatic stress disorder:

My story is not a strictly military account nor a clinical, academic study of the breakdown of Rwanda. It is not a simplistic indictment of the many failures of the UN as a force for peace in the world. It is not a story of heroes and villains, although such a work could easily be written. This book is a *cri de cœur* for the slaughtered thousands, a tribute to the souls hacked apart by machetes because of their supposed difference from those who sought to hang on to power. It is

¹⁰ The Ugandan Bush War, a guerilla war, lasted from 1981 to 1986. The Rwanda Civil War occurred in two phases: 1990 to 1993, and April 7, 1994 to July 18, 1994. The Algerian Civil War raged from 1991 to 2002. The Burundian Civil War began in 1993 and ended in 2005.

the story of a commander who, faced with a challenge that didn't fit the classic Cold War-era peacekeeper's rule book, failed to find an effective solution and witnessed, as if in punishment, the loss of some of his own troops, the attempted annihilation of an ethnicity, the butchery of children barely out of the womb, the stacking of severed limbs like cordwood, the mounds of decomposing bodies being eaten by the sun.¹¹

Slaughter, hack, annihilate, butcher, sever: these verbs, belonging to a vocabulary that is far from describing a noble gladiatorial struggle, allow us to visualize the atrocity of the murders as witnessed by the Lieutenant General. Dallaire and his contingent were initially in Rwanda in 1993 following the signing of the Arusha Accords on August 4th of the same year, a peace agreement intended to bring to an end the civil war between the Hutu-led government at the time, Habyarimana's regime, and the RPF. The UNAMIR was meant to ensure that the conditions of the accords were being met while continuing to maintain peace and security in the area. When Habyarimana's assassination occurred, acting as the last impetus for the genocide, the UNAMIR was present in the area, and yet given its peacekeeping mission in a more diplomatic capacity, the UN forces were unable to use military force to assist in keeping the Tutsi safe. As Article 33 of Chapter IV, "Pacific Settlements of Disputes," of the Charter of the United Nations states:

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.¹²

Dallaire was additionally aware of, and informed the UN of, weapons distributed from covert international sources to the Hutu militia and yet was told that it was not in his capacity as an

¹¹ Dallaire, Roméo, and Brent Beardsley. *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2005, 6-7.

¹² <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vi/index.html>.

arbitrator to do anything about it,¹³ making the UN Force Commander and his delegation unable to bring relief to the situation. Finally, the UNAMIR's contingent was very small, equally pointing to the international community's disinterest in sending additional troops to the area and dismissal, even denial, of the emergency.

This UN mission was thus unsuccessful not only within the context of the genocide – little actual aid was brought to Tutsi victims and, instead, the UNAMIR was a passive observer of the massacre – but equally within the greater context of the United Nations, which was specifically born of the horrors of a genocide, the Holocaust, with the words “never again” reverberating loudly as the organization was inaugurated. The UN was established in 1945 following the events of World War II¹⁴ and its goal has become synonymous with the maintenance of international peace and security.¹⁵ And yet, in the last 25 years alone – from the

¹³ Tim Gallimore, former spokesperson for the ICTR, explains: “On Jan. 10, 1994, a militia commander and former member of the President’s security guard, code-named ‘Jean-Pierre,’ gave UN peacekeepers details of the planned genocide. The informant told UN Colonel Luc Marchal that each of the militia units he controlled had the ability to kill 1,000 people every 20 minutes, and that he was overseeing the provision of weapons and training for militia recruits. General Romeo Dallaire, Commander of the UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda, faxed General Maurice Baril in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) at UN headquarters in New York and advised him of the weapons distribution and extermination plan that ‘Jean-Pierre’ provided. On Jan. 12, 1994, Dallaire got a fax signed by Kofi Annan, Head of DPKO, advising Dallaire not to seize the weapons that were stockpiled by the militia because it was not in the mandate of UN peacekeepers to do so” (Gallimore, Tim. “A Closer Look at Where Rwanda’s Lethal Weapons Came From.” *Huffington Post*, 11 Apr. 2014. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-gallimore/a-closer-look-at-where-rwanda-b-5135559.html>).

¹⁴ A variation of the following sentences is repeated throughout the UN’s website: “One of the purposes of the United Nations, as stated in its Charter, is ‘to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.’ The UN first did this in the aftermath of the Second World War on the devastated continent of Europe, which it helped to rebuild” (<http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/deliver-humanitarian-aid/index.html>).

¹⁵ This has various courses of action overseen by numerous bodies, both charter-based, that is, born of the UN Charter and confined to internal UN committees, and treaty-based – in other words, delegated to independent bodies that oversee that UN-State treaties are respected and maintained. The UN commits to monitoring the respect of international law, as well as promoting sustainable development, delivering humanitarian aid, and protecting human rights. This latter category is governed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), whose mission statement focuses on the empowerment of individuals through the protection of their rights, and whose implementation is subdivided into many groups – from the Human Rights Council, a UN intergovernmental body comprised of 47 States created in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights on its 60th anniversary, to the Human Rights Committee, an independent organization that monitors the implementation and maintenance of human rights treaties. For a complete list of these bodies and organizations, see “Human Rights Bodies” at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>. The OHCHR’s mission statement reads as follows: “The mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Rwandan genocide to Srebrenica to the sex and rape scandals in the Congo, to name just three examples – there have been gross failures on the UN’s behalf. It is not within the scope of this project to analyze specifically why these humanitarian missions were unfulfilled, what could have been additionally done or done differently to prevent the massacres in Rwanda, what is problematic in the UN humanitarian endeavor overall, and what ideological determinations contribute to its motives, successes, and failures.¹⁶ Perhaps what these failed missions underline best, however, in addition to the difficulties of providing humanitarian aid while respecting the laws of participating international States, is the irregular nature of their respective conflicts as noted above. How does one follow the rules dictated by an organization like the UN and bring aid to a war zone that does not follow the rules of war? Moreover, due to the immensely complex nature of such conflicts, humanitarian aid, social programs, and judicial proceedings are not the sole hardships nations and their people encounter after an apocalyptic occurrence such as a genocide – communicating the event by writing about it, for instance, also presents tremendous difficulties. Echoing Paul C  lan and Theodor Adorno after the Shoah, Abdourahman Waberi’s *Moisson de cr  nes* (2000) calls into question the act of writing – and its very possibility – after the Rwandan genocide.¹⁷ Indeed, there is comparatively little fiction on the topic of this genocide, with a number of the works that do tackle the subject having been written during the

is to work for the protection of all human rights for all people; to help empower people to realize their rights; and to assist those responsible for upholding such rights in ensuring that they are implemented”

(<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/MissionStatement.aspx>). See the UN’s “What We Do” page on its website for further details concerning each of its goals: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/index.html>.

¹⁶ As G  raud de Geouffre de la Pradelle argues, “en cons  quence du caract  re successif, s  lectif et dispers   des r  actions l  gislatives nationales et internationales, on ne peut pas se fier    une d  finition juridique uniforme du ‘crime contre l’humanit  ’ qui serait valable pour tout l’humanit  , donc dans le monde entier” (“Le sort des harkis et la notion juridique de ‘crime contre l’humanit  .’” *Les Temps Modernes*. 2001/5, n. 666, 240).

¹⁷ As Waberi states, “La question de Paul Celan, po  te roumain de langue allemande, surgie fatalement apr  s la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ‘Comment   crire apr  s Auschwitz?’,   tait toujours l  , nich  e dans le tr  fonds de mon inconscient, du moins je le pr  sume” (Waberi, Abdourahman. *Moisson de cr  nes: textes pour le Rwanda*. Paris: Groupe Privat/Le Rocher, 2004, 14). Adorno is known for having affirmed that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (Adorno, Theodor W. “Cultural Criticism and Society.” *Prisms*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983, 34).

1998 “Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire” project organized by the Fest’Africa festival.¹⁸

And yet, as Josias Semujanga states in *Le génocide, sujet de fiction?* (2008), on the one hand evoking a line of thought similar to Waberi’s, but on the other contradicting it, “le génocide n’a pas cessé de défier les mots, les pensées, les images, sans jamais les abolir.”¹⁹ The works that do exist on the topic of the Rwandan genocide, by their very existence, confront the presumed failure of words in the face of ethnic annihilation. Gatore’s novel is one such example.

Why *Le Passé devant soi*?

Le Passé devant soi is a fragmented text that comes and goes between two plots: one tells the story of Isaro, a young orphaned woman who lives in present-day France with her well-off adopted family, whose members she reproaches, however, for not having told her about her kin or her origins; the other is the story of Niko, a creaturely man haunted by the horrors of his actions who lives in a cave with a group of monkeys of which he is considered one.²⁰ It is as much a text about trauma, mourning, reconciliation, the complexity of memory and the refusal to remember²¹ as it is about how to tell the story of genocide – and the ethical and moral

¹⁸ See note 37 in my Introduction for more on this project. Rwandan fiction on the topic of the genocide created outside of the “Écrire par devoir de mémoire” project does exist to a degree, including Aimable Twagilimana’s *Manifold Annihilation* (1996), Benjamin Sehene’s *Le feu sous la soutane* (2005), Scholastique Mukasonga’s *Inyenzi ou les cafards* (2006), and Aimé Yann Mbabazi’s *Sheridan* (2007), to name but a few texts. Bernard De Meyer additionally highlights three nonfictional testimonies of consequence: Yolande Mukagasana’s *La Mort ne veut pas de moi* (1997), Esther Mujawayo and Souâd Belhaddad’s *Survivantes* (2004), and Pauline Kayitare’s *Tu leurs diras que tu es hutue* (2011). See De Meyer, Bernard. “*Le Passé devant soi* de Gilbert Gatore: du génocide à la littérature.” *French Studies in Southern Africa*, no. 47, 2017, 38 for more.

¹⁹ Semujanga, Josias. *Le génocide, sujet de fiction? analyse des récits du massacre des Tutsi dans la littérature africaine*. Montreal: Éditions Nota Bene, 2008, 22-23.

²⁰ The text is broken up into numbered fragments (Niko’s story) and interspersed with Isaro’s more fluid narrative. There is logic and fastidious precision to the double chronicles in conversation with each other, building off one another, picking up where each one leaves off, precise and exact in their numbering, from chapter to paragraph.

²¹ Kizito, Isaro’s companion in Rwanda, recounts to her a fairytale and she immediately wants to discover “ce que ce conte refusait de lui rappeler” (LPDS 109). In present-day Rwanda, the question of remembering, commemorating, and memorializing is of imperative importance. April 7th marks the annual commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda, a day also recognized by the UN with events taking place at their New York headquarters and beyond (see <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/commemoration/annualcommemoration.shtml> for a list of the events organized by the UN). Leading up to April 7th, there are speeches, theater performances, vigils, and other acts of

implications such a task entails. Isaro applies for a grant from the French government and when her project entitled “En mémoire de . . .”²² is rejected, she sets off for her native land regardless. Her goal is to transcribe memory by collecting testimony from survivors in an effort to “vivre avec, au lieu de vivre contre” (LPDS 212) the genocide. As she summarizes, the writing project is a way for her and the people she wishes to interview to “déposer le fardeau qu’ils portent, de permettre au pays d’avoir en commun ce récit et, qui sait, d’y dissoudre la haine que l’expérience individuelle a produite” (LPDS 89).²³ And yet, we discover at the very end of the novel that what she ends up writing is a work of fiction about a character named Niko: the numbered fragments that have been interrupting Isaro’s narrative in the novel are in fact Niko’s story written by her.²⁴ *Le Passé devant soi* for this reason, among others, has stirred controversy, with scholars such as Elizabeth Applegate, Catherine Coquio, Nicki Hitchcott, Madelaine Hron, and Charlotte Lacoste underlining the perversity of a narrative that appears to validate the experience of a perpetrator more than that of the victim.²⁵ As Hitchcott underscores, “what is striking about this novel is that

remembrance organized throughout Rwanda known as Kwibuka (the Kinyarwanda term for “remember”): remember – unite – renew. See additional information at <http://kwibuka.rw/>.

²² Her project brings to mind elements – such as the relationship between fact and memory, and the desire to know the truth about one’s parents – of Mukasonga’s novel *Inyenzi ou les cafards*, the story of the autobiographical narrator’s search for her parents after their disappearance during the genocide. For Isaro, bearing witness to atrocious events diminishes the harboring of resentment; that is, registering memory may lead to reconciliation, and recovery from trauma.

²³ This project is equally a way for Isaro to reconnect with her roots and her history, since her adoptive parents have only ever referred to her past as “inutilement encombrant” (LPDS 180).

²⁴ “Il est pourtant le fruit de son imagination et elle s’est donné une immense peine pour le faire vivre” (LPDS 215).

²⁵ Discussions of the controversy are extensive. As Applegate writes: “although the novel has been recognized for its literary merits, some critics have been troubled by the way *Le passé devant soi* represents the genocide and its aftermath. It is rare for a novel about genocide to explore a killer’s feelings of guilt in such detail, and critics have been shocked by the comparison of the killer’s and victim’s experiences. Furthermore, some have found fault with what they consider to be the inaccurate portrayal of postgenocide Rwanda. Madelaine Hron criticizes the fact that the novel contains few references to traditional Rwandan culture, and finds it ‘unnerving that, while [the character] Isaro transcribes survivor’s testimonies all day, she ultimately composes a killer’s chronicle’ (Hron 172). Charlotte Lacoste goes further, excoriating the representations of killer and victim as dangerously inaccurate and misleading. How, she asks, can the novel ask us to have sympathy for a killer when so many real victims are still suffering and dying today? Lacoste objects to the fact that Niko starves to death while Isaro becomes plump and has to buy new clothes. . . . In a March 2009 conference, Catherine Coquio also criticized the text for not accurately representing the reality of the victim’s experience” (Applegate, Elizabeth. “Reimagining the Swallow and the Toad: Narrating Identity and Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda.” *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2012, 76). As

both survivor and perpetrator of genocide are presented as victims of trauma.”²⁶ Furthermore, as ambiguous as it may be, any empathy we may feel for the perpetrator Niko has supposedly been placed there by the victim Isaro, since Niko is, after all, her creation. I will turn to a more structural analysis of *Le Passé devant soi* at the end of this chapter to highlight precisely these tensions and consider what the form of the novel does to our understanding of the genocide.

Indeed, the *Le Passé devant soi* is a troubling and rich novel for several reasons. In addition to its contentious perpetrator-survivor perspectives reinforced by its formal hybridity, the Rwandan genocide is not named directly or described at length in Isaro’s narrative or the novel overall, and is as a result never fully acknowledged. Although there are various hints about it, such as references to bloody massacres occurring within a short span of time,²⁷ the word “genocide” – or “Rwanda” for that matter – is never used; the terms “événements” (LPDS 81), “drame” (LPDS 182), “une époque innommable” (LPDS 200), and “un des événements les plus marquants du vingtième siècle” (LPDS 81-82) are resorted to instead. This recalls the use of the more euphemistic *itsembatsemba* – “to slaughter and slaughter again” – during the genocide, rather than the word formulated after 1994, *itsembabwoko*, specifically defined as “killing” “an

Hitchcott summarizes, “For Catherine Coquio, *Le Passé devant soi* fails as a genocide novel because it generates empathy for a killer, an empathy that she claims is neither possible nor true (258). Charlotte Lacoste goes further, accusing Gatore of using fiction as literary revisionism. For Lacoste, Gatore’s attempts to present his fictional perpetrator as a victim bears comparison with the global media’s decision to focus, at the end of the genocide, on stories of the appalling living conditions of the Hutu refugees from Rwanda that were living in Zaire, stories that, as Lacoste rightly points out, did help strengthen the revisionist theory of a ‘double genocide’” (Hitchcott, Nicki. “Between Remembering and Forgetting: (In)Visible Rwanda in Gilbert Gatore’s *Le Passé devant soi*.” *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2013, 86). Hitchcott revisits these contentious elements in her article “Intimate Enemies. Representations of Perpetrators in Literary Responses to the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.” (*Perpetrating Selves: Doing Violence, Performing Identity*. Edited by Claire Bielby and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 163). Bernard De Meyer too mentions that “Catherine Coquio, pour prendre un exemple, s’est insurgée contre le fait que le roman offre un [*sic*] capitale sympathie à un génocidaire” (De Meyer, Bernard. “*Le Passé devant soi* de Gilbert Gatore: du génocide à la littérature,” *op. cit.*, 49).

²⁶ Hitchcott, Nicki. “Between Remembering and Forgetting: (In)Visible Rwanda in Gilbert Gatore’s *Le Passé devant soi*,” *op. cit.*, 83.

²⁷ See Chapter 9, especially, of *Le Passé devant soi* for descriptions of the massacres.

ethnic group.”²⁸ The absence of squarely addressing *itsembabwoko* in *Le Passé devant soi* is noticeable to the point of indicating its presence. For instance, the narrator suspiciously uses the word “trou” when describing Isaro’s losses after the genocide – “le trou laissé en elle par la perte des siens, de ses amis et de son pays” (LPDS 65) – which results in emphasizing not only the aporia caused by the genocide but additionally the very hole in the narrative vis-à-vis naming what has happened. Moreover, as a result of having a large pot fall on his head in the middle of the novel, Niko is in fact unconscious at the start of the genocide, creating yet another lacuna with respect to the massacres and their designation. Notably, while he is comatose, he dreams of killing his father and has visions of gods speaking of the murders that are to come, underscoring a clear cruelty: “Les pauvres, la moitié va finir coupée comme du bétail . . . il va couler du sang en quantité inouïe” (LPDS 136).

Echoing the words of Jean-Baptiste in *Reel, Rwanda*, the quote above underlines the bloody cruelty (*cruor*) in *Le Passé devant soi*. Indeed both Isaro’s and Niko’s stories too are clearly imbued with cruelty and throughout Gatore’s novel there is language that alludes to “classical” cruelty through references to veins (LPDS 13), blood (LPDS 13, 18, 53, 55, 67, 86, 136, 154, 167, 169, 173, 186, 191), flesh (LPDS 67), and other sanguinary mentions, such as “La jeune fille pleurait alors des larmes de sang” (LPDS 98), all of which amounts to a crimson air that pervades the book. Blood is imprinted into this text and the massacres it describes: “Les

²⁸ Madelaine Hron explains: “*itsembabwoko* is a neologism coined after 1994 to refer to the genocide; it is a compound word, meaning ‘killing’ ‘an ethnic group.’ During the genocide, however, the massacres were simply termed *itsembatsemba* – ‘to slaughter, and slaughter again’” (*Gukora and Itsebatsemba: The “Ordinary Killers” in Jean Hatzfeld’s Machete Season. Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 42, No. 2, *Achebe’s World: African Literature at Fifty* (Summer 2011), 137). Olivier Barlet provides a history of the term *itsembabwoko* as follows: “The Kinyarwanda word *itsembabwoko* did not exist before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The Rwandan government and survivor groups invented it to describe the genocide. *Itsema* means ‘to decimate,’ and *bwoko* is the term for the Rwandans’ social identity before they were divided into ethnic groups; it can designate one’s regional belonging, profession, or clan” (“Representing the *Itsembabwoko*.” *Black Camera*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2012, 234).

traces de sang ne seraient-elles donc pas indélébiles, comme l'affirme le proverbe?" (LPDS 161)

The descriptions of the gory ways in which the (non-explicit) Tutsi are killed abound: "coupées en morceaux, enterrées à moitié puis lapidées, suspendues la tête en bas et de bien d'autres façons encore" (LPDS 158). Indeed, the presence of cruelty is undeniable in this text and functions as a starting point from which to discuss the ontology of yet another perpetrator in this dissertation – Niko – and his various states of being.

Cruelty (and Beyond)

The grisly examples from *Le Passé devant soi* bring to mind the interviews conducted by Jean Hatzfeld in 2000 with the imprisoned perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide from the regions of Kibungo, Ntarama, and Kanzenze, which three years later were compiled into a book entitled *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*.²⁹ The killers chronicle an array of experiences – from how the genocide was organized and how they internalized their actions to what they felt post-genocide – and recount in detail the gruesome deaths originating at their hands:

At one point I saw a gush of blood begin before my eyes, soaking the skin and clothes of the person about to fall,³⁰

I had killed chickens but never an animal the stoutness of a man, like a goat or a cow;³¹

Killing with a gun is a game compared to the machete, it's not so close-up,³²

²⁹ This happens to be the title of the work in the UK. In the US the same translation, by Linda Coverdale, is published under the title *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*. Hatzfeld has written several books on the Rwandan genocide including fiction (*Englebert des collines*, 2014, for instance); in terms of nonfiction, he has published a volume on the genocide told from the perspective of survivors (*Dans le nu de la vie*, 2000, translated by Gerry Feehily as *Into the Quick of Life: The Rwandan Genocide – The Survivors Speak* in 2008), as well as *La Stratégie des antilopes* (2007, translated into several languages including English, by Linda Coverdale, under the title *The Strategy of Antelopes: Rwanda After the Genocide* in 2011), which undertakes a look at communities in which Hutus and Tutsis live side by side.

³⁰ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*. Translated by Linda Coverdale. London: Serpent's Tail, 2008, 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² *Ibid.*, 21.

[M]ost people did not want to involve the children directly in these bloody doings, except for watching, of course.³³

In addition to these descriptions of excessive bloodshed, Alphonse, one of the killers, states:

Me, I was not scared of death. In a way, I forgot I was killing live people. I no longer thought about either life or death. But the blood struck terror in me. It stank and dripped. . . . Death did not alarm me, but that overflow of blood, that – yes, a lot.³⁴

This vocabulary, overflowing with blood, is telling of the ways in which the Tutsi were killed and tortured during the genocide. These methods, or, fittingly, “techniques of cruelty,”³⁵ as Christopher Taylor, borrowing fellow anthropologist Liisa Malkki’s terminology, calls them, carry heavy symbolic meaning: “The torturers not only killed their victims; they transformed their bodies into powerful signs that resonated with a Rwandan habitus even as they improvised upon it and enlarged the original semantic domain of associated meanings to depict an entire ethnic group as enemies of the Hutu state.”³⁶ Malkki first uses the term “cruelty” in reference to the Hutus killed by Tutsis in Burundi in 1972: “The first thing to be examined is the extent to which the techniques of cruelty actually used were already meaningful, already mythicohistorical.”³⁷ Taylor supports the idea that these same techniques were used on the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994, explaining:

Many of the same forms of violence, the same techniques of cruelty, were encountered in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide: impalement, evisceration of pregnant women, forced incest, forced cannibalism of family members. There were also other forms of torture and terror in Rwanda that may or may not have occurred in Burundi: the widespread killing of victims at roadblocks erected on highways, roads, streets, or even on small footpaths; the severing of

³³ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Taylor, Christopher. “The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994.” *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*. Edited by Alexander Laban Hinton. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002, 168.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Malkki, Liisa. *Purity and Exile*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 94, quoted in “The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994,” *op. cit.*, 141.

Achilles tendons of human and cattle victims; emasculation of men; and breasts oblation of women.³⁸

These examples, according to Taylor, bring to mind the ways in which criminals were killed in the past in Rwanda – cattle thieves, for instance, were impaled from anus to head on a pole left standing for days to serve an exemplary function³⁹ – and are symbolic of bodily flow and blockage as theorized in traditional Rwandan healing practices: illness manifests when the body's fluids are not flowing properly, that is, are blocked.⁴⁰ He suggests that cruelty and torture methods are culturally based, and that the practices used during the genocide – cutting tendons, limbs, impalement – were geared toward obstructing flow. Indeed, the Tutsi, and even their cows, had their feet and legs mutilated and cut with machetes to reduce mobility.⁴¹ Not only was this procedure practical in the sense that it hindered Tutsis from running away, it was equally a symbolic representation of obstruction and blockage – the cut individuals were unable to move and their life fluid, blood, was no longer flowing in their bodies. Tutsis also had their genitals or breasts cut off, again symbolic of fluid (milk or semen) restriction in the same way and restriction of reproduction, thus life, more generally. In these respects, the killings were certainly cruel – not only in regard to the etymological definition of cruelty, but equally vis-à-vis the idea

³⁸ Taylor, Christopher. “The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994,” *op. cit.*, 141.

³⁹ “In precolonial and early colonial times, Rwandans impaled cattle thieves. The executioners inserted a wooden stake into the thief's anus and then pushed it through the body, causing it to exit at the neck or the mouth. The pole and its agonizing charge was then erected, stuck in the earth, and left standing for several days” (*ibid.*, 166).

⁴⁰ As Taylor explains, “During my fieldwork in Rwanda in the 1980s, I found that illnesses were often characterized by perceived irregularities in fluid flows, and that these tended to have an alimentary or reproductive symptomatic focus” (*ibid.*, 147).

⁴¹ Taylor explains how “[t]hese forms betrayed a preoccupation with the movement of persons and substances and with the canals, arteries, and conduits along which persons and substances flow: rivers, roadways, pathways, and even the conduits of the human body, such as the reproductive and digestive systems” (*ibid.*, 158). He goes so far as to say that the analogy of obstruction was not only seen in the execution methods used by the Hutu, but additionally by the roadblocks that were setup all across the country to impede the Tutsi from escaping: “[t]his technique of cruelty has a certain logic to it where human beings are concerned. . . . The persecutor “blocks the path” of human beings and impedes the movement of the material/symbolic capital necessary to the social reproduction of human beings – cattle. Even when it is apparently unnecessary to arrest the movement of the already immobile, the assertion of the capacity to obstruct is nonetheless the claim and assertion of power” (164).

of value: if understood in the capacity of having symbolic importance, these acts can be seen as cruel – thus appropriately labelled “techniques of cruelty” – precisely because of the symbolic value attributed to them. The bodies of Tutsis were charged with value because their corpses were mangled in a particular way for a reason, consequently acting as physical representations of power domination by the Hutu.

And yet, these slaughters – techniques in severely debasing a group of individuals to animal status when they were treated like their cows, for instance, or to something far less recognizably human or even animalistic, an entirely monstrous state produced by extreme mutilation – evokes a kind of violence *qui dépasse en horreur et en cruauté* the symbolic acts explained by Taylor. Consider, for instance, the testimonies found in the United Nations’ Commission on Human Rights publication of the “Report of the mission to Rwanda on the issues of violence against women in situations of armed conflict” that was presented to the UN Economic and Social Council on February 4, 1998, their 54th session. The report, concentrated on women victims of violence in Rwanda, is subdivided into nine categories – from punishment or impunity for perpetrators to the treatment of women in prisons; from the psychological state of women affected by violence to the presence and efficacy of UN agencies and NGOs in the East African nation. Presenting six case studies of women – Bernadette, Monique, Denise, Jeanne, Donatilla, and Marceline – treated horrifically during the Rwandan genocide, it illustrates, in detail, atrocious acts. I mention an abridged version of these here:

When the genocide began, Monique ran into the forest with her six-year-old daughter. The Interahamwe [far-right Hutu paramilitary group] found them and raped her and the child repeatedly. Monique was six months pregnant. The baby that was born from the pregnancy was abnormal. Her six-year-old daughter was badly affected by the rape and Monique’s uterus was damaged and she has developed diabetes. Her husband is dead and she has very little ability to take care of both children. Monique went to testify in Arusha against the perpetrators of the genocide but when she returned, she found that people

had left stones and pepper under her door with a note, “You are also a killer, because you accuse others.” She was since chased out of her rented house. . . . [The Interahamwe] beat [Denise] badly, a machete gashed her arm and she was injured by grenade fragments. . . . [After a month in the forest,] maggots had infested her wound and she had no choice but to remove her own arm by pulling it off, without any anaesthetic or medical care. When the RPF found her in the forest, the stump on her arm was still covered with maggots and lice. She was taken to the Red Cross hospital and has since had to undergo three operations to shorten her arm further to stop the gangrene from spreading. . . . Jeanne survived the genocide, but now has AIDS. The lesions have begun developing and she is wracked with pain. . . . When the genocide began, a journalist named Ruyenzi came to Donatilla’s house with a group of men to rape her. Two of the men kept her legs apart while the journalist, using rusty scissors, cut her genitalia. Her clitoris was cut and her labia were mutilated. . . . Marceline and the other women were made to dig graves to bury the men. The Interahamwe also took their children and threw them into the pit, asking their mothers to bury them alive. “I will never forget the sight of my son pleading with me not to bury them alive. He kept trying to come out and was beaten back. And we had to keep covering the pit with earth until they were suffocated and no movement was left.”⁴²

Though here too genital mutilations are mentioned, one can notice how they are not explained as holding particular symbolic importance, and how emphasis is rather put on the abnormal, on damage, on mutilation so severe that the body finds itself unrecognizably human, instead prosthesised by maggots and lice. Though Taylor’s analysis does indeed offer another dimension to understanding the cruel methods of elimination used during the genocide that productively complements my theorization of cruelty as a value-based act, it does not account for aneconomic, gratuitous violence, notably deemed *monstrous* in my previous chapters – a word that can easily be ascribed to the violence denounced in the testimonies of Bernadette, Monique, Denise, Jeanne, Donatilla, and Marceline. Strikingly, the monstrous nature of the Rwandan genocide as aporetic violence is captured in the language used by the perpetrators themselves.

⁴² “Report of the mission to Rwanda on the issues of violence against women in situations of armed conflict,” *Rwandan Subject Collection*, Box 1 Rwanda, 8-10, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University. See Figures 32-35, inclusive, in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for a copy of the original document.

Notice how one of the imprisoned killers interviewed by Hatzfeld, Pancrace, describes torture: “Torture was a supplementary activity, resulting from an individual decision or a small meeting. It was just a distraction, like a recreational break in a long work day. The orders were simply to kill.”⁴³ Torture, here, is certainly gratuitous, a horrific form of distraction, a recreational activity not used to attain any particular goal. It is violence so senseless that it becomes aneconomic insofar as not having value to recuperate or commodify. I will shortly return to various forms of violence and their depictions, specifically in Gatore’s novel. Having now seen bloody cruelty, animality, and monstrosity overlap on a few occasions, however, let us for the time being more closely consider these categories.

Theories of Monsters, Animals, and the In-Between

Monsters, animals, and the in-between, then: how and in what capacity do these states relate to the category of the human? As LaCapra explains, focusing on humans and animals, there seems to be a desire to find a “decisive criterion”⁴⁴ that can be used to differentiate humans from non-human animals. But LaCapra, like Derrida before him in *L’animal que donc je suis* (1997), maintains that the human/non-human animal divide is not binary,⁴⁵ that it is filled with complexities, and that a bipartite distinction is potentially even dangerous, “self-serving, anthropocentric, oppressive, or exploitative.”⁴⁶ Moreover, such a distinction is questionable as soon as it is raised as it relies on “an excessively homogenous category of the animal,”⁴⁷ the actual heterogeneity of which Derrida tries to address with the neologism “*animot*” as explained in Chapter 1. A single, *decisive criterion* is thus out of the question, a fact Giorgio Agamben,

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁴ LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, *op. cit.*, 149.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 150, 154, 155.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

referencing the inhuman more generally, and specifically against the backdrop of atrocity, also highlights. As he writes in *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002), referencing the Shoah and underlining this inability to identify outright the difference between the human and inhuman:

“[p]erhaps concentration and extermination camps are also an experiment of this sort, an extreme and monstrous attempt to decide between the human and the inhuman, which has ended up dragging the very possibility of the distinction to its ruin.”⁴⁸ The divide itself between the human and other becomes all the more opaque in situations of atrocity; the border between the human and inhuman is blurred and becomes indiscernible. But I would like to push this observation further still: if the border between human and inhuman is undetermined, by the same token, are the presumed categories on either side of the boundary not respectively contaminated also? In other words, is a distinction between human and inhuman difficult – impossible – to identify precisely because the inhuman is incorporated into the human?

By extension, paralleling this line of thought while echoing Agamben’s use of the word “monstrous,” we may ask: is the monster human? Such was the question raised starting in the Middle Ages, in particular for legal and religious purposes. Wives could claim parts of estates if they had given birth to baptized children (entirely inhuman beings could not be baptized), and therefore questions of humanness and monstrosity were debated in courts of law. As Marie-Hélène Huet writes, “It seems . . . that unless the progeny was so severely deformed that it bore no resemblance at all to a human being, the monster was generally baptized.”⁴⁹ The legal

⁴⁸ Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003, 22. I would like to underline that I am not simply trying to apply the Eurocentric narratives born of the Holocaust and Holocaust studies to Rwanda – a general concern, as supported by Semujanga, that I underlined in my Introduction – but instead using them as a starting point from which to build and diverge, as well as converse with, in my study of the genocide against the Tutsi.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 277n24. See also Jacques Roger’s *Les sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIII^e siècle. La génération des animaux de Descartes à l’Encyclopédie* (1963), which explores this very question in the 17th and 18th centuries.

dimension of Huet's observation gestures to my analysis of Foucault in Chapter 2 where I underscored the limitations of Saint-Exupéry's humanism precisely for the reason that it does not account for the monstrous as human. As we recall, Foucault identifies three groups of "abnormal individuals," one of which is explicitly the "human monster." As he writes, juxtaposing "human" to "monster": "What makes a human monster a monster is not only that it is an exception to the form of the species but also that it introduces disorder into the legal system (whether it is a question of marriage laws, canons of baptism, or laws of inheritance)."⁵⁰ Whether a monster is human is also the question that Mary Shelley's Monster in *Frankenstein* (1823) highlights, since the Monster is stitched together of human parts but is in fact dubbed a "monster." As Huet underlines, "monsters blur the differences between genres and disrupt the strict order of Nature,"⁵¹ a blurring that is epitomized by Victor Frankenstein's creation. In the final analysis, in all of these examples, the monstrous finds itself in relation to the human as a projection outside the norms of what is human. By interrogating whether a monster is human, whatever the answer to that question may be, we already presume the monstrous to be beyond the human, all the while intimately relating it to the human.

We can understand the monster to be inhuman, or rather in-human, in much the same way as the animal, then, that is, always in reference to and outside of the norms that define the human. As LaCapra writes,

A question concerning humanism is whether it has always required a radical other, perhaps even a quasi-sacrificial victim and scapegoat, in the form of some excluded or denigrated category of beings, often other animals or animality itself. As categories of humans (such as women or nonwhite "races") have been critically disclosed as the other of humanism, however universalistic

⁵⁰ Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador, 2003, 324.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

in its pretensions, the other-than-human animal in its animality has been left as the residual repository of projective alienation or radical otherness.⁵²

The historical practice of defining the human by separating this category from “lesser” categories such as the one grouping together all animals, or by contrasting the category of the human from a *radical other*, is certainly a shortcoming of humanism. What LaCapra’s passage also raises, however, is once again the idea that human-inhuman (whether animal or monster) differences are systematically based on parallelization and projections. Such comparative strategies too are used in the wake of mass atrocities: discourses of dehumanizing distinctions based on differences are frequently employed. As a result, on the one hand, hierarchies are established based on animals and insects being of lesser importance than the human. Monsters, on the other hand, with their horrific and unnatural other-than-humanness, seem comfortingly not human. And yet, to return to Agamben and my first citation of LaCapra, the process of identifying a single criterion to distinguish human from inhuman is impossible. And as we have understood thus far in this dissertation and will continue to observe here, by attempting to excise the inhuman – be it animal or monster – from the human, we only see the inhuman more starkly reflect back on the human and intersect with this very category. In the case of a perpetrator, such a categorical destabilization means conceding that we are more inhuman than we might like to think. On the contrary, acknowledging the humanity of the inhuman can be a way for victims to recuperate their human status. Our preoccupation with the in-human should thus not concern whether there is a decisive criterion to decide between human and inhuman, monster and human, or human and animal, but to better understand what inhuman discourses do to the ontologies of the beings they are describing.

⁵² LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, op. cit., 152.

Dehumanizing Discourses

Inhuman language can be applied on both the side of the victim and the side of the perpetrator, and though my interest lies predominately in the latter, here I would like to fully acknowledge the former. Dehumanizing victim discourses have a chronicled, attested significance and can shed light on the different kinds of violence enacted against groups of people as we will see shortly. In the words of Élie, one of the killers interviewed by Hatzfeld, underlining a less-than-human narrative of the Tutsi: “Everyone was hired at the same level for a single job – to crush all the cockroaches.”⁵³ The assimilation of Tutsis to cockroaches is a specific manifestation of the long-standing tradition in various conflicts of equating a group of individuals to an insect or animal to dehumanize and devalue them.⁵⁴ The practice of animalization and insectization, which entirely degrades ethnic groups and religions, has historically been applied far and wide, consequently registering these populations as non-human to the perpetrators of violence against them. In Rwanda, the term “*inyenzi*” was used for

⁵³ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, op. cit., 12.

⁵⁴ In a passage on Agamben, specifically “the complex relations between figuration of the other as raw material (or bare life) and as scapegoated, quasi-sacrificial victim” (LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence*, op. cit., 159), LaCapra writes, “It is, of course, on the basis of negative figurations of the animal that one may invoke it in a derogatory fashion in characterizing groups of humans. Typically, in a disavowal of characteristics that internally mark those who scapegoat, along with a simultaneous attempt to reduce internal anxiety to focalized or determinate fear of a phantasmatic other, groups of humans may even come to be projected beyond humanity and share the fate of other-than-human animals (treated ‘like’ rats, dogs, cattle, pigs, or even wild or savage beasts)” (159-160). LaCapra goes on to reference Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison’s *Coloniser. Exterminer: Sur la guerre et l’État colonial* (2005) and the various degrading strata of dehumanization colonizers projected onto the individuals they had colonized. Mbembe too explains strategies of dehumanization used by colonizers on their colonial subjects. As he writes: “each according a central place to an image of the colonized that made of the native the prototype of the animal. In one, what we shall call the Hegelian tradition, . . . the colonized could only be envisaged as the property and thing of power. He/she was a tool subordinated to the one who fashioned, and could now use and alter, him/her at will. As such, he/she belonged to the sphere of objects. They could be destroyed as one may kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and if need be, eat it. . . . The second tradition may be called Bergsonian. . . . In the Bergsonian tradition of colonialism, familiarity and domestication thus became the dominant trope of servitude. Through the relation of domestication, the master or mistress led the beast to an experience such that, at the end of the day, the animal, while remaining what he/she was – that is, something other than a human being – nevertheless actually entered into the world for his/her master/mistress” (*On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 27). In both cases of the colonized portrayed as *the prototype of the animal*, the animal is manifestly other-than-human, and even in the Bergsonian domestication tradition seen as less valuable than the human.

precisely this purpose. As Kennedy Ndahiro explains, “The radio station RTLM, allied with leaders of the government, had been inciting Hutus against the Tutsi minority, repeatedly describing the latter as *inyenzi*, or ‘cockroaches,’ and as *inzoka*, or ‘snakes.’ The station, unfortunately, had many listeners.”⁵⁵ He further underlines elsewhere how “equating Tutsi with cockroaches meant that few would think twice about killing and attempting to exterminate something so vile, dirty and sneaky.”⁵⁶ “Cockroach,” then, was a dehumanizing verbal precursor to annihilation, overall used to underscore a complete worthlessness.

Such lack of value brings to mind Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915) for the obvious reason that post-metamorphosis Gregor Samsa is most frequently understood to have transformed into a cockroach. And yet, what Gregor becomes is much more ambiguous than that. Translator Susan Bernofsky provides a detailed explanation of the etymology of the German word *Ungeziefer*, the word used to name Gregor’s state, and its relationship to the terms “bug,” “insect,” and “sacrifice” in her article “On Translating Kafka’s ‘The Metamorphosis.’”⁵⁷ Though in the Western imaginary Gregor gets pictured as a cockroach, the word *Ungeziefer* denotes, rather, vermin or bug more generally. Most interestingly of all is that the term literally means *that which is unworthy of being sacrificed*. The cockroach, then, if associated so closely to *Ungeziefer* as to have become its English translation – correct or not – is not only a denomination of dehumanization, but a designation of an economy that clearly annihilates any

⁵⁵ “In Rwanda, We Know All About Dehumanizing Language.” *The Atlantic*. April 13, 2019.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/04/rwanda-shows-how-hateful-speech-leads-violence/587041/>.

⁵⁶ He also explains the origin of the use of “*inyenzi*”: “The word *inyenzi* originated among the Tutsi themselves. *Inyenzi* designated the armed movement in exile formed by Tutsi youth whose families had been thrown out of the country fleeing persecution during the decades that followed the 1959 pogrom. The armed wing would attack at night and were known for their exemplary discipline and courage. However, the genocidal government turned the *inyenzi* identity into a derogatory word. All Tutsis became *inyenzi*” (Ndahiro, Kennedy. “Dehumanisation: How Tutsis were reduced to cockroaches, snakes to be killed.” *The New Times*. March 13, 2014.

<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/73836>). See Katy Long’s “Rwanda’s First Refugees: Tutsi Exile and International Response 1959-64.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6:2, 2012, 211-229 for more.

⁵⁷ See <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/on-translating-kafkas-the-metamorphosis>.

value whatsoever to the one being so labeled. In other words, there is dehumanization to the point of insect in most translations of *Ungeziefer* and further devaluation once one takes into account its etymology.⁵⁸ The *Ungeziefer* is seen to be so worthless that it is not even worth being sacrificed.

Kivu Ruhorahoza's 2011 film *Matière grise*, shot on location in Rwanda, poignantly represents in visual terms the association of the Tutsi with the cockroach. Though the context of this film – the Rwandan genocide – is completely different from Kafka's described above, the idea of worthlessness so obvious that it is not even deemed sacrificial as represented by Kafka's *Ungeziefer* is harrowingly clear in *Matière grise* also. The plot of the film, which underlines the importance of storytelling – through writing, painting, and cinematography – as a way to uncover trauma, revolves around Balthazar, a filmmaker on the search for funding in Kigali to finance his directorial debut, *Le cycle du cafard*. The spectator gets a chance to see parts of the film, since *Matière grise* is divided into three storylines: Balthazar's financial mission, scenes from *Le cycle du cafard* Acte Un that portray a perpetrator of the genocide, obsessed with cockroaches, in solitary confinement in what seems to be a mental hospital, and another story, *Le cycle du cafard* Acte Deux, about Tutsi siblings Yvan and Justine, and specifically Yvan's severe struggles with coming to terms with the genocide, the death of his parents, and survivor's guilt.⁵⁹ The first image of a cockroach in the film is of the insect trapped in a glass jar in the insane asylum-prison, a jump cut from Balthazar's plotline. During this scene, there is a concurrent voiceover, a

⁵⁸ As David Wills too summarizes, "In German it is *Ungeziefer*, which the standard English translation makes an insect. It could also be bug or vermin, but the etymological derivation refers to what is unworthy of sacrifice, a type of pariah animal, something like the worst of the worst of creatures" (Wills, David. *Killing Times: The Temporal Technology of the Death Penalty*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019, 212).

⁵⁹ Yvan devastatingly recounts that his father was burned alive and mother raped by two men, that the perpetrators additionally cut him with a machete and raped Justine (*Matière grise*. Directed by Kivu Ruhorahoza. Scarab Studio Films, 2011, 1:05:21).

radio broadcast alerting the city to an invasion of cockroaches that need to be exterminated: a pervasive and not so subtle message of ethnic divide and hatred. As the female announcer states in a stone-cold voice: “Please show no mercy, a cockroach is not a human being,”⁶⁰ killing them is “an act of defense.”⁶¹ Images of cockroaches are seen for the duration of the film – running across the screen, the floor, up and down the walls, and even, in a hallucinatory scene, added to an omelet. In *Matière grise*, the cockroach metaphor becomes literal.⁶² Such a depiction of an ethnicity can also help us understand why aneconomic violence *qui dépasse en horreur et en cruauté ce que peut envisager l’esprit le plus imaginatif* – “monstrous” acts insofar as applied against “cockroaches” not even worthy of a valued sacrifice – rightfully describes the genocide.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25:11.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25:48.

⁶² The dehumanization of a group of people deemed inferior by the ruling order is still being represented today, in a literal fashion again in “Men Against Fire,” episode 5, season 3 of *Black Mirror*, for instance. A military hunt for “roaches” – seeming mutants that have pillaged a village at the beginning of the episode – is the plot for this dystopic installment. During a farm raid, Medina, a squad leader, explains to the property’s owner, Parn Heidekker, who has been housing “roaches,” the dangers of these inhumans: “[y]ou even got to protect the roaches. Right? It’s not their fault they’re like that. They didn’t ask for this. . . . There’s shit in their blood that made them that way. The sickness they’re carrying. . . . You can’t still see them as human. Understandable sentiment, granted, but it’s misguided. We gotta take them out if humankind is gonna carry on in this world” (Brooker, Charlie. Directed by Jakob Verbruggen, 2016, 9:18-10:52). What we later discover is that these “roaches” are in fact human beings who are deemed to have bad DNA: “Higher rates of cancer. Muscular dystrophy. MS. SLS. Substandard IQ. Criminal tendencies. Sexual deviances” (*ibid.*, 50:46- 51:10), as explained by Arquette, the psychologist on the military base, his speech echoing in spirit cleansing ideologies preached by Nazis and extremist Hutus, to name but two examples. To better kill these individuals deemed less-than-human, the latter are visually represented in a less-than-human fashion. The soldiers have an implant imbedded in their cerebral cortex – the MASS system – that makes them see the “roaches” not as humans, but as deformed, nameless, faceless humanoid forms with screeching voices and unrecognizable human features. The vocabulary of the inhuman is indeed reflected in Stripe’s – the episode’s protagonist whose MASS system begins to malfunction following his exposure to a device created by the “roaches” – characterization of these societally undesirable beings: “they’re monsters. I’ve seen them” (*ibid.*, 42:03). And yet when his neural system fails, Stripe discovers that he has been fed a lie by the military in the form of a trance, a kind of brainwashing: the literal representation of genocidal beliefs. One of the “roaches,” Catarina, explains to him and the viewers that the visualizations are false and programmed: “You just can’t hear us. . . . Your implants. Your army implants. . . . They put it in your head to help you fight, and when it works, you see us as something other” (*ibid.*, 41:21-41:34). The history of the implants is also briefly explained. Referencing the Vietnam war and PTSD, Arquette argues that past examples of warfare proved combat to be inefficient, thus technological advances were made to create effective human killing machines who they themselves are not entirely human. While the “roaches” are deemed inhuman because of the supposedly less-desirable quality of their DNA and their monstrous representation, the soldiers too embody an unclear human-inhuman divide with their technological enhancements. Are they human or actually robots? Though the show deliberate leaves this unclear, what does remain certain is that once his MASS system is inoperative, Stripe sees the “roaches” for who they are: “They’re human beings” (*ibid.*, 50:48), he whimpers as the episode draws to a close.

In Hatzfeld's *A Time for Machetes*, it is not only a dehumanization of the Tutsi that is observed, but a dehumanization, or stripping of humanity, of the Hutu perpetrators also. Notice how Pio describes his quotidian killing tasks: "We no longer saw a human being when we turned up a Tutsi in the swamps. . . . Our daily life was unnatural and bloody, and that suited us."⁶³ Pio underlines both the dehumanization of the Tutsi – no longer seen as human beings – *and* of himself through his emphasis on the *unnatural*, something other or beyond the norm, something not found in nature, an act not in line with *human nature*. There is a certain bestiality in these words, or rather even a monstrosity – not even an animal, the presumed epitome of "natural" being, could commit such acts. Pio's unnaturalness as defined by non-norm, non-human conforming acts is forewarningly echoed when Alphonse's wife evokes the language of the inhuman, of the beyond human, with respect to her husband's acts: "Alphonse, be careful. Everything you are doing will have accursed consequences, because it is not normal and passes all humanity."⁶⁴ We once again observe the human-inhuman status of these perpetrators come into focus.

Niko's In-Humanity

The in-human state is precisely the one inhabited by Niko. In what follows, I will highlight how Niko is depicted as an animalized human as well as a human-monster before the genocide, a monstrous, undetermined being during and immediately after his killings, and, finally, a humanized animal at the end of the text, after an uncertain amount of time has passed following the massacres. From the beginning of *Le Passé devant soi*, Niko is compared to a

⁶³ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, op. cit., 42-43.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

monkey. There is a plethora of such examples, including (all referencing his state of being before the massacres):

Est-ce à cause de ce sourire qu'on l'appelait Niko-le-singe? (LPDS 23);
C'est parce qu'ils croyaient que Niko, pour être muet, ne pouvait ni penser, ni rêver, que certains l'avaient, pendant un temps, surnommé Niko-le-singe (LPDS 41);
on n'évoquait pas juste Niko mais Niko-le-singe (LPDS 116).

Specific remarks are also made about his smile:

Ce sourire, contraste inattendu et monstrueux, aurait écrasé la fascination naissante chez l'intrus aussi violemment qu'un piège broie la petite tête d'un rat appâté. L'observateur se serait senti foudroyé par la déception et le dégoût. . . . Son visage et le reste incarnaient l'harmonie et la grâce. Mais, lorsque, pour sourire, il dévoilait des dents aussi immenses que miteuses et désordonnées, il paraissait un singe à certains, un démon à d'autres. Il fallait être habitué ou averti pour supporter ce sourire sans manifester aucun signe de répulsion (LPDS 116-117).⁶⁵

How Niko is compared to an animal is relatively straightforward in these passages. But it is not a monkey-like smile only that is described in the excerpt above; it is equally one that is demon-like: deceptive and disgusting, untrustworthy and unsightly. There is already an allusion made here to the monstrous in the sense of the grotesque, that is, in the sense of repulsion and discontinuity, heterogeneity: a seemingly “normal” human body hiding an off-putting grimace. Already two parallels are thus drawn in the ill-defined divisions between the human and inhuman with respect to Niko: the obvious man/animal indistinction and the hinted at man/monster imbrication, seemingly presaging his forthcoming behavior.

If Niko is deemed a monster, he most clearly shows himself to be one during the genocide. Furthermore, he is first and foremost a monster in a classical sense, harkening back to Aristotle as seen in my previous chapters. Niko can certainly be thought of as a monster in those

⁶⁵ Another example reads as follows: “Pour fonder cette comparaison [à un singe], il y avait aussi son sourire” (LPDS 41).

Aristotelian terms – monstrousness as surplus or lack of human attributes – for the simple reason that he is lacking something – a voice – that would make him entirely human. Indeed, when he is a child, his grandmother describes him as a horrible doll, a seemingly off-putting humanoid figure deprived of a voice: “Elle avait l’impression de tenir une horrible poupée possédant tout d’un être humain sauf la voix” (LPDS 95). In *Le Passé devant soi* we thus witness a somewhat different kind of monstrosity from that discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Whereas in my previous analyses I spoke of monstrous acts and “normal” physical exteriors, here, with Niko, there is an overlap of monstrous actions and physical deviance. Indeed, though Niko may be deemed inhuman because of his lack of human qualities and form (his non-voice and monkey-like grimace), he is equally behaviorally monstrous as a result of his gratuitous acts during the Rwandan genocide, thus exhibiting both physical and moral non-conformity with respect to the human.

Chapter 9 of *Le Passé devant soi* is the sole moment in the text that depicts some of Niko’s killings. Specifically, Niko murders his father, yet tries to persuade himself into believing that it is someone else. In fact, he equates his father to an animal: “il ouvre les yeux et porte toute son attention sur la nuque qui n’est pas celle de son père, mais celle de n’importe quel homme, ou animal d’ailleurs” (LPDS 154). The animal/human divide continues to be problematized in this chapter of Gatore’s novel when the following question is asked: “Peut-on dire alors . . . que la principale différence entre hommes et animaux réside dans leur attitude devant la mort? Les humains espèrent, même quand la mort est certaine, alors que les animaux doutent jusque dans la sécurité absolue” (LPDS 156). The latter quote confirms the animal status of the Tutsi during the genocide by satisfying Niko’s definition of “animal” as a being that lives in continual fear of being killed. Both quotes cited above, moreover, are pertinent to Niko’s status in particular.

Indeed, in the former case, Niko seems to exclude himself from the two categories “*n’importe quel homme*” and “*animal d’ailleurs*.” In the latter, Niko is once again abstracted from the categories of “*hommes*” and “*animaux*” as a result of our having no clue as to his inner thoughts on death and fear. Ultimately, on account of their inexplicit applicability to Niko, these passages delineate a perpetrator that does not appear to fully conform to the classification of either human or animal. It is as though the categories of “human” and “animal” at the moment of the genocide are relevant to Niko’s father, supposedly a moderate Hutu, and that the category of “animal” is relevant to the Tutsi; and yet Niko, conversely, occupies a status exterior to these categorizations. His actions render him monstrously other.

In all other parts of *Le Passé devant soi*, Niko’s murderous actions are reduced to a single scene that plays out regularly in his mind, repeated with slight differences every time, a kind of variation on a theme – “les souvenirs des tueries se sont mélangés et ne forment plus qu’une seule et même scène” (LPDS 186) – as though the singular traumatic memory now automatically plays on repeat, overpowering, even erasing, any and all other thoughts and recollections. Not only have Niko’s acts altered his perception of time and his ability to remember, they bring about a senselessness in his life: “Cela fait longtemps qu’il a admis que sa vie n’a pas de sens, et n’a pas besoin d’en avoir” (LPDS 58). This incongruity is echoed in Isaro’s plotline shortly afterward when the narrator, referencing Isaro’s parents, states: “C’est bien là le problème avec les anges: leur générosité empêche que s’accomplissent la cruauté et l’absurdité auxquelles sont condamnés les humains” (LPDS 60).⁶⁶ With this phrasing, cruelty and absurdity – the latter term

⁶⁶ The collation of the same words, “absurdité” and “cruauté,” arises once again when Isaro visits a prison in the hopes of conducting interviews with the inmates, but quickly realizes that this is an impossible endeavor given the fact that the prisoners are only permitted a few minutes of visitation per week and are forced to play out a kind of performance when they have visitors: “cette scène dont l’absurdité, avec le temps, se colore d’une cruauté et d’un désespoir insoutenables” (LPDS 204).

crystalizing gratuitous, senseless, “monstrous” violence – read as two separate states that are nonetheless intimately related to one another. It is unclear whether the “and” performs an additive function or one of equivalence, underscoring the power of cruelty to be both the within and the beyond, of its ability to inflect the human with the inhuman. It is precisely the kind of juxtaposition that we have come across at multiple other instances in my other chapters: cruelty is a point of departure from which we can analyze valued versus valueless acts, as well as the inhumanity of its enactors.

As I have developed throughout this dissertation, and to return specifically to my analysis of Taylor, at the basis of cruel atrocity is a commodification of violence into value through (cruel) acts. In other words, cruelty is enacted for a reason – enmity for instance; its justification is attempted by its perpetrators. Noticeably, acting upon personal enmity produces power dynamics that can be linked to Elias Canetti’s notion of affirmation of life through killing and survival as developed in his work *Crowds and Power* (1960). When an individual kills another, the killer has in that interaction, since he or she is not the killed, become a survivor. And, as Canetti writes, the “moment of survival is the moment of power.”⁶⁷ Elissa Mailänder builds on Canetti’s work, stating that “[f]or the survivor, the violent overpowering of another human being yields an incomparable satisfaction and vital affirmation of the self.”⁶⁸ In theory, then, in the capacity of personal enmity, cruelty is plentiful, generating value through such instances of satisfaction and affirmation that is subsequently recuperated, reused, and recycled in an economy of war and violence. But as we read about Niko retreating into a cave after his genocidal acts in *Le Passé devant soi*, nearly annihilated by what he has done and wholly powerless, we realize

⁶⁷ Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. Translated by Carol Stewart. New York: Continuum, 1962, 227.

⁶⁸ Mailänder Koslov, Elissa. *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. Translated by Patricia Szobar. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015, 258.

that his murderous survivorship could not be further from an affirmation of the self. He is not a perpetrator of cruelty negotiating some sort of value through his acts, but an enabler of gratuitous, uncontrolled, senseless violence that prompts a pressing questioning as to its very incomprehensible occurrence. Notice how the narrator, referencing Niko, emphasizes precisely this inanity, insanity:

Un moment, il essaie de considérer toutes ces pensées comme des foutaises. Comment autant de gens peuvent-ils disparaître en même temps? Quelle folie peut justifier et accomplir cela? Comment en arriverait-il à tuer son propre père? Il ne le considère même pas assez pour qu’il fasse partie de ses pensées, alors pourquoi devrait-il le tuer? Pourquoi deux inconnus se tueraient-ils? Foutaise! (LPDS 142)

These rhetorical questions are filled with oxymorons: indeed, no madness can justify what has happened. *Foutaise!* – it is nonsensical. The acts described in Gatore’s novel are not acts of cruelty that generatively supplement an economy of war, or violence more generally. It is for this reason that the term “monstrous” is here justified: these acts are needless, hold no value, and certainly do not enhance the value of human life. As Sylvie Umubyeyi, a Rwandan genocide survivor, states in an interview with Hatzfeld, “[the genocide] is no longer anything human,”⁶⁹ with Hatzfeld himself using the phrase “monstrous nature of the extermination”⁷⁰ to describe the massacres.

And so, known as Niko-le-singe growing up, Niko is no longer identified as such as a result of his murderous acts, before fleeing to the cave: “Plus personne ne l’appelait Niko-le-singe” (LPDS 166). In fact, throughout the course of the genocide, not only is Niko not associated with an animal, he is also seen as nothing more than the simple illusion of a human being. As the narrator explains, “Avec le temps, l’insensibilité a coulé en lui comme du béton et

⁶⁹ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, op. cit., 212.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

s'est inscrite sur son visage. Toutes ses expressions s'effacent, réduites à une sorte de masque perfectionné. Un masque sur lequel le sculpteur aurait eu le talent de donner l'illusion d'une peau humaine, de rendre le mouvement des yeux et d'articuler la mâchoire" (LPDS 157). It is as though this mask, created by a sculptor, has a performative function through which Niko can only *appear* to be human. Niko, no longer monkey-like, consequently finds himself no longer on the periphery of the human and animal, but on or beyond the border between the human and some other form of inhuman. Indeed, following his acts, Niko is described as "le nouvel être qu'il est" (LPDS 131), an ambiguous being whose humanity is not so straightforward. But once again, if we are to focus on the *insensibilité*, the complete obliteration of facial expressions of his mask-like face – which brings to mind the gratuitous, *monstrous nature of the extermination* as described by Hatzfeld – we can certainly say that he appears to be a kind of undetermined human monster, putting into practice Charlotte Lacoste's observation that "nous sommes tous potentiellement monstrueux, . . . certains . . . passent à l'acte, s'écartant du chemin de l'homme ordinaire (entendu comme celui qui câline sa famille plutôt qu'il ne l'extermine)." ⁷¹ This human-monster state is even more obvious when compared to the fact that prior to his killing spree, Niko does indeed think of himself as a human being. Reflecting on his life's solitude and the natural pairing off of all the young men and women around him, he wonders why there was never a single woman interested in him: "Certes, les autres étaient des êtres humains, tout comme lui" (LPDS 118), the narrator matter-of-factly ascertains, stressing Niko's humanity (pre-genocide). The fact that the narrator describes romantic interest as a function of *being human*, that there is a need to explicitly state that Niko is a human being (while nevertheless also being

⁷¹ Lacoste, Charlotte. *Séductions du bourreau. Négation des victimes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010, 319.

bestial and monstrous) is jarring, and only further dramatizes the stakes of Niko's ontology, his in-humanity.

Following his transformation into this new being after the genocide, Niko eventually begins living in a cave shared with a family of monkeys. And, notably, this is when he once again appears animalistic. Indeed, the narrator definitively categorizes Niko as an animal when the 37 monkeys in the cave are counted, along with Niko, as 38. Twice the narrator states: "Trente-huit avec lui" (LPDS 72, 73), emphasizing the point that he is a monkey amid the monkeys. Niko even undergoes bodily transformations and too recognizes himself as other. And though, in conjunction with the "trente-huit avec lui" classification, such a metamorphosis seems to point to his fulfilling a more literal monkey existence than was previously symptomized by his smile, the passage that explains his bodily changes contradicts the very fact of his being animal:

Il découvre alors, sur lui-même, des bizarreries jusque-là ignorées. Par exemple, il note que la chair entre sa peau et ses os s'est considérablement réduite. Où qu'il se tâte, sauf le cou, le ventre, les fesses et le sexe, il touche directement un os. De même, quand il enfonce son doigt à n'importe quel endroit de son corps, il y reste une trace comme s'il s'agissait de cire ou d'argile. . . . Si un esprit surgissait dans cette grotte, il serait tout d'abord surpris d'y voir un homme au milieu d'un groupe de singes (LPDS 79-80).

Consider the striking differences between the beginning and end of this passage. The excerpt begins with an otherizing description – Niko does not seem to recognize the form of his body and certainly does not appear to be identifying as human – and yet ends with an external identification of him, by some kind of *esprit*, as *un homme au milieu d'un groupe de singes*. It is as though Niko is identifiable, physically, as human, though with the animal incorporated into it. Another confounding moment arises when Niko calls himself a prisoner of the monkeys – "Niko a acquis la certitude d'être une sorte de prisonnier des singes" (LPDS 185) – and yet he equally

wants to properly honor the life of a deceased monkey as though the creature were his own kin. On the one hand, as a seeming prisoner, he is frightened of his cave mates; on the other, he wishes to help them as though he were one of them and they one of his own: “La peur qu’il a des singes et son affaiblissement ne lui permettent pas de joindre effectivement à eux et de creuser, comme il le voudrait, une quatrième tanière au côté des trois autres” (LPDS 208). Oscillating between states, Niko is still caught in the in-between, between human, and, certainly, animal.

Animal-Human Metamorphosis: The Dog

A poignant example of an animal-human metamorphosis, in addition to Niko’s, is found in Belgian artist Jean-Philippe Stassen’s graphic novel *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2000). It strikingly represents atrocity through the blank stares of its characters and their facial expressions of incomprehension – echoing Niko’s *masque sur lequel le sculpteur aurait eu le talent de donner l’illusion d’une peau humaine* from above – and depicts a startling human-animal transformation.⁷² A story told in contemporary Rwanda post-genocide with flashbacks to before the massacres, *Deogratias* exhibits only a few panels referencing the genocide directly.

⁷² The liminality between human and animal, the ineffable animality within the human and vice versa, is also explored at length in Bhanu Kapil’s *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children* (2009), where the very word “humanimal” echoes the term “in-human” in the duplicity of notions, their overlap and their relation to one another that each represents (indeed, liminal spaces appear in Kapil’s other works also: see, for instance, *Incubation: A Space for Monsters* (2003)). *Humanimal* traces the story of Kamala and Amala, two feral children, the “Bengali wolf girls,” who were supposedly raised by a wolf and then captured and domesticated (through violent means that led to their deaths) by an Indian missionary, Revered Joseph Singh, in Midnapure. Examples of the humanimal abound in the book, each instance questioning the border between human and animal and increasingly becoming a reflection on the author’s – and our – humanimality: “The humanimal mode is one of pure anxiety attached to the presence of the body” (Berkeley: Kelsey Street Press, 2009, 12); “animal wolves and human wolves curl up with their mother, in sequence, to nurse” (28); “When I grew up, I wrote about the bloodstream of a child as intermingling with that of an animal” (40); “With nets or sheets, shawls and ropes, they get her and bring her down. For humanimals, this is a destiny that cannot be averted. Each time she crosses, in truth or fiction, she breaks the tracery of delicate glass threads that marks the border. A border felt in the body as fear and sometimes . . . no, I cannot speak for her now” (63-64); “I understood that the humanimal moment occurs most powerfully at dawn, when the eyesight adjusts to the light of the upper rooms of the jungle” (65). Perhaps most relevant here, however, is Laura Moriarty’s endorsement of *Humanimal*, in which she asks: “What are the limits of cruelty in what passes for love or civilization?” Even if only briefly making an appearance, time and again, cruelty is woven into the vocabulary of questions concerning hybrids, borders, and extreme cases of violence.

These display dogs eating corpses and then soldiers killing the dogs,⁷³ an accurate depiction of one of the ways in which animals were involved in the genocide. As a survivor named Manase explains in *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*, “Cats and dogs were there, just eating people.”⁷⁴ Philip Gourevitch further describes how the RPF shot all the dogs that were rendering corpses even more mutilated.⁷⁵ But there is more to the figure of the dog in *Deogratias*, the titular character’s story of revenge on the figures who had organized or assisted in the Opération Turquoise, a French-led military operation that was meant to bring humanitarian aid to the region. Though the Opération Turquoise was designed to keep civilians unharmed by establishing a “safe zone” through road blockades, it has since been seen as a controversial failure that assisted extremist Hutus more than it helped the Tutsi.

Deogratias, though he vows retribution, is in fact, like Niko we assume, a Hutu who had participated in the genocide, having lost his mind and now believing, when not drunk on Urwagwa, that he is a dog.⁷⁶ “I’m ill . . . Sometimes I’m a dog,”⁷⁷ he states. The transformation from man to dog is meticulously executed in the graphic novel, with Deogratias clearly going from human to animal and back again over the course of several panels.⁷⁸ Ultimately, he is a sort of other-than-human Hutu dog counterpart to the representation of the Tutsi as cockroaches, though it is unclear what exactly the mutation illustrates: an altered physical state representative of an altered mental state, madness, and guilt are all options. Perhaps deferring to an animal state

⁷³ Stassen, Jean-Philippe. *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*. Translated by Alexis Siegel. New York: First Second, 2006, 75.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁷⁵ “But as the RPF fighters had advanced through the country, moving down from the northeast, they had shot all the dogs” (*ibid.*, 148).

⁷⁶ There are also many references to the colloquial expression “filthy dog” in the graphic novel. See, for instance, Stassen, Jean-Philippe. *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*, *op. cit.*, 23 and 71. Deogratias additionally has flashbacks to dogs eating the bellies of cadavers (26).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, *ibid.*, 52 and 76, where the metamorphosis takes six and three panels respectively to complete.

is a way for Deogratias to cope with what he has done. Unable to comprehend committing such atrocities as a human being, he instead understands himself as other, as a dog, a beast that attacked the corpses of Tutsis. He thus devalorizes himself; he sees himself as an animal that could have, perhaps even should have in his mind, been shot with the rest of the canines. As Brother Philip states at the very end of the graphic novel, “He was a creature of God,”⁷⁹ referencing not only the protagonist’s name – Deo/gratias, that is, thanks be to God – but also his ambiguous human-inhuman, creaturely condition. Perhaps it is this mention of God that brings to mind the emphasis on “croire” in Nocky Djedanoum’s poem “Croire en l’homme” from his poetry collection *Nyamirambo!* (2000): “Je veux bien croire encore et toujours en l’homme/Je m’y efforce jour et nuit/Je m’y efforce sans y croire,”⁸⁰ Djedanoum writes, alluding to not only the extermination of the Tutsi, but of the transient concept of the human in the face of this atrocity. Perhaps Deogratias has lost all hope and even belief in the human (and God, though I do not have the space for this here), and consequently can only see himself as an animal.

The Monkey

And yet, is this true? Deogratias is in fact not *always* a dog, but a kind of humanized animal or animalized human – he oscillates between both states. And, what is of further note is the fact that where Deogratias metamorphosizes into a dog, Niko is compared to, even transforms into also, undulates to and from, an animal that is equally but differently important symbolically: a monkey. Gatore’s novel does not specify whether Niko lives with tailed primates – monkeys – or with ones that are tailless – apes – since the term “singe” could in theory refer to both (of course, with the addition of the adjective “grand,” “grand singe” is the more accurate terminology for

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁰ Djedanoum, Nocky. *Nyamirambo! poésies*. Bamako: Le Figuier, 2000, 36.

“ape” in French), and in her English translation of *Le Passé devant soi*, Marjolijn de Jager takes the liberty, as I do here, of using the word “monkey.” However, even an association with “just” a monkey is striking and renders Niko’s human-animal status all the more ambiguous. As Donna Haraway underlines, “Primatology is about the simultaneous and repetitive constitution and breakdown of the boundary between human and animal. . . .”⁸¹ Niko is not compared to an insect or any animal other than the one that is the most human of them all, the one that not only blurs the distinction between human and animal, but completely collapses it, imbricates both sides of the presumed limit. Indeed, for all the seemingly hideous qualities that Niko’s smile seems to encompass and represent, a monkey’s smile, in reality, is uncannily human.⁸² Consequently, though an association with an animal renders Niko other-than-human, a comparison to a monkey specifically also unexpectedly humanizes the creature that is Niko. As primates are some of our

⁸¹ Haraway, Donna. “Primatology is Politics by Other Means.” *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy*, Vol. 2 (1984), 496.

⁸² In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Charles Darwin argues that “man is descended from some less highly organised form” (Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man*. The Project Gutenberg EBook. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2300/pg2300-images.html>). This form is the great ape (Hominidae), with whom we share a common ancestor and who is our closest living relative. Indeed, with the advent of genome sequencing, we have learned that we share approximately 99% of our DNA with chimpanzees and bonobos (and 98% with gorillas). The articles “Bonobos Join Chimps as Closest Human Relatives” and “Tiny Genetic Differences between Humans and Other Primates Pervade the Genome” provide good summaries of the topic (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/tiny-genetic-differences-between-humans-and-other-primates-pervade-the-genome/> and <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2012/06/bonobos-join-chimps-closest-human-relatives>). The 2017 National Geographic documentary *Jane* (directed by Brett Morgen), created using Hugo van Lawick’s remarkable footage from the 1960s believed to have been lost until rediscovered in 2014, captures Dr. Jane Goodall’s study of chimpanzees in the Gombe National Park in Tanzania and emphasizes, in various ways, this close relationship between humans and apes, namely chimpanzees. From first joining Dr. Louis Leakey’s 1957 Gombe expedition as a 26-year-old secretary before becoming the world’s leading chimpanzee specialist who works “to increasingly relate our understanding of chimpanzee behaviour to human behaviour” (51:52), Goodall has identified chimpanzees as “nearly human creatures” (49:55) and “fellow beings” (24:43) who express emotions like humans. “The more I learned, the more I realized how like us they were in so many ways” (23:44), she states in the film, underlining – one of many eye-opening observations in the documentary – that not only are chimps able to use a tool, they are capable of object modification (see the fascinating sequence 26:45-28:00). Indeed, it is Goodall’s research that prompted the questioning of the divide between human and animal in scientific terms. Dr. Leakey’s reply, when seeing her results, amounted to rethinking the categories of humans and apes: “we must now redefine man or accept chimpanzees as human” (28:05). I am, of course, but scratching the surface, here, of what largely constitutes evolutionary science, but I mention these discoveries and *Jane*, which is ultimately a touching and engaging overview of the relationship between humans and near-human animals, because of the jarring and important role the monkey/ape plays in *Le Passé devant soi*.

closest human relatives, the perpetrator is humanized through his association with the animals, seen more as a human than a villainous monster when he is compared to a monkey. In other words, Niko finds a recuperated humanity through animality – paradoxically and contrary to our expectations. This is also contrary to our expectations of how animalizing discourses have historically functioned through racist, Eurocentric lenses that have compared people of color to simians. Gatore is making a markedly different use of this analogy, valorizing Niko’s humanity through this comparison. Specifically, when Niko is likened to primates in the cave, the question arises of his remorse: a distinct manifestation of his attempt at re-humanization.



Though the animals in the photos above are not quite smiling, their facial expressions – from their mouths to their expressive eyes – are rather human. On the left, the De Brazza’s monkey conveys what almost seems to be surprise in a way very similar to how humans would indicate such an emotion. On the right, the western lowland gorilla cracks a sideways smirk while observing a fellow primate (personal photographs taken at the Franklin Park Zoo, Boston).

Here we see western lowland gorillas, *des grands singes*, engaging in humanlike behaviors: one using a toy as a pillow under his head when sleeping; another sitting upright in a chair and wearing a scarf. Human-primate parallels are remarkable in these two examples (personal photographs taken at the Franklin Park Zoo, Boston).



Remorse? Humanization through Animalization

As already mentioned, in addition to his peculiar characteristics, Niko is mute. And this lack of voice indeed becomes a hindrance to him when he is in the cave, drowning in his own silence. As the narrator explains, “Pour la première fois de sa vie, sa gorge aphone lui parut un handicap sérieux. Il aurait aimé avoir une voix, pouvoir crier et pleurer vraiment” (LPDS 177). There is, however, another way in which Niko uses his (non-)linguistic orifice: to vomit. Niko is described as having severe physical manifestations of his mental state – “[l]es émotions qu’il s’était tant et si bien gardé de ressentir débordèrent et se répandirent au sol, devant lui, sous forme de vomi irrépressible” (LPDS 169) – that are exhibited as bodily fluid expulsions. Here, there is an overlap of overflowing emotion and vomit. He feels nauseous at several other moments too, a state that completely overwhelms him: “envahi par une nausée qui lui fit rendre

le fond de ses entrailles” (LPDS 173).⁸³ Unable to contain his bodily excrements, his existence after his genocidal acts appears increasingly abject to the point of transforming his cranial fluid from blood into vomit: “au lieu du sang, c’est du vomi qui gicle de son crâne” (LPDS 189). The mention of *sang* here is noticeable for the reason that it signals cruelty once more, additionally highlighting, one more time, the frequent coupling of cruelty with a beyond. Here, we too witness a moving past *cruor* to something other, vomit.

But even more importantly, it is as though Niko’s bodily expulsions attempt to perversely equate to the linguistic expression needed for his mourning and repentance process. As the narrator states, “Seule la grotte, son isolement et son obscurité pouvaient le sauver de ces pensées insoutenables, des tremblements, des vomissements et des évanouissements qui les accompagnent, pensait-il en essayant de hâter son pas” (LPDS 174). And yet, repentance cannot fully occur because of his lack of voice, the importance of which is underlined when Niko labels the inability to scream and cry not as a simple deficiency but as *un handicap sérieux*. This wording indicates a significant desire to mourn, yet a certain physical blockade with respect to it. The mention of a wish to express sorrow could already point to a certain degree of repentance.

Niko’s cave life is never clearly an experience in either repentance or punishment, but somewhere between these two poles. As the narrator explains, reflecting on Niko’s state:

Quelques rares fois, il parvient à regarder son sort calmement. Il éprouve d’abord une culpabilité et une honte sans fin. Puis il se demande ce qui l’a vraiment poussé à fuir. A-t-il essayé d’échapper à la justice? De se punir? Une punition à la hauteur de sa culpabilité existe-t-elle? La mort est-elle une solution? Et l’isolement? Les singes exécutent-ils son châtiment? En ont-ils reçu la mission? De qui? (LPDS 189)

⁸³ There are other references in the text to vomit and nausea, for instance: “Malgré son réveil, l’odeur du vomi le poursuit et lui donne une nausée terrible” (LPDS 189).

Reading this passage, we wonder if Niko feels guilt solely for fleeing – perhaps then for being seen as a coward – or guilt for his actions. Guilt, moreover, does not equate to repentance, and it is unclear whether his cave situation is indeed self-inflicted punishment. Niko, after all, never explicitly expresses remorse by saying sorry for what he has done.⁸⁴ It is in this way that Niko brings to mind the killers Hatzfeld interviewed, whose testimonies display their views on forgiveness and repentance “with a disconcerting naïveté,”⁸⁵ or else a barter-inspired, even mercantile, perspective. Fulgence, for instance, speaks of forgiveness and repentance in wide-eyed, simplified terms: “Me, I begged pardon of the stricken families during the trial, and I told them of the evil I had done to them. So I think I shall be forgiven.”⁸⁶ According to him, confession instantly equates to forgiveness. Élie approaches absolution with similar notions of exchange: “what we are offering is prison repentance, so they will give us a pardon of convenience in exchange.”⁸⁷

Niko’s ruminations may be ambiguous and inconclusive, and yet, the presence alone of the above passages – the reflection on his fate and at least his awareness of such questions – do render him more human, since these are accepted *human* contemplations following an atrocious crime. Reproach, regret, remorse, repentance, responsibility presuppose significantly more of an

⁸⁴ Niko dies at the end of the text and Isaro kills herself (see LPDS 216). Applegate identifies this suicide as pessimism at the possibility of coming to terms with the aftermath of the genocide (“Reimaging the Swallow and the Toad: Narrating Identity and Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda.” *op. cit.*, 76). Indeed, with Isaro’s death, reconciliation between Tutsis and Hutus essentially comes across as an impossibility, though I do not equate reconciliation, a formal, frequently judiciary, structure, with the internal processes required for repentance. Suicide is another question altogether, and perhaps most interestingly is that in reality, suicide among genocide survivors rarely occurs in Rwanda. As Wilson Rubanzana *et al.* state, “Our results demonstrated, rather surprisingly, that genocide survival was not associated with a higher risk of committing suicide in Rwanda” (“Exposure to Genocide and Risk of Suicide in Rwanda: A Population-Based Case-control Study.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 69.2 (2015), 117-122). The authors attribute this, possibly, to the social programs put in place after the genocide, but I would equally support the fact that individuals in Rwanda work so hard to stay alive in debilitating poverty that killing themselves after their constant struggle for survival is not an option.

⁸⁵ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, *op. cit.*, 187.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

internal, intimate process that is substantially more linked to the notion of the human. As Derrida underlines, “Now, in the tradition that we are tracking here, the animal, according to Levinas, seems deprived of all possibility, in fact, of all power of saying ‘Here I am’ and of responding, hence of all responsibility.”⁸⁸ Repentance and the web of notions within which it finds itself thus matters to Niko’s humanization because non-human animals supposedly do not take responsibility for their actions and thus have no need to repent. In other words, if Niko is a purely non-human animal, he is not responsible for his crimes, so should not engage in acts of repentance. And yet here we do not witness a total absence of repentance but rather a desire to accomplish it and an inability to do so. Moreover, the most salient fact is that Niko’s humanization occurs while he is being animalized through his relationship with the monkeys. Indeed, Derrida fights against the belief that non-human animals simply react while humans respond – and perhaps Niko’s humanization through animalization points precisely to this also: the power of Gatore’s text lies not only in its reconfiguring our understanding of the human but in the fact that it helps us reconsider a less patronizing place of the animal in regard to the human too.

Indeed, Niko’s post-genocide animalization echoes the human/inhuman divide that is examined in *The Open: Man and Animal*, when Agamben focuses on the relationship between animal and man and the very production of the unstable, ever-changing concept of man through the man/animal and the more general human/inhuman dichotomies, a process he dubs the “anthropological machine”: “the anthropological machine . . . each time decides upon and recomposes the conflict between man and animal, between the open and the not-open. . . .”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Translated by David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 111.

⁸⁹ Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*, *op. cit.*, 75. Agamben’s concept of the “open” is a rethinking of Heidegger’s conceptualization of *aletheia*, truth, as “disclosure” or “openness,” but equally an allusion to

Agamben continues to explain that ancient and modern forms of the anthropological machine function simultaneously in our modern-day culture. As he states:

If, in the machine of the moderns, the outside is produced through the exclusion of an inside and the inhuman produced by animalizing the human, [with the ancient machine] the inside is obtained through the inclusion of an outside, and the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape, the *enfant sauvage* or *Homo ferus*, but also and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form.⁹⁰

Ultimately, as a result of the anthropological machine, “[t]he total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man.”⁹¹ There is thus an equivalence, a chiasmus at play: for Agamben, the human/inhuman divide is characterized by the animalization of the human and the humanization of the animal, with the need alone to choose between the human and the animal, that is, the very existence of the anthropological machine, encapsulating the opacity between the two. In *Le Passé devant soi*, we witness an intersection of these very phenomena. Indeed, Niko is a human who is bestial (perhaps even as a precursor to his monstrosity) before the genocide: *an animalized man*. Following the genocide, Niko is compared to a monkey but by this very comparison is humanized, especially since the animal to which he is juxtaposed is, precisely, a monkey: *a humanized animal*.

In the final analysis, Gatore’s novel problematizes the various states inhabited by a perpetrator of atrocity and by extension offers a reflection on monstrosity, animality, and, just as equally, the notion of the human – all in light of cruelty, or rather, *la cruauté et l’absurdité*

désœuvrement, to which he dedicates his penultimate chapter. Analyzing Titian’s *Nymph and Shepherd*, he states in that chapter: “the lovers who have lost their mystery contemplate a human nature rendered perfectly inoperative – the inactivity [*inoperiosità*] and *désœuvrement* of the human and the animal as the supreme and unsavable figure of life” (87). See Leland de la Durantaye’s article “The Suspended Substantive: On Animals and Men in Giorgio Agamben’s ‘The Open’” (*Diacritics*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2003, 3-9) for more on precisely this interpretation of Agamben’s notion of the “open.”

⁹⁰ Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*, op. cit., 37.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

auxquelles sont condamnés les humains, to recall Isaro's words. As we have seen in this project, cruel acts make readable the border between the human and inhuman by breaching the limits of the human while nevertheless remaining human, exhibiting a to-ing and fro-ing between the human and inhuman. The in-human is thus seen committing both economic – excessive, nonappropriable, though value-attributing and -distributing acts – as well as aneconomic acts, defined as monstrous in my previous chapters and built upon here. Thus when cruelty is conjugated with the monstrous or, in this case, the animal too, it shows us how acts of atrocity deform the human. In its most salient moments, *Le Passé devant soi* certainly constructs Niko as monster as a result of his actions, though it also at times paradoxically humanizes him through his animalistic metamorphosis. As Applegate writes, “[t]he novel . . . demonstrates the humanity of a killer. . . .”⁹² Although this fellow feeling has largely stirred controversy, eliciting empathy for a killer as I underscored in my introduction, I see its outcome differently from the discussions mentioned there, and rather as a way of better understanding human nature. In the end, then, what does Gatore's novel offer vis-à-vis our understanding of human ontology?

To consider this question, I very briefly would like to return to Hatzfeld's text. Notice how Joseph-Désiré, municipal leader of the Interahamwe, names his “otherness” during an interview. After all, his very own wording underlines his unordinariness and his denial, even his refusal, to accept his actions when he states: “If a divine miracle were to help me return to my hill, my family, and a job, people would see that I can become an ordinary person again.”⁹³ Is it possible, however, to become ordinary again? Can one undo the supposed undoing of humanity brought about by acts of atrocity? If we look to *Le Passé devant soi* for clarity, it appears the

⁹² Applegate, Elizabeth. “Reimagining the Swallow and the Toad: Narrating Identity and Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda,” *op. cit.*, 73.

⁹³ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, *op. cit.*, 165.

answer to these questions, on the one hand, is no. Niko, though partially re-humanized and simultaneously animalized after participating in the genocide is never “ordinary” again, never *fully* human. But, on the other hand, does one need to be “fully human” to be human? Do the various hybrid depictions of Niko in Gatore’s novel, the diverse deformations and perversions of the human, not point to the fact that, in fact, the inhuman is very human indeed? Doesn’t the process of becoming more human through a comparison to an animal underscore the undeniable certitude that the line between human and animal is very – too – difficult to draw? Against the backdrop of cruel, bestial, monstrous acts, Gatore’s text once again underscores the need to incorporate the inhuman – be it the non-human animal or some other nebulous, monstrous otherness – into the notion of the human, advocating instead for the *in-human* rather than the strictly human or inhuman. If Gatore’s novel shows us anything, it is the avowal of the inhuman within the human.

Postscript: A Word on Form

Le Passé devant soi is a text that questions distinctions, acts of differentiation, and categorizations. But the schisms, divides, divisions defining Gatore’s work can be seen beyond its content, beyond its description of Niko’s acts and his corresponding condition or state. Indeed the narratological complexity of *Le Passé devant soi*, its structure – a prime example of heteroglossia, to borrow Bakhtin’s term – is also critical vis-à-vis the story it tells. As we have seen, the articulation between the fictional account of Niko’s life and Isaro’s autobiographical narrative, between “En mémoire de . . .” and the fictional chronicle that Isaro’s initially nonfictional project becomes, produces a highly elaborate narratological problematic that in turn gives us an allegorical account of what occurred in Rwanda in 1994. But in addition to the work’s narrative, the narrative itself *does work*; the form of the novel recounts the impossibility

of telling the story of the genocide. In other words, the book tries to get itself together throughout its entire development with the narrator and author never settling on one form or perspective,⁹⁴ instead displaying a formal cohabitation that itself reflects Niko's unclear state of being. Embodying the in-between, the structure of Gatore's narrative is defined by a coming and going between two points of view as well as between fiction and testimony, pointing to an impossibility of a monolithic form for a literature of genocide. If the atrocities of genocide destabilize traditional literary forms and defy regular genres⁹⁵ – frequently resulting in experimentations of form – *Le Passé devant soi* represents a prime example of that. After all, the reader is warned of the narrative's hybridity at the very beginning of the text by Isaro herself, who asserts,

“Cher inconnu, bienvenu dans ce récit. Je dois t'avertir que si, avant de mettre un pied devant l'autre, il te faut distinguer le sentier incertain qui sépare les faits et la fable, le souvenir et la fantaisie; si la logique et le sens te paraissent une seule et même chose; si, enfin, l'anticipation est la condition de ton intérêt, ce voyage te sera peut-être insoutenable” (LPDS 11).

There is thus no way to distinguish between fact and fiction, between memory and imagination in Isaro's project, and Gatore's text more generally,⁹⁶ between fiction and testimony – “le filet de ces limites *entre* fiction et témoignage”⁹⁷ in the words of Derrida in *Demeure*. Maurice Blanchot (1998), interrogating the threshold between literature and bearing witness. As a result, the architecture of *Le Passé devant soi* contemplates atrocity within a nexus comprising notions such as bearing witness, truth, and memory. One reading of this obfuscating hybridity,

⁹⁴ Marie Bulté has also commented on this double form in “Faire l'histoire immédiate, faire le roman de l'histoire immédiate: double dispositif dans *Le Passé devant soi* de Gilbert Gatore.” (*Pour un récit transnational: La fiction au défi de l'histoire immédiate*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018, 43-55. <https://books.openedition.org/pur/52542?lang=en>).

⁹⁵ See Semujanga, Josias. *Le génocide, sujet de fiction?*, op. cit., 29.

⁹⁶ After all, De Meyer himself admits that “Isaro n'arrive pas à résoudre le conflit entre les faits et la fable” (De Meyer, Bernard. “*Le Passé devant soi* de Gilbert Gatore: du génocide à la littérature,” op. cit., 47).

⁹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Demeure*. Maurice Blanchot. Paris: Galilée, 1998, 70.

which has been regularly raised in scholarly work on Gatore, can be attributed to the latter's contentious personal story. As Applegate underlines, further underscoring the controversy stirred by this text, to which I referred earlier, "accusations that Gatore's own father had participated in the killings contaminated even further the negative criticism."⁹⁸ But relying solely on such a reading to explain Gatore's focus on a perpetrator through the lens of a survivor, privileging the former voice, is perhaps a little reductionist.

Indeed, more broadly, Niko's genesis is important for the signifying system of *Le Passé devant soi* not only because it underlines a genocide survivor's choice to use fiction rather than nonfiction to reflect on, to try to come to terms with, the genocide but precisely because it hides a *perpetrator* attempting to gain indemnity behind a narratological framework. Parallels can thus be drawn between Gatore's novel and the accounts collected in Hatzfeld's text.⁹⁹ In both works, the perpetrator is given a (large) part or all of the narrative voice and as a result we find ourselves questioning the veracity of both narratives – and their motive. How are these accounts to be evaluated, valued, listened to? In the latter case, what do we make of the killers and their testimony as a result of Hatzfeld's interviews? Why *do* they speak? First, disclosing their complicity is a way of guaranteeing the courts' promised clemency – undeniably

⁹⁸ Applegate, Elizabeth. "Reimagining the Swallow and the Toad: Narrating Identity and Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda," *op. cit.*, 78.

⁹⁹ Anneleen Spiessen too has read Gatore and Hatzfeld side by side in "La mise en scène du bourreau: Jean Hatzfeld et Gilbert Gatore." *Témoigner: Entre histoire et mémoire*. 102 (2009): 20-40. Furthermore, in her article "Voicing the Perpetrator's Perspective: Translation and Mediation in Jean Hatzfeld's *Une Saison de Machette*," she focuses on a linguistic analysis of the interviews, while also underscoring their issues. As she states, identifying one such example, "Fragments of interviews are meshed together in thematic chapters, while the telling and seemingly ironic titles manipulate the reader's interpretation of the text" (*Translation and Violent Conflict*. Edited by Moira Inghilleri and Sue-Ann Harding. Volume 16, Number 2, 2010. New York: Routledge, 2014, 323). Hron too underlines the inconsistencies in the interviews – and the need to be skeptical with respect to them – writing "some works cite or reference *Machete Season* without questioning or situating its context, genre, or form, as if the text were an accurate historical document or research report. Other scholars dismiss the text altogether, either because its genre does not fit in with established conventions or alternately, because the killers' statements are largely questionable and contradictory – reflecting the half-truths and self-serving lies of genocidal perpetrators" (Hron, Madelaine. *Gukora and Itsembatsemba: The "Ordinary Killers" in Jean Hatzfeld's Machete Season*, *op. cit.*, 126).

incommensurate with the perpetrators' crimes. As Hatzfeld explains, "After years of silence, as their trial approached, most of the members of the [Interahamwe] gang began to admit . . . their participation in the genocide. They were prompted by the legal system's promises of leniency. . . ."¹⁰⁰ Second, for the killers just as for the victims, recounting their story, confession in the formers' case, may be a therapeutic form of release.¹⁰¹ This perhaps comes as little surprise, since, as Lacoste underlines, "[c]ontrairement aux récits de témoins survivants, en effet, les confessions de bourreaux, lieu de plainte et de justification, sont de véritables entreprises de victimisation."¹⁰²

Hatzfeld describes the experience of the confession itself. As he states,

The first thing I felt in front of each member of the group was not aversion, or contempt, or pity, but distrust: it was immediate and mutual. . . .

The killer . . . does not dread your disbelief – on the contrary he fears that you will bring accusations against him. Even if you can convince him that his words will do him no harm, he fears that no matter who his listener is – or later on, his reader – he would be better off remaining silent. . . . The killer stays on guard because he feels the threat of punishment hanging over him. . . .

Alone, faced with the reality of genocide, a survivor chooses to speak, to "zigzag with the truth," or to be silent. A survivor who chooses to speak accepts the constant need to question and challenge the confusions of memory.

Faced with the reality of genocide, a killer's first choice is to be silent, and his second is to lie. He may change his mind, but he will not discuss why.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Hatzfeld, Jean. *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak*, op. cit., 29.

¹⁰¹ This is reminiscent of the motivation behind Isaro's project, which is far from simply establishing facts or coming up with immediate solutions: "En mémoire de . . . ne prétendait pas régler les problèmes de ce pays" (LPDS 88). Instead, as she declares, it has a therapeutic dimension: "Mon rêve est peut-être que la souffrance de chacun, ainsi reconnue, s'apaise et se transforme en une nouvelle cohésion" (LPDS 89).

¹⁰² Lacoste, Charlotte. *Séductions du bourreau*, op. cit., 319. This once again brings to mind Hitchcott's concern about the victimization of both survivor and perpetrator in the *Le Passé devant soi*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 36-39. As Fujii summarizes, focusing on more loquacious rather than elusive testimony, "Hatzfeld . . . may have succeeded in eliciting graphic details from both genocide perpetrators and survivors, but the highly articulate and chillingly detailed language in which his informants speak – in stark contrast to the way the perpetrators with whom Straus (2006), Mironko (2004), and I spoke – does not necessarily mean his informants are telling more 'truth'" (Fujii, Lee Ann. "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (March 2010), 239-240). According to Fujii, truth is a slippery concept, difficult to qualify or characterize, and it cannot simply be determined by volume of detail.

Indeed, perpetrators may fear being more harshly accused, and of crimes even greater than the ones they committed. In this sense they too dread disbelief. They fear the veil of their lies being lifted; they fear that their narrative holds questionable value as their narrator is of dubious morality, and thus by extension untrustworthy. Though for entirely different reasons, in much the same way as the victims described above, perpetrators also frequently choose to be silent, for when they speak, the fact/truth value of their statements is, too, put into question.

How, then, does one convey the truth about the violent past? Juliane Okot Bitek reflects on this very same question – of truth and how to share it – from the point of view of the survivor in *100 Days*. “How these hundred days/should be days . . . /to witness ~~humanity & good~~,”¹⁰⁴ begins the poem “Day 90,” the crossed-out words paradoxically screaming in their erasure that which was certainly not witnessed during the 100-day period: *humanity & good*. “Day 46,” a genuine ode to bearing witness in Okot Bitek’s oeuvre, underlines with great precision the difficulties and limitations of attestation:

we know/the impossibility of knowing everything that happened/we know that
true witnesses cannot speak/& that those who have words/cannot articulate the
inarticulable/we know that there are those who died/without telling what they
knew/we know that there are those who live/without telling what they
know/we also know what some people choose to tell/& some stories choose to
remain untold¹⁰⁵

It is impossible to know everything that happened in 1994. Some of this impossibility lies in the fact that those who did know and could tell are now deceased. Other reasons include the impossibility of articulating the inarticulable or the choice to remain silent. Might this latter hesitancy, moreover, be attributed to the idea that we do not always know what the truth entails or that the truth, whatever this comes to signify, is not always believed? The concept of truth is

¹⁰⁴ Okot Bitek, Juliane. *100 Days*, *op. cit.*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

even questioned by Isaro when she explains that she does not always collect veracious testimony.

As she states,

Même les mensonges des gens, leurs omissions, leurs exagérations me paraissent intéressantes. N'oubliez pas que l'objectif de cette aventure est précisément de mettre en lumière la subjectivité, car c'est là-dessus que se fondent la haine et la violence (LPDS 90).

Notwithstanding Isaro's (we presume good) intentions, this passage, which highlights the subjectivity of attestation, also calls into question the truthfulness of testimony. It points to the larger problem that victims are not always openly believed or trusted, and frequently need to undergo trying and tribulating recounts of their lived atrocious experiences only then to be partially believed or entirely disbelieved, their accounts labeled as exaggerated, too horrific to be true, or just simply false.¹⁰⁶ As Robert Harvey summarizes, "A witness is present, thought to be

¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the credibility of victim and survivor testimony is frequently put into question. Even in the most well-intentioned of interviewers, in the case of Lee Ann Fujii, for instance, who conducted extensive and groundbreaking fieldwork in Rwanda, deceptive and dissimulative narratives are put to the foreground in her article "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence." Fujii analyses various forms of deceit observed during interviews – from embellishments to evasions to complete silence – in her article and argues that these manifestations of meta-data ("the spoken and unspoken expressions about people's interior thoughts and feelings" (*op. cit.*, 232), as Fujii explains) are in fact data, just as telling as the facts individuals unveil. As she posits, "narratives of violence, even those filled with inaccuracies, fictions, and lies, can embody all sorts of truths – emotional, psychological, and moral. These truths are as crucial to researchers' analyses of past violence and prospects for future peace as any 'fact-based' reports" (235). Admittedly, the truth comes in different facets and is made of various dimensions – a fact that can lead to unprecedented discoveries into the psychology of traumatic storytelling, the complexity of giving and collecting testimony, and the experience of the interview, but such a truth about the truth can also be used against victims and survivors. The putting into question of victim testimony has been especially visible in cases of sexual violence. *Vox*, among many others, has published articles on the topic. See, for instance, "What We Know About False Rape Allegations" (Lind, Dara. *Vox*. June 1, 2015. <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/1/8687479/lie-rape-statistics>). What we *do* know is that false rape allegations are incredible rare: "somewhere between 2 and 8 percent" (*ibid.*). For other analyses of victim truth and testimony, in a variety of contexts, see Cristiana Giordano's "Lying the Truth: Practices of Confession and Recognition" (*Current Anthropology*, Vol. 56, No. 12 (December 2015), 211-221). The article investigates the act of *denuncia*, that is, the denunciation of an individual's perpetrator to a representative of the law, focusing on victims of human trafficking reporting their experience to police officers in Italy. Giordano summarizes the undertaking as follows: "The stories that converge in the denuncia are the result of several regimes of truth intersecting with each other; they produce a testimony that, while not entirely truthful, is nevertheless not a lie either. This is the performative power of the confessional" (*ibid.*, 220). See also Brigittine M. French's "Technologies of Telling: Discourse, Transparency, and Erasure in Guatemalan Truth Commission Testimony" (*Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 8 (2009), 92-109). Focusing on various forms of narrative and discourse, French studies the power dynamics of truth and reconciliation commissions – in Guatemala in her report specifically – and the marginalization and subjugation survivors undergo when bearing witness within the framework of a commission as a result of the official format their testimony must take which can mutate its meaning and lessen its significance. Consider also Holly L. Guthrey's "Expectations and

present, hoped present whenever an event occurs.”¹⁰⁷ The way in which in the previous quote the presence of the witness becomes progressively hypothetical indicates not only the uncertainty involved in bearing witness (what does it mean to be present at an event, to see it, to remember what happened, and to perform a recapitulation of the occurrence?) but also acknowledges our acceptance of this possible uncertainty when bearing witness to the testimony of a witness.

Harvey also states:

Since *Auschwitz*, witnessing – being a witness and the being of a witness – elicits a level of respect that can be mesmerizing. When a witness is called to the stand that bears his name, when one of them stands before rendering testimony, the audience falls silent, sensing that a heretofore hidden truth about all of us will now, suddenly, come spectacularly to light. . . . Witnesses who are survivors of the most egregious crimes are revered as repositories whose memories might build ramparts against future genocides and ethnocides.¹⁰⁸

And yet, once again, what Harvey insists is that the witness’s esteem is becoming increasingly negated in today’s antagonistic climate. “The professional representatives of the culpable try to confound them [the witnesses] or stifle them in hopes that the deeds of their clients will remain unverified, unprosecuted, unpunished,”¹⁰⁹ reads the ellipsis in the above quotation and this is true today more than ever. Though witnesses in certain situation are – and very much should be –

Promises in the Quest for Truth: Examining Victims’ Perceptions of Truth Commission Participation in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste” (*Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 4, (2016), 306-317), an article focused on the expectations survivors have when agreeing to share their stories of survivorship within the context of truth and reconciliation commissions – in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste in this case – and the consequences, such as the calling into question of truth and reconciliation commissions in general, that ensue when their testimony engenders little change.

¹⁰⁷ Harvey, Robert. *Witnessness: Beckett, Dante, Levi and the Foundations of Responsibility*. New York: Continuum, 2010, 6. Harvey in this text embarks on an analysis of Beckett’s *Worstward Ho* (1983), the latter’s penultimate prose piece and the only text he deemed untranslatable (see 5n4), informed by Dante’s *Purgatorio* and Primo Levi’s *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986) and *If This Be a Man* (1947, also published under the titles *If This Is a Man*, *Survival at Auschwitz*, and *Survival in Auschwitz*), against the backdrop of Auschwitz and all in the light of the very act of translation. It lays bare an ethics of witnessing, even awakening in its readers a deep ethical consciousness with respect to the witness and what it means to bear witness. Questions of ethics, art, and empathy are once again posed in Harvey’s more recent *Sharing Common Ground: A Space for Ethics* (2017), this time, fittingly for what is to arise in the next chapter, with respect to Marguerite Duras.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

honored archives, experience in recent years has shown us that they are frequently far from respected. For there to be credence, for that which is witnessed to be accepted as truth, suspension of disbelief or the renunciation of political partisanship is regularly necessary on behalf of the witness's interlocutor. Testimony can otherwise be contested, met with incredulity. Ultimately, we once again find ourselves at an impasse, face to face with the impossibility of knowing in the face of an event at which one was not present or which one did not experience.

Regardless of Gatore's background, and whatever his project and motives may be, the form of *Le Passé devant soi* results in lacunary, disjointed moments that point precisely to the impasse mentioned above and the loaded dynamics that exist between witnesses, perpetrators, and survivors. Bernard De Meyer in his reading of Gatore's novel offers a wider reflection on the fictional literature of genocide by underlining how the two Rwandan nationals of the "Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire" project initially demonstrated hesitancy toward fictionalizing the genocide: "Jean-Marie Vianney Rurangwa et Vénuste Kayimahé . . . étaient convaincus à l'époque qu'on ne pouvait pas fictionnaliser le génocide,"¹¹⁰ he writes. And yet, in response to Rurangwa and Kayimahé, and Waberi and Adorno from earlier in this chapter, literature in some capacity, even if circuitously, does speak of and to atrocities; narrative provides an archive – what Antonin Artaud would call "l'importance de l'artiste et de cette fonction de sauvegarde qu'il exerce au profit du bien collectif"¹¹¹ – that "speaks" when atrocities, especially the gratuitous, senseless, monstrous kind, and their direct testimony are nearly, if not entirely, "unspeakable," unnamable. As Semujanga writes in *Narrating Itsembabwoko* (2016), "the question of the inexpressible in [genocide literature] gives way to that of the enunciative distance

¹¹⁰ De Meyer, Bernard. "Le Passé devant soi de Gilbert Gatore: du génocide à la littérature," *op. cit.*, 37-38.

¹¹¹ Artaud, Antonin. *Œuvres complètes*, t. VIII. Paris: Gallimard, 1971, 287.

opposite the event. . . . Writers seek forms – language or genre – that allow them to represent the horror of extermination . . . using words that communicate the values of humanity. . . .”¹¹² De Meyer too observes that “[i]l serait donc possible, par la fiction, d’approcher la vérité d’une façon différente; l’intimité de ce qui s’est passé ne peut être exprimée pleinement par le témoignage du survivant, enfermé dans le deuil et les souvenirs qui s’évaporent.”¹¹³ Perhaps fiction, then – a form that by its very definition is not expected to be entirely truthful or exact – is the most liberating option there is, one that speaks the truth through a constructed falsity. Indeed, the complex architecture of Gatore’s text, its nested fictionalized narratives that encompass both the limits of representation and the limits of witnessing in the face of atrocity, and the very contention it elicits do precisely this. Although *Le Passé devant soi* is disputable historical documentation vis-à-vis the Rwandan genocide, it indisputably produces other forms of knowledge: ontological reconfigurations and cognizance of our moral and ethical comfort – societally, academically – in allowing a perpetrator to speak and to study his or her narrative. Gatore’s novel also underscores, more problematically than ever, the specific power of cruelty to trouble categorical definitions, including that of what makes a work of fiction.

In the final analysis, the atrocities of genocide put into question how we represent – or whether we even can depict or, more fundamentally, *know* – horrific events. Be it the fault of memory and its ability to twist and change the truth, be it the active changes the truth undergoes because of lying, suppression, and retraction, on the side, notably, of the perpetrator, be it the choice to remain silent: testimony and bearing witness to atrocity are condemned to the

¹¹² Semujanga, Josias. *Narrating Itsembabwoko: When Literature Becomes Testimony of Genocide*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016, 17.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 39. De Meyer concludes his article by stating that Gatore’s project is to “déplacer la parole, de la déshumaniser et de la rendre artistique. L’ambition de Gatore était donc moins de témoigner, mais de s’afficher en tant qu’écrivain” (*ibid.*, 50).

unknown. The truth is nebulous to a point, however. Some part of the truth should be – and is – known. As Primo Levi states, “one must note that the distortion of fact is often limited by the objectivity of the facts themselves, around which there exists the testimonies of third parties, documents, *corpora delicti*, historically accepted contexts. It is generally difficult to deny having committed a given act, or that such an act was committed. . . .”¹¹⁴ This chapter, for instance, is an artefact that speaks to the objective atrocities of the Rwandan genocide and attempts to do its part in bearing witness by juxtaposing testimony and legal documents to fiction and analyzing the dialogue created between them. And yet generally today, the notion of objective fact finds itself called into question. It is our responsibility to read critically, to discuss openly, and to move forward in search of the truth.

¹¹⁴ Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2017, 19.

CHAPTER 5

IMPERSONALITY AND ABJECTION: TOWARD A NARRATOLOGY OF CRUELTY

There are those who fear the very hills where they should be working their lands. There are those who fear encountering Hutus on the road. There are Hutus who saved Tutsis but who no longer dare go home to their villages, for fear that no one will believe them. There are people who fear visitors, or the night. There are innocent faces that frighten others and fear they are frightening others, as if they were criminals. There is the fear of threats, the panic of memories.

— Sylvie Umubyeyi, Rwandan genocide survivor¹

Les mots ne sont que masques/Vainement jetés sur la peur.
— Maïssa Bey (ACS 52)

At grief so deep the tongue must wag in
vain; the language of our sense and memory
lacks the vocabulary of such pain.
— Dante, *Inferno*

Pain is original and pure. It is the first thing.
— Sharon Cameron, *Beautiful Work: A Meditation on Pain*

With Chapter 4's concluding analysis of form, why, now, turn to Marguerite Duras? It is indeed precisely, as this final chapter will show, for the reason of form that I have chosen to focus on this author. Perhaps Duras does not appear to be the most obvious figure to close this study of cruelty, human inhumanity, and monstrous acts, and especially not following a discussion of 21st-century conflict. And yet Duras and her corpus incomparably sum up everything analyzed thus far. She brings us back, through a few chapters and a few decades, to WWII, echoing Saint-Exupéry and the beginning of this work. Her fictional content, thematically, is also not all that distant from the works of Bachi, Bey, and Gatore. Like the latter

¹ Sylvie fled Butare for Nyamata at the start of the genocide. This quote appears in *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak* (2003); she was also interviewed for Hatzfeld's *The Antelope's Strategy: Living in Rwanda after the Genocide* (2007).

three writers, Duras offers reflections on war, suffering, and torture – to name just a few of the concepts either touched upon or analyzed at length in this project. Finally, it will become clear that I read Duras’s oeuvre as also offering an essential reflection on cruelty and a reconceptualization of the categories of the human, of the in-human, precisely through this notion. In this chapter I will address cruelty in conjunction with an analysis of narrative, namely form, as represented in Duras’s collection of six short texts dedicated to pain, *La douleur* – an autofictional, even autobiographical account of and reflection on Duras’s actions during WWII published in 1985. I focus particularly on what I will be developing as *abjectifying repetition*: be it of fear in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” painful waiting in “La douleur,” or the word “donneur” and its variants in “Albert des Capitales.” Moreover, I will be considering the various human entities that these repetitions destabilize: subject in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” object in “La douleur,” and subject again in “Albert des Capitales.”

Duras and her work have been studied at length, with the vocabulary used by scholars to characterize or describe her writing over the last several decades systematically including the

terms: silent/silence (and frequently in conjunction with absence),² void/lacuna,³ erasure,⁴ blankness/blank space,⁵ impersonal,⁶ and the intricate linguistic web these words weave. For decades, silence, its metonyms, and the name Duras have gone hand in hand in an effort, on the part of literary critics to respond to the aftermath of WWII, to develop an aesthetics of the

² As Lucy Stone McNeece summarizes, “There has been eloquent testimony to Duras’ use of silence, gaps, fragmented syntax, repetition and slow rhythms, and both the elliptical narrative structures and the poetic allusiveness of her texts have been the subject of sustained interest” (“The Reader in the Field of Rye: Marguerite Duras’ *L’Amour*,” *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1992, 3). She further explains how “Although almost everyone writing on Duras’ novels discusses the economy of her gaps, silences, and fragmented syntax, certain critics have focused on one or another rhetorical device. For example, Christine Mawkward [*sic*] treats hysteria and the role of silence in an article entitled ‘Structures du silence/du délire’; Trista Selous devotes an entire chapter to the blanks in *The Other Woman*; Madeleine Borgomano studies Duras’ language in relation to the texts’ fantasmatic structures” (*ibid.*, 15n2). Makward labels this silence in additional ways: “Ellipsis or ‘manque’—lack, lacuna, hole, ‘trou,’ absence, blank space, rarefied text, ethereal meaning, evanescent plot, elusive character, silence, loss. . .” (Makward, Christiane P. “For a Stylistics of Marguerite Duras.” *L’Esprit Créateur*, Vol. 30, No. 1, “Marguerite Duras” (Spring 1990), 34), while Pamela A. Genova underlines the inseparability of silence and absence: “this image of dark silence haunts Duras’s work, continually present in the absence it implies” (“Marguerite Duras and the Contingencies of Modern Autobiography: *L’Amant*,” *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1/2 (Spring-Autumn, 2003), 46). For more on this latter term, see Nina S. Hellerstein’s “‘Image’ and Absence in Marguerite Duras’ *L’Amant*” (*Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring, 1991), 45-56). See also the articles “Duras’ War” (Kritzman, Lawrence D. *L’Esprit Créateur*, Vol. 33, No. 1, “The Occupation in French Literature & Film, 1940-1992” (Spring 1993), 63-73); Marilyn R. Schuster’s chapter “Criminals of Love: From Interrogations of Desire to a Narrative of Silence” in her book *Marguerite Duras Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993); Lisa F. Signori’s *The Feminization of Surrealism: The Road to Surreal Silence in Selected Works of Marguerite Duras* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); and “Women, Trauma, and Late Modernity: Sontag, Duras, and Silence in Cinema, 1960-1980” (Kaplan, E. Ann. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Vol. 50, No. 1/2 (Spring & Fall 2009), 158-175) for repeated use of the terms silence and absence.

³ “In *L’Amour* the elements of character, relationships, time, and memory are destroyed in the course of Duras’ revolutionary itinerary toward the void,” writes Deborah B. Gaensbauer (“Revolutionary Writing in Marguerite Duras’ *L’Amour*,” *The French Review*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (April 1982), 634). Other texts such as Laurie Vickroy’s chapter entitled “Filling the Void: Transference, Love, Being and Writing in Duras’s *L’Amant*” (*Marguerite Duras Lives On*. Edited by Janine Ricouart. Lanham: University Press of America, 1998, 123-36) offer further reflections on Duras’s “voids.”

⁴ There is an entire passage dedicated to erasure in Susan D. Cohen’s *Women and Discourse in the Fiction of Marguerite Duras: Love, Legends, Language* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, 183-189); erasure is also mentioned in James S. Williams’s *The Erotics of Passage: Pleasure, Politics, and Form in the Later Work of Marguerite Duras* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997). Incidentally, eroticism and desire and, moreover, how these concepts relate to silence are also frequent topics of analysis in Duras Studies.

⁵ See Just, Daniel. “Aesthetics of Blankness: Political Imagination in Marguerite Duras’s Hybrid Narratives.” *Romanic Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (May 2010), 359-376.

⁶ Gaensbauer also asserts that “the global, impersonal, catastrophic quality of *L’Amour* may remain unique in Duras’ development as a social novelist” (“Revolutionary Writing in Marguerite Duras’ *L’Amour*,” *The French Review*, *op. cit.*, 634). Regardless of *L’Amour*’s (1972) contested revolutionary uniqueness in Duras’s corpus, it remains that the text, like so many of Duras’s works, evinces an impersonal narrative. Just furthermore adds: “Duras’s early eighties hybrid stories were almost entirely composed of one-word exchanges, moments of silence, and simple questions that precipitated a series of short circular answers. Even though the often included stage directions provided some information about the settings, they were highly impersonal and with no narrative agency that would help to move the story into its next phase” (Just, Daniel. “Aesthetics of Blankness,” *Romanic Review*, *op. cit.*, 366).

modern in Duras or, as Kristeva explains, of the postmodern: “[m]oderne historiquement et psychologiquement, cette écriture se trouve aujourd’hui confrontée au défi postmoderne.”⁷

Indeed, the atrocity of the war redefined any aesthetics or ideology preexisting it. Kristeva notes: “l’actualité de la Seconde Guerre mondiale a brutalisé les consciences par l’explosion de la mort et de la folie qu’aucun barrage, idéologique ou esthétique, ne paraissait plus pouvoir contenir.”⁸

The Durasian subject has equally been a topic of inquiry in conjunction with the above phraseology – of erasure, blankness, the impersonal. Indeed, there has even been debate as to whether the subject in Duras truly is erased or whether it progresses to some other form, an out-of-body manifestation. Consider, for instance, how Tatiana Karl’s essence extends beyond the physical delimitations of her skin, in turn rendering her subject-state nebulous, undefined in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964): “Tatiana sort d’elle-même, se répand par les fenêtres ouvertes, sur la ville, les routes, boue, liquide, marée de nudité” (RLVS 116).⁹ Jon Wagner and Lynne Goodhart posit this query – of whether or not the Durasian subject is erased – in the following way:

Duras herself contributed to this confusion [“of the dissolving subject”] by describing her novel *Le Vice-consul* and her film *India Song* as showing a constant movement toward an erasure of the subjective self in favour of the whole. In her published conversations with Xavière Gauthier, Duras refers to “ce gommage de l’être en faveur du tout” (210). How is this movement toward the apparent elimination of the ego incorporated into the substance of the texts and films? Is there genuine progression involved in the erasure of the subject in Duras? And what is the nature of what she calls “le tout” toward which her characters might be moving?¹⁰

⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Soleil noir: Dépression et mélancolie*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987, 246.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹ Carol J. Murphy explains how in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, “Les personnages ne sont que des bribes d’identité et à force de ne pas porter de noms, ils se confondent dans l’élaboration de l’histoire” (“Marguerite Duras: le texte comme écho.” *The French Review*, Vol. 50, No. 6 (May, 1977), 853), an observation that can be extended to various other works by Duras.

¹⁰ Wagner, Jon, and Lynne Goodhart. “Durassic Park: Evolution and Extinction in the Work of Marguerite Duras.” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 2004), 110.

Although hypothesizing on this “tout” is beyond the scope of this analysis, the concepts of silence and erasure are indeed important here. In what follows I will argue that a complete impersonalization, that is, a rendering-impersonal – which will be discussed at length in dialogue with Sharon Cameron – is at work in Durasian texts that revolve around martial cruelty, whether or not this cruelty is directly stated. I will demonstrate how the cruelty of the events circuitously described by Duras is translated into a textuality and aesthetics of the abject through an excessive silence – by way of abjectifying repetition – with respect to a variety of atrocities. I will show that it is through this abject form and apparatus device of repetition that the language relating to cruel events in Duras’s texts is enunciated through a type of impersonality, producing an erasure of the subject, expelling elements or traces of the human in the work, and in turn putting at stake the presumed distinctions between human and inhuman.¹¹ Ultimately, I will underscore not only how cruelty and cruel actions bring into focus and interrogate the border between human and inhuman, but specifically how cruelty relates to textual form and strategy: here it will be a question of articulating cruelty with silence, with the abject, and with the impersonal.

Consequently, Kristeva’s notion of the abject, as developed in *Pouvoirs de l’horreur* (1980), is vital to this analysis. Before even turning to the topic of the abject, however, it is

¹¹ For more on repetition in Duras – another prevalent area of study with respect to Duras’s corpus – see, for instance, Catherine Oxland’s focus on time and repetition in “*Moderato cantabile*: ou l’incantation psalmodiée d’un désespoir féroce.” (*La Chouette* (1981): 12-34); Françoise Py’s “La ‘Constellation India Song.’” (*L’Arc* 98 (1985): 71-75) on the repetition – with difference – of characters in Duras’s India Song cycle; Marie-France Étienne’s examination of Lacanian-informed repetition and oblivion in “L’Oubli et la répétition: *Hiroshima mon amour*.” (*Romanic Review* 78, no. 4 (1987): 508-14); Claude-André Tabart’s focus on repetition and, on the contrary, remembrance in “Marguerite Duras, une parole perpétuelle.” (*L’École des lettres II* 79, no. 6 (1987): 3-13); Anne Bariet’s “*Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras: Un mythe de l’éternelle répétition.” (*Recherches sur l’imaginaire* 18 (1988): 157-73) in dialogue with Mircea Eliade’s notion of the eternal return; Yves Moraud’s “Duras et le roman poétique.” (*Cahiers du CERF XX* 5 (1989): 79-105), which turns to the idea of repetition while discussing the poetics of Duras’s novels; Anne Tomiche’s turn once again to forgetting and repetition, alongside Freud, in “Repetition: Memory and Oblivion. Freud, Duras, and Stein.” (*Revue de Littérature Comparée* 65, no. 3 (1991): 261-76); and George Moskos’s psychoanalytic reading of *Savannah Bay*, where repetition in the text is compared to the *fort/da* game played by Freud’s grandson in “Child’s Play: Repetition and Death in Marguerite Duras’s *Savannah Bay*.” (*Neophilologus* 77, no., 2 (1993): 215-21).

important to note that Kristeva in general is acutely relevant to any discussion of Duras, having addressed many of the motifs present in Duras's oeuvre in her chapter entitled "La maladie de la douleur: Duras," in *Soleil noir: Dépression et mélancolie* (1987). Addressing death and pleasure, abandonment, the multiplicity and mirroring of characters, and the figure of the mother in her text, she equally accentuates Duras's take on melancholia – "la mélancolie durassienne"¹² – depression, and sadness: "[l]a tristesse serait la maladie fondamentale."¹³ Through Duras's literary and cinematographic corpus, Kristeva reflects more generally on the state of artistic expression after "l'horreur de la Seconde Guerre mondiale."¹⁴

Like the scholars who have come after her, Kristeva concentrates on voids, "paroles vides,"¹⁵ and silence in Duras's corpus: "Les discours elliptiques des personnages, l'obsédante évocation d'un 'rien' qui résumerait la maladie de la douleur, désignent un naufrage des mots face à l'affect innommable."¹⁶ And yet in parallel to this silence, Kristeva's notion of the abject is paradoxically productive when put in dialogue with Duras for according to Kristeva, the abject is seen in literature through an overflowing of words, a fascination for bodily fluids and excrement much like a fetishized verbal orgy. Although Duras's abjection is far less "classical" than that, I will maintain that in the short texts analyzed here, the mechanisms of impersonality – through, for instance, the repetition of concepts such as fear, or of *not* naming directly any of the violent or perturbing events that take place in the story, that is, blatant avoidance or deflective writing – nevertheless constitute a form of abjection and evidence of abjection as form. In other words, the narrator's silence with respect to recorded atrocities produces less an overflowing of

¹² Kristeva, Julia. *Soleil noir: Dépression et mélancolie*, op. cit., 242.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

words to describe those acts than an overflowing of silence vis-à-vis cruel events. The effect of this silence is to critically implicate the narrator of these texts, for she – the narrator is consistently a woman and, we can imagine, a double or mirror image of Duras herself – is no longer seen as a subject – to borrow from Kristeva’s vocabulary we can say there is an expulsion of the subject or the “I” – or even as an object, but rather as a form of the inhuman free of any affect.

Revisiting the Irregularities of War

As we will see, Duras avoids directly discussing or representing the atrocities of WWII in her works, and so I underline these acts here to acknowledge their occurrence and highlight precisely what impersonalization and abjection are hiding or transforming in the Durasian short stories studied below. In what follows I will delineate some of the numerous ways in which WWII was both cruel and the beyond cruel, gratuitously monstrous in these cases also, underscoring once again the relevance of a discussion of the in-human within the context of the irregularities of battle. As Kalyvas states, to continue tracing a line of thinking posited in my Introduction,

Irregular war, broadly conceived, has been practiced in ‘backward’ areas invaded by regular armies (e.g. wars of empire and colonization); in areas that had been already colonized (wars of decolonization); in modern states whose regular armies have been defeated on the battlefield (wars of occupation); in weak but modernizing states bent on centralization and the subjugation of their periphery; and in ‘failing’ or ‘failed’ states.¹⁷

In Chapters 3 and 4 of this work, we witnessed manifestations of irregular combat in a war of independence and civil war in Algeria and an ethnically-motivated civil war and genocide in Rwanda. Needless to say, WWII too exhibited many irregularities, from Nazi death camps to

¹⁷ Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 67.

what Kalyvas identifies as “wars of occupation,” namely the German occupation of Europe from Ushant to Mozdok, Barentsburg to Gavdos, comprising of course the Military Administration in France.

With respect to the former example, Elissa Mailänder in her chapter “License to Kill? Unauthorized Actions by the Camp Guards” focuses on Nazi concentration and extermination camps, and although she specifically addresses the acts of female SS guards (*Aufseherinnen*), she describes atrocity that is applicable in general to the Nazi camps. As Mailänder explains:

[t]he disciplinary and penal code for the concentration camps spelled out the treatment of prisoners in precise detail. However, the daily violence and punishments meted out by the SS often bore little relation to these official guidelines, a discrepancy that has received comparatively little attention in the scholarship on Nazi concentration camps.¹⁸

This discrepancy – a further irregularity in the already extremely irregular practice of the death camp – is what makes the distinction, seen throughout this dissertation, between exceedingly cruel, highly regulated treatments and monstrous acts seemingly devoid of any human content. Mailänder cites various documents that outline the rules that guards were supposedly required to follow, with flogging, for instance, being permitted “only as a last resort.”¹⁹ Indeed, physical punishment or abuse was formally not allowed in the camps: “[o]fficially, . . . the duty regulations that applied to all concentration camps expressly forbade the female guards from carrying out corporal punishments, or from exacting punishments on their own initiative,”²⁰ and yet, Mailänder goes on to explain, they systematically did just that. Often floggings occurred

¹⁸ Mailänder Koslov, Elissa. *Female SS Guards and Workaday Violence: The Majdanek Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. Translated by Patricia Szobar. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015, 207.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 212. She equally references documents that state that “[w]hen a prisoner is escaping, the guard must call ‘halt’ three times while drawing his weapon” (as quoted in *ibid.*, 221) to allow the prisoner the possibility of stopping before being shot.

“before permission was received from the higher level,”²¹ as stated by Dorothea Binz, an *Aufseherin*, even though bureaucratic paper work needed to be filed – or more precisely performed as being filed – to authorize the operation.²² There was thus in the camps a mix of formal procedure horrific in its own right *and* gratuitous atrocity or acts of monstrosity, a coming and going that Mailänder calls “shifting between sanctioned violence and arbitrary brutality.”²³

Mailänder equally analyzes the many arbitrary rules prisoners were meant to follow and of which they were not informed and needed to learn “by way of brutality”²⁴ upon their arrival at the camps. Thus for both guards and prisoners, “the rules were designed to be broken,”²⁵ Paul Martin Neurath, a prisoner at Dachau and Buchenwald, states. But there were also different degrees to this rule-breaking for the guards. As Danuta Medryk, a survivor, explains,

Aufseherin Braunsteiner and *Aufseherin* Lächert administered the most punishments. There were major differences in how hard they hit. We preferred to have *Aufseherin* Anni David carry out the punishments. But *Aufseherinnen* Braunsteiner, Lächert, and Orlowski administered the sharpest blows.²⁶

Here the discrepancy between how blows are supposed to be administered and are actually issued is witnessed once more, leading one to ask to what this difference in degree is attributed. Besides being founded on enmity, which Mailänder does not speak of, was it a sense of agency that such acts gave to their perpetrator, a sense of superiority or authority that comes from being the “best” employee, the one flogging the hardest and shooting the most that prompted them? Indeed, one could “risk rejection by their colleagues and peers”²⁷ by not participating vigorously and enthusiastically enough in these acts of violence. “[R]ather than simply administer the

²¹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 217.

²² See *ibid.*, 213-217.

²³ *Ibid.*, 227. The fact that there is a shift is in and of itself already arbitrary.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*

²⁶ As quoted in *ibid.*, 219.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

prescribed 25 lashes, a female guard might add an extra one for good measure; nor was one whipping exactly like the next, since *Aufseherinnen* were free to choose how vigorously to administer the blows,”²⁸ summarizes Mailänder, highlighting the perverse adherence less to the rules of the camps than to their theatrics. Though there is no one simple answer to why these atrocities were committed, what is clear is that this martial irregularity, this spilling over of war into non-sanctioned violence weakens the humanity and in turn humanness of its perpetrators. “[L]es Monstres occupaient le ciel allemand,”²⁹ writes Hélène Cixous, labelling these malfactors as inhuman beings.

In addition to these irregularities, WWII displayed many others. One case to note is the French Resistance Movement. Like the *maquisards* known as *mujahideen* or *djounoud* seen in Chapter 3, French Resistance fighters too were members of the Maquis and guerilla fighters in their own right who disrupted the German presence in France with clandestine missions from reconnaissance to sabotage. From Étienne Achavanne, “le premier martyr de la résistance intérieure,”³⁰ shot for having interfered with the communication lines at the Boos base outside of Rouen to Honoré d’Estienne d’Orves, “le premier agent de la France libre à tomber sous les balles de l’ennemi,”³¹ who established a radio line in Brittany to collect intelligence on the Germans, various acts of resistance and French Resistance Movements were born during Germany’s occupation of France, eventually unified by Jean Moulin until his capture and death at the hands of the Gestapo in 1943.³² Duras too, in real life, participated in the French

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁹ Cixous, Hélène. *1938, nuits*. Paris: Galilée, 2019, i.

³⁰ Wieviorka, Olivier. *Histoire de la résistance: 1940-1945*. Paris: Perrin, 2013, 13. Wieviorka’s text is a monumental source on the topic of the French Resistance. See it in addition to *Une histoire de la résistance en Europe occidentale* (2017) for more.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² See Figures 36 and 37 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for more on Moulin.

Resistance, as do many of her characters in *La douleur*. “Il n’y aura plus jamais de justice dans le monde si on n’est pas soi-même la justice en ce moment-ci” (AdesC 135), asserts the narrator of “Albert des Capitales,” describing what essentially amounts to vigilante acts as one of the duties of Resistance fighters.

Klaus Barbie, a Nazi notoriously known as the “Butcher of Lyon,” was responsible for Jean Moulin’s arrest as well as the suffering and death of thousands. He escaped to Bolivia after the war but was extradited to France in 1983. After being on trial for over 400 hours in 1987, he was sentenced to life in prison for crimes against humanity and died incarcerated in 1991. A 45-minute selection of the trial is screened multiple times a day at the Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation in Lyon.³³ In it, several witnesses try to bear witness to lived atrocities that words cannot even begin to express. Various torture techniques – from victims being hung by the wrists, the strappado or corda method, to being beaten and forced to have sex with a dog – are described, with a constant emphasis put on the inhuman. These victims were viewed as *Untermenschen*, “under men,” deemed subhuman, less-than-human.

It is clear from this short survey alone that calling into question the category of the human, namely by imbricating it with its inhuman counterpart, is undeniably produced by the violence of the Second World War. This violence, moreover, has various manifestations. Cruel violence, a requisite in irregular combat as I argued in my Introduction and Chapter 1, is a rule-defying violence that is nonetheless regulated, an excessive violence that is not reappropriable,

³³ See Figure 38 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for images of this site. The story of Barbie’s life was turned into a four-and-a-half-hour documentary, *Hôtel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1988. On October 9, 2018, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, the Nazi-hunting couple responsible for tracking Barbie down in South America in 1971, were awarded France’s Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor and the National Order of Merit respectively by President Emmanuel Macron.

verging on the unaccountable, and yet economic insofar as it is committed for reasons, and generates value. If violence begins cruel, it can also become aneconomic, senseless, “monstrous.” Cruelty thereby invokes various forms of the inhuman, oftentimes the monstrous, for the reason that humans who engage in cruel acts oscillate on the border of human and inhuman, flirt with becoming something other by way of their acts. Notice even how Duras comments on the senselessness of the war while also mentioning *cruor* in notes indicating the staging of the German soldier’s death scene, witnessed by his lover, in *Hiroshima mon amour*. As she writes, describing the couple: “Ils sont tous les deux, à égalité, en proie à cet événement: sa mort à lui. . . . Même douleur. Même sang. Mêmes larmes. L’absurdité de la guerre, mise à nue, plane leurs corps indistincts.”³⁴ Underscoring *l’absurdité de la guerre*, this passage recalls the exodus from Chapter 1 described by both Saint-Exupéry and Werth as monstrous. But it also mentions *sang*. And though this may appear to be but a word, *sang* evokes the (etymologically) cruel realities of the war, and, further, when juxtaposed to *absurdité*, imbricates cruelty with gratuity, inflecting *cruor* with the monstrous.

Clearly in this scene, Duras does not *directly* state, differentiate between, or conflate monstrosity and cruelty. Nor does she do this in the stories that I will be studying here – or in her corpus more globally for that matter. But the presence of the in-human in the face of cruelty – and beyond cruelty – is captured by Duras without her ever even explicitly stating it. This is accomplished, namely, through what we will understand as abject repetition.³⁵ The maddening

³⁴ Duras, Marguerite. “La mort de l’Allemand.” *Les Évidences nocturnes; Nevers; scénario (fragments)*, 500/90. 76 DRS 18.6, the IMEC.

³⁵ The simultaneous erasure and evidence that abject repetition gives rise to is starkly obvious in Duras’s “L’ortie brisée,” the second-to-last short story of *La douleur*. War is at the heart of this text and yet, few mentions of war – we assume WWII – are actually made. In the text, the word “*ortie*,” nettle, or more specifically stinging nettle, is a word that is compulsively repeated; the plant becomes a placeholder for the war and its traumatic legacy. Though the war is referenced directly twice in the short story, it cannot compare to the substantial descriptions of nettle in the text. The use of the plant as a substitute for descriptions of the war and its horrors then avoids the direct naming

recurrence of certain words, as we shall see, both erases and brings to the forefront the cruelties of the war. This strategy, furthermore, impersonalizes the text by jettisoning affect and subjectivity to the point of reducing traces of the human from it, forcing the human to edge toward the inhuman. Whereas in my previous chapters the inhuman predominately manifested as the monstrous or the animal – an extension beyond cruelty that is always already inscribed into it – in the following texts, the inhuman will present as an impersonal form of writing, further problematizing the places at which one turns or spills over into the other by imbricating the human subject with an impersonal inhumanity. Overall, the human subjects and objects of cruelty remain human in the texts that I will study – cruelty in the final analysis *is* accountable in human terms – but not before being impersonalized, showing us how “humanity” is far from being a simple concept.

Fearing Monsieur X.

“[L]e sujet qui a peur reste toujours un sujet,” Roland Barthes affirms in 1973 in *Le Plaisir du texte*. He continues: “mais qui pourrait dire: ‘*J’écris pour ne pas avoir peur*’? Qui pourrait écrire la peur (ce qui ne voudrait pas dire la raconter)?”³⁶ If anyone is capable of generating a textual fearing, if anyone can *write fear*, to borrow Barthes’s expression, it is Marguerite Duras. Indeed the word “peur” appears 43 times in her 45-page text entitled “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.” The short story recounts a series of encounters from 1944, between a woman, who remains nameless in the text, and a man named Pierre Rabier, a Gestapo agent and, more precisely, the individual who has arrested the woman’s husband – a member,

of the events, impersonalizing the text by giving more prominent descriptive space to a plot than to the affects and effects of the war. This short story was adapted into a 20-minute long film by Franck Bourrel in 2010. See <https://vimeo.com/89949373>.

³⁶ Barthes, Roland. “Le Plaisir du texte.” *Œuvres complètes*. Paris: Seuil, 2002, 249.

like his wife, of the French Resistance. Rabier and Monsieur X. are in fact pseudonyms for Charles Delval, the actual gestapo officer who apprehended Duras's husband, Robert Antelme (who will become an important figure in my analysis of "La douleur"). Duras kept company with Delval from June to August 1944.³⁷ The short story, an imbrication of history and fiction, is told against the backdrop of Second World War and quickly demonstrates a near-obsessional fear, the word "peur" being as frequent as the very pages of the text. Moreover, it is not simply a repetition of the word "peur" that Duras's work produces, but a strategic, functioning fear, a fear that acts, that works, that does.

In 1980, Julia Kristeva published *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, which includes a chapter entitled "De quoi avoir peur," a reflection that seems to pick up where Barthes leaves off with respect to fear, but in an entirely indirect way, as Barthes is nowhere mentioned. In her chapter, Kristeva additionally clearly underlines the subjectivity of fear by accenting the "je," repeating the pronoun and consequently underscoring the first-person agency of fear, when she states the following progression of the emotion: "'je' reviens, 'je' recule, 'je' retrouve l'angoisse: 'j'ai peur.'" ³⁸ Moreover, Kristeva seems to reply in "De quoi avoir peur" to Barthes's question, namely, *qui pourrait écrire pour ne pas avoir peur, qui pourrait écrire la peur?*: "L'écrivain: un phobique qui réussit à métaphoriser pour ne pas mourir de peur mais pour ressusciter dans les signes," ³⁹ retorts Kristeva, as though writing about Duras, who manages at every turn in her works not only to put fear into words, but also to keep her characters – and perhaps herself –

³⁷ Duras's original manuscript of "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier" makes use of the name "Delval" in some instances, a seeming accidental slip of the tongue/hand. Though "Rabier" already figures in the title, there are other moments in the draft where "Delval" is crossed out and "Rabier" is written in by hand instead. See for instance p. 4 (Duras, Marguerite. *Monsieur X ici dit Pierre Rabier: Manuscrit*. 76 DRS 15.2, the IMEC). For more, see the "Notice" about *La douleur* in Duras's Bibliothèque de la Pléiade collected works: *Œuvres complètes*, IV. Edited by Gilles Philippe et al. Paris: Gallimard, 1336-1339.

³⁸ Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Seuil, 1980, 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

alive thanks to this very fear, as we will witness below. “Je suis quelqu’un qui a peur, . . . peur d’être délaissée, peur de l’avenir, peur d’aimer, peur de la violence, . . . peur de l’inconnu, de la faim, de la misère, de la vérité,”⁴⁰ Alissa compulsively states in Duras’s *Détruire, dit-elle* (1969), captioning her very self through the notion of fear as well as developing with this repeated signifier an atmosphere of fear, on the brink of despondency, reflective of Duras’s entire corpus. *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* further underlines how fear is intimately linked to narration. As Jacques Hold states, “Mais on n’a pas peur. C’est un mot” (RLVS 138).⁴¹ Indeed, though “peur” is but a word, it is one that takes on a very particular function well beyond a simple expression of speech or feeling in Duras’s work and especially in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.”

I first propose to read Duras’s “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” as a writing of fear, reflecting on Duras as someone *qui pourrait écrire la peur*, and to focus on fear as formally structuring the text. “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” is abject and impersonal in its form precisely because of its lack of language, that is, its reticence in directly naming atrocities. Though Duras alludes to these extreme forms of violence – torture, camps, murders – she does so not by describing the cruel events themselves but by naming her repeated petrifying fear with respect to them, which translates into a type of verbal excess. In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” the word “peur” replaces any and all direct mention of cruel or atrocious events. I thus take this repetitive functioning of the word “peur,” this abject logorrheic use of the term, to be paradoxically synonymous with erasure: fear takes on a very active, particular role of both signposting and erasing any cruelty in the text. And though, on the one hand, the fear in the text does distinguish the narrator from Rabier, allowing her to be a subject in her own right, I will

⁴⁰ Duras, Marguerite. *Détruire, dit-elle*. Paris: Minuit, 1969, 72.

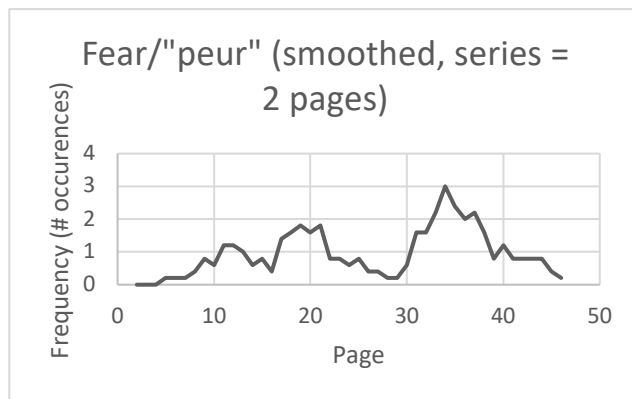
⁴¹ Moreover, the word “peur” noticeably appears in the latter half of this work. See, for instance, RLVS 146, 150, 175.

equally point to how it in fact also erases the subject, functioning in a way completely opposite to how Barthes and Kristeva articulate its subjectivity. Indeed, fear, though but a single word, is not purely pleonastic or quasi-mechanical. It does not simply unsettle the reader or bring the text to a standstill. Instead, in its overflowing and diarrheal nature, it is generative. Fear both acknowledges and erases the narrator's subjectivity thus weakening the claims of her character, her body, her being, as independent of the perpetrator Rabier's. Though fear precisely safeguards the narrator from Rabier, it equally evacuates her agency, it expels her "I." In other words, where fear renders the narrator a subject independent of her potential *bourreau*, delimiting her in certain ways from Rabier, it equally suppresses her subjectivity: she becomes nothing but fear. Relating fear to the "absence" of cruelty, I will show how this expulsion of the "I" – this act of impersonalization – is an expulsion of anything human, consequently demonstrating how a textual abjection and thus an aesthetics of erasure enacted through the repetition of the word "fear" not only relate to cruelty but equally entail an unsettling of the categories of the human and inhuman.

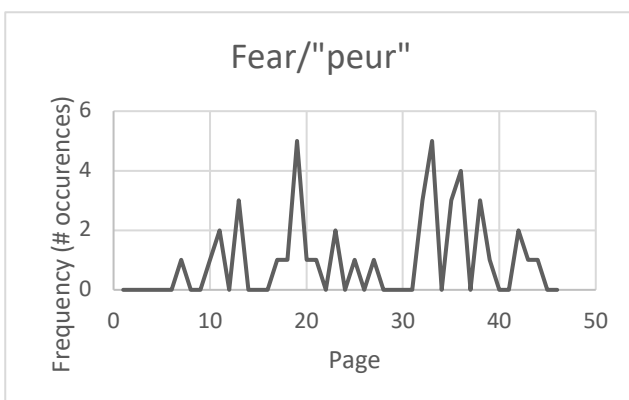
Although the word "peur" is repeated 43 times in "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier," it does not appear until the 7th page of the text. The narrator, at that moment, refers to Rabier in the following way: "À travers ma peur, à mesure que le temps passe, un espoir se fait jour, celui d'avoir affaire à un fou"⁴² (MX 83). Fear, overall, is on the rise as the narrator's relationship with Rabier lasts and intensifies, which can be gathered from Graph 1 below – a smoothed graph that presents the general trend of the word "peur" in "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier." Graph 2,

⁴² Interestingly, we notice a shift in language from the original manuscript to the published version. In the original, it is an apprehension that is felt by the narrator – "A travers ma peur, à mesure que le temps passe, une nouvelle crainte s'instaure, celle d'avoir à faire à un fou" (Duras, Marguerite. *Monsieur X ici dit Pierre Rabier: Manuscrit*, 5.76 DRS 15.2, the IMEC) – rather than the hope that he is in fact mad. And how can we not notice the word play transmuting *à faire* (*peur* as the expression frequently has it) to *affaire* – their relationship being, in the final analysis, *une affaire à faire peur*.

however, also demonstrates that fear is often in flux in the text, with multiple occurrences appearing on one page and very few on another. Evidently the presence of fear in the short story functions in a much more subtle way than the simple increase of the frequency of the word throughout the text.



Graph 1: We attain this smoothed graph by measuring the local mean of the number of occurrences of the word “peur” in a series of 2 pages. This smooths the graph, rendering it continuous and thus providing a general idea of the frequency and, especially, trend of this word in the story.



Graph 2: This figure represents the discontinuous occurrences of the word “peur” in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.” The word appears 5 times on page 33 of the text, for instance.

Strikingly, a side-by-side analysis of, in the first column, the first draft of “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” found in the previously mentioned IMEC archival collection, with, in the second column, the published version of the short story points to the evolution and piercing importance of the term “peur” in this particular text of Duras’s – and how it relates to erasure, *non-dits*, abjection, and atrocity. Below I trace out these salient changes, as well as subtle and not-so-subtle differences from draft to final piece, which are neutralizing progressions, that is,

changes that force emotional distancing, dissociation, and impersonality.⁴³ I will underscore how these changes indicate a growing integral (abject) presence of fear in the short story in order to, eventually, reflect on how the abject and impersonal problematize the human-inhuman divide.

1. Il y a deux périodes distinctes dans mon histoire avec Rabier.

La première période part du moment où je le rencontre dans un bureau de la Gestapo, jusqu'à la lettre à François Morland ~~dans laquelle je lui promets de tout faire pour permettre au Mouvement d'abattre Rabier avant que la police s'en empare.~~

La deuxième période va de cette lettre à François Morland [à] l'exécution de Rabier.⁴⁴

2. Rabier a ajouté: Il y avait ce jour là [*sic*] également quatre semaines que nous nous connaissons.

La main de Rabier était toujours sur mon épaule. L'été de la Libération [– devenue de glace] tout à coup. Maintenant je sais que dans la peur le sang qui se retire de la tête trouble le mécanisme de la vision. J'ai vu les grands immeubles du carrefour de Sèvres tanguer dans le ciel [et] les trottoirs [se creuser] de gouffres.⁴⁵

3. - Parce que je vais vous demander de me suivre, dit Rabier.

Je savais, on me l'avait dit, on me l'avait raconté [dès] ~~que tout de suite après~~ la confirmation de l'épouvante, survient un soulagement immédiat. C'est vrai. Là sur le trottoir, je me suis trouvée déjà arrêtée, inaccessible désormais [au facteur même de la

1. Il y a deux périodes distinctes dans mon histoire avec Rabier.

La première période part du moment où je le rencontre dans un couloir de la rue des Saussaies jusqu'à celui de ma lettre à François Morland. C'est celle de la peur, chaque jour, atroce, écrasante.

La deuxième période va de cette lettre à François Morland à l'arrestation de Rabier. C'est celle de cette même peur, certes, mais qui parfois verse dans la délectation d'avoir décidé de sa mort. De l'avoir eu sur son propre terrain, la mort (MX 86-87).

2. Rabier a ajouté: "Il y avait ce jour-là également quatre semaines que nous nous connaissons."

La main de Rabier était toujours sur mon épaule. L'été de la Libération est devenue [*sic?*] de glace.

Dans la peur le sang se retire de la tête, le mécanisme de la vision se trouble. Je vois les grands immeubles du carrefour de Sèvres tanguer dans le ciel et les trottoirs se creuser, noircir (MX 91).

3. - Parce que je vais vous demander de me suivre," dit Rabier.

Je découvrais que je m'y attendais depuis toujours. On m'avait raconté que dès la confirmation de l'épouvante, survient le soulagement, la paix. C'est vrai. Là sur le trottoir, je me suis trouvée déjà arrêtée, inaccessible désormais au facteur même de la

⁴³ Throughout this chapter, square brackets ([]) denote Duras's handwritten notes in an original manuscript. A ~~strikethrough~~ indicates text that has been scratched out, by hand, by Duras. I have additionally underlined text for emphasis.

⁴⁴ Duras, Marguerite. *Monsieur X ici dit Pierre Rabier: Manuscrit*, 8.76 DRS 15.2, the IMEC.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

peur] Rabier[, lui échappant.] Rabier continue à parler:

- Mais à vous je vous demanderais de me suivre dans un restaurant où vous n'êtes jamais allée. J'aurais l'extrême plaisir de vous inviter.

Il a dit la fin de la phrase en marchant. [Entre] les deux phrase[s] [il se passe] le temps d'arriver à la hauteur du square Boussicot.

Rabier me quitte ce soir-là à Sèvres Babylone, épanoui, joyeux comme un enfant.

Je ne l'avais pas encore ce soir-là condamné à mort.

Je rentrai chez moi à pied.⁴⁶

peur: Rabier lui-même, lui échappant, Rabier parle de nouveau: "Mais à vous je vous demanderai de me suivre dans un restaurant où vous n'êtes jamais allée. J'aurai l'extrême plaisir de vous inviter."

Il s'est remis à marcher. Entre la première phrase et la deuxième phrase, il s'est passé le temps de faire une certaine distance, un peu moins d'une minute et demie, le temps d'arriver au square Boucicaut. Il s'arrête de nouveau, et cette fois il me regarde. Je le vois rire dans un brouillard. Dans un faciès très cruel, terrible, le rire indécent éclate. La vulgarité aussi, tout à coup, elle se répand, nauséabonde. C'est une farce qu'il doit faire aux femmes qu'il voit, sans aucun doute des prostituées. Une fois sa farce faite, elles lui doivent la vie. Je crois que, de cette façon précise, il a dû avoir des femmes par-ci, par-là, pendant l'année qu'il a passée rue des Saussaies.

Rabier avait peur de ses collègues allemands. Les Allemands avaient peur des Allemands. Rabier savait pas à quel point les Allemands faisaient peur aux populations des pays occupés par leurs armées. Les Allemands faisaient peur comme les Huns, les loups, les criminels, mais surtout les psychotiques du crime. Je n'ai jamais trouvé comment le dire, comment raconter à ceux qui n'ont pas vécu cette époque-là, la sorte de peur que c'était.

J'ai appris pendant son procès que l'identité de Rabier était fausse, qu'il avait pris ce nom à un cousin mort dans les environs de Nice. Qu'il était Allemand.

Rabier me quitte ce soir-là à Sèvres-Babylone, épanoui, content de lui.

Je ne l'avais pas encore condamné à mort.

Je rentre chez moi à pied (MX 92-93).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

The importance of fear in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” is difficult to deny when considering these three instances of Duras’s deliberate addition of it into the final version of her short story. In the first example, the published version exhibits representations of fear that are completely absent from the original manuscript. Indeed Duras purposefully inserts fear into her description of life before and after Rabier. No longer determined by facts or events, by a visit to the Gestapo office or a letter to Morland, the two periods in the narrator’s (hi)story with Rabier are distinguished by fear and its varied manifestations: a pure fear versus a fear mixed with pleasure, delectation, *jouissance*. Example 2 is notable not so much for the introduction of fear into the final version, but in fact for the erasure of the personal that fear generates in the published story. The underlined phrase in this example points to a progression in impersonality – the transition from the subject “je,” *je sais que dans la peur*, in the original to the use of an impersonal turn of phrase in the final: simply *dans la peur*. If fear is generally highly subjective as underlined by Kristeva above, in this example and in many others in this chapter, fear replaces the subjectivity of the one feeling it. The personal *j’ai peur*, emphasizing the “je,” becomes simply the impersonal *peur* in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” fear in this way signaling a subjectivity through its affective nature *and*, paradoxically, simultaneously erasing it. Finally, in example 3, there are significant differences between the two versions with the most obvious distinction being the insertion of an extensive passage on fear in the final story.¹ Even in the original manuscript, however, we already witness an evolution of the presence of the word “peur” in the text with Duras’s handwritten addition of *au facteur même de la peur*, fear thus

¹ There are other examples apart from the ones analyzed here of fear being inserted into the final version of the story when it is absent from the original. See, for instance, the following passage that makes mention of an atmospheric fear, a fear that continues to circulate from neighbor to neighbor, in the published text, nonexistent in the original manuscript: “Dans les photographies de groupe du C.C. du Soviet Suprême à Moscou, les assassins membres se présentent quant à moi dans la même solitude que Rabier, l’âme mangée aux mites, la solitude du choléra, moins encore, chacune son costard, chacune grelottante de la peur du voisin, de celle de l’exécution capitale de demain” (MX 97).

gradually making more and more of a mark in the passage and on the narrative. This growing presence and deliberate addition, moreover, comes across as a complete aside to the plot. Being such an unexpected leap from a reflection on Rabier's love life, it must more than simply serve a descriptive or transitional purpose.

What is this fear, then, and what does it do in the text? Kristeva, again in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, provides several definitions of the term and I should mention two particular instances here: "Face aux états de détresse que nous évoque l'enfant qui se fait entendre mais est incapable de se faire comprendre, nous employons, nous adultes, le mot de 'peur.'"² And again, "La peur et l'agressivité qui doivent me protéger d'une cause ou d'un autre, encore non localisable, sont projetées et me reviennent du dehors: 'je suis menacé.'"³ Fear in "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier" too is linked to the idea of an external threat. The fear inscribed in the text attempts to protect the physical, psychological, and moral integrity of the narrator; fear endeavors to keep this subject intact, safe from harm and injury, from wounds, ruptures, traumas, psychical manipulations, or a contamination of values and morals.

Example 3 from above, the instance when the narrator repeats the word "peur" five times in one paragraph, is a moment that clearly indicates her perception of a threat. Rabier is a dangerous man for a member of the Resistance – of which the narrator is, and Duras was a part. He arrests the narrator's husband; he can just as easily arrest her also. And yet this Gestapo agent invites the narrator to dinner. And what is of note is the fact that she does not describe in the paragraphs that follow what happens in the restaurant. Instead, she focuses, rather intently, on fear. I repeat the paragraph from above once again below:

² Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*, op. cit., 44.

³ *Ibid.*, 50.

Rabier avait peur de ses collègues allemands. Les Allemands avaient peur des Allemands. Rabier ne savait pas à quel point les Allemands faisaient peur aux populations des pays occupés par leurs armées. Les Allemands faisaient peur comme les Huns, les loups, les criminels, mais surtout les psychotiques du crime. Je n'ai jamais trouvé comment le dire, comment raconter à ceux qui n'ont pas vécu cette époque-là, la sorte de peur que c'était (MX 92).

This passage is startling for several reasons. First, we find in it the repetition of the word “peur,” but a repetition that does not lead to a description of the particular fear that the narrator is feeling or any supplementary information about its cause. She explains neither her symptoms nor what being scared in this case even entails. Indeed, though fear is reiterated throughout the passage, its repetition does not bring the reader any closer to an understanding of it. Fear does, however, *do* something in this passage. It is through fear that the narrator distances herself from Rabier and, in general, the Germans: *Les Allemands faisaient peur*, she asserts, which consequently is a method of distinguishing between *les Allemands* – the perpetrators of fear – and all others, the victims of the Germans’ threats and actions that provoke this fear. Fear is obviously both veil and signpost of cruelty, and thus a kind of protective barrier, a shield between the narrator and Rabier, a reminder for the narrator not to get too emotionally close to this cruel individual. It is in this way that the persistent presence of fear is a manner in which the narrator seems to differentiate herself and construct herself as separate from the enemy.

And yet, this moment is not one where the narrator claims any sort of agency through the act of *avoir peur*. She does not state anything along the lines of “j’ai peur,” in which she would accentuate her personal, her “I,” experience with fear, but rather emphasizes an atmospheric, ambient fear – *Je n’ai jamais trouvé comment le dire, comment raconter à ceux qui n’ont pas vécu cette époque-là, la sorte de peur que c’était* – a generalized fear that is impossible to fully grasp. Indeed, a similar passage mirrors both this indescribable, ethereal *sorte de peur* and a fear that functions as a subject-defining safeguard, a metaphoric guardrail against the Gestapo chief,

as when the narrator states, describing innocent individuals in a cafe: “La sorte de peur que je vis avec Rabier depuis des semaines, la peur de ne pas tenir tête à la peur – la sauvegarde est là, dans cette façon de dire – cette peur, eux ils ne la connaissent pas” (MX 106). Here, the narrator underlines her life under the regime of fear – *peur que je vis* – additionally underscoring the very vocabulary of protection or defense with her use of *sauvegarde*. And yet, all the while, she does not specify this fear, does not personalize it in any way; certainly, the recurrent use of *sorte de peur* and *cette peur* are highly generic expressions of fear. Fear thus takes on a double paradoxical role in “Monsieur X dit ici Pierre Rabier”: a subject-defining method of construction that enables the narrator to differentiate herself from Rabier, *and* a generalized fear circulating throughout the text – and 1940s France – that equally renders the narrator impersonal. In other words, falling back on a repetition of fear is a way for the narrator to avoid taking a more personal narrative approach in which she would have to acknowledge, identify, perhaps even come to terms with, her relationship to Rabier’s, and by implication the Gestapo’s, cruel acts. The crux of the fear paradox in this short story is the fact that though fear is an affect, it gives us no affective knowledge of the narrator.

I would like to associate to these moments of fear an example of seeming non-fear, or rather transmuted fear, a fear-become-non-fear that the narrator identifies when she herself explicitly relates fear to her relationship with Rabier. As she explains – I once again reiterate a passage from example 3 above:

Il y a deux périodes distinctes dans mon histoire avec Rabier.
La première période part du moment où je le rencontre dans un couloir de la rue des Saussaies jusqu’à celui de ma lettre à François Morland. C’est celle de la peur, chaque jour, atroce, écrasante.
La deuxième période va de cette lettre à François Morland à l’arrestation de Rabier. C’est celle de cette même peur, certes, mais qui parfois verse dans la délectation d’avoir décidé de sa mort. De l’avoir eu sur son propre terrain, la mort (MX 86-87).

The link between fear and death is frequently a point of focus in this short story. Undoubtedly this relation is not at all unexpected or surprising, since, after all, death is the most extreme threat there is to which fear is a natural response. And although the narrator affirms that she is growing accustomed to the fear of dying – “Je commence à être habituée à la peur de mourir”⁴ (MX 94) – she changes her mind immediately following this statement, contemplating instead the impossibility of such a habit: “Ça paraît impossible. Je dirais plutôt comme ceci: je commençais à être habituée à l’idée de mourir” (MX 94). Impossible, then, to get used to fear; perhaps this is the reason why the notion continues to return in the text. Indeed, as the narrator cultivates a relationship with Rabier, fear is the palpable reminder that a threat, ultimately that of death, is always present.

As Derrida writes in the twelfth session of his seminar *La vie la mort* (1975-1976),

Freud distingue alors entre la peur (*Furcht*), qui est provoquée par la présence d’un objet dangereux *déterminé*, l’angoisse qui se rapporte à un danger inconnu, indéterminé . . . et la frayeur (*Schreck*) contre laquelle protège l’angoisse et qui est, elle, productrice de traumatisme, puisqu’elle est provoquée par un danger *inconnu*, par l’irruption d’un danger auquel on n’était pas préparé.⁵

In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” the narrator clearly experiences fear – the threat of a determinate object – but also fright, a feeling that arises from an unknown danger for which one is not prepared (and which is the basis for traumatic neuroses according to Freud) and from

⁴ In the original manuscript, the sentiment is similar though the narrator does not make mention of “peur”: “[J]e dirais plutôt [comme ceci:] je commençais à me fatiguer de être [*sic*] habituée à l’idée de mourir” (Duras, Marguerite. *Monsieur X ici dit Pierre Rabier: Manuscrit*, 12.76 DRS 15.2, the IMEC). This only confirms the possibility of growing accustomed to the *idea* of death, but not to the *fear* of dying.

⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *La vie la mort. Séminaire (1975-1976)*. Edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Peggy Kamuf. Paris: Seuil, 2019, 302. *La vie la mort* is one of three seminars in which Derrida speaks of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) between the years 1970 and 1980, compelled to repeatedly return to the repetition compulsion and the death drive in that decade in *La Psychanalyse dans le texte* as well as “Spéculer – sur Freud.”

which anxiety, preemptively, is meant to protect us.⁶ It is clear that under the exceptional circumstances of war resulting in an augmented probability of encountering death on a daily basis, one does not even know what to prepare for – indeed, as Freud explains, “nothing resembling death can ever have been experienced; or if it has, as in fainting, it has left no observable traces behind”⁷ – and this is precisely what characterizes the narrator’s frightening and frightful relationship with Rabier: a distillation of fear into fright, a coming and going, a *fort/da*, between fear and fright, between a direct and obvious danger – the Gestapo agent – and all the dangers that he carries or represents that cannot even be envisioned. Thus *peur* in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” can be understood as the narrator’s protective barrier of fear that shields her from the determinate object that is Rabier, and an equally impersonal, atmospheric, general fright of that which is not even known to be unknown.

Nevertheless, the narrator’s one certainty throughout the course of the story is the following: “Je sais que Rabier peut me tuer comme un enfant le saurait. Ça se confirme chaque jour”⁸ (MX 103). Indeed, as already stated, her relationship with Rabier is a silent, subtle, near-passive fight with death. But if she is frightened of dying, she is equally frightened of condemning Rabier to death as she herself divulges: “je suis devenue son flic, celui par lequel il mourra. Tout en grandissant, la peur corrobore cette certitude: il est entre mes mains” (MX 94). These four sides of the same two coins – fear/death, death/condamnation to death – are

⁶ Interestingly, while also focusing on the concept of threat, it is the unknown that Heidegger, not distinguishing between fear and fright, labels as the cause of fear in *Being and Time* (1927): “If, however, that which is detrimental draws close and is close by, then it is threatening: it can reach us, and yet it may not. As it draws close, this ‘it can, and yet in the end it may not’ becomes aggravated. We say, ‘It is fearsome’” (Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward S. Robinson. New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Thought, 2008, 180).

⁷ Freud, Sigmund. “Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety.” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 129-130.

⁸ Immediately preceding this sentence come the following five and their three instances of “peur”: “J’ai peur de mourir. Tout le monde a peur de mourir. C’est une peur terrible. Nous ne connaissons pas les Allemands. Nous sommes dans la certitude que les Allemands sont des assassins” (MX 103).

connected in turn with a Kristevian reflection on fear: “la peur ne voile-t-elle pas une agression, une violence qui revient à sa source avec son signe inversé?”⁹ she asks in *Pouvoirs de l’horreur*. For the narrator, is it “‘[j]’ai peur d’être mordu’ ou ‘j’ai peur de mordre?’”¹⁰ It is in fact both sentiments: both a fear of dying and a fear of taking on the role of the other, of the perpetrator of fear and the atrocity that it presumes. Building on the latter fear, during a scene of drunkenness in a restaurant,¹¹ the narrator, referring to a couple, states, “Ce sont des innocents. À côté de Rabier et de moi ce sont des innocents, ils n’ont pratiqué la mort d’aucune façon” (MX 106). The illicit duo, however, did and does condemn men to death; they have and will *pratiqu[é/er] la mort* unlike the innocent civilians dining in the cafe. And yet though this act of condemning to death belongs to both the narrator and Rabier, it is once again fear that explicitly distinguishes the former from the latter: fear is precisely the element that differentiates the narrator from her *amant-bourreau* since he is *not* scared: “je n’ai pas peur, vous le savez bien” (MX 105), he states. Indeed though Rabier is an enemy, *the* enemy, sending him to the gallows is equally a threat to the psychological and moral integrity of the narrator as she has had an intimate relationship with him. Consequently, the fact that the narrator continuously announces her fear and, eventually, offers Rabier up to the police at his – and perhaps her – most vulnerable moment is what continues to draw the line, the barrier, between him and her.

⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection*, op. cit., 49.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ It is impossible to cite this scene without remembering a nearly identical one in *Hiroshima mon amour*. From a chronological standpoint, this parallel is understandable since both works were drafted by Duras around the same time. As Marie-Sophie Doudet clarifies, “l’histoire de Pierre Rabier commence à être rédigée en 1958 (parallèlement à *Hiroshima mon amour* qui transpose en partie à Nevers la relation Duras/Rabier ‘Delval’) et sera reprise en 1985” (“Dossier: Le texte en perspective.” *La douleur*. Paris: Gallimard, 2011, 203). Moreover, it is precisely during a scene of drunkenness that the only explicit mention of fear in the film occurs: the man, *Lui*, asks the woman, *Elle*, if she is scared (Duras, Marguerite, and Alain Resnais. *Hiroshima mon amour: scénario et dialogue*. Paris: Gallimard, 2003, 91). Inebriated and free of her inhibitions she replies in the affirmative: “J’ai peur. Partout. Dans la cave. Dans la chambre./Lui: De quoi? . . . /Elle: De ne plus te revoir, jamais, jamais” (*ibid.*).

In all truth, however, we do not know very much about the details of this relationship, bringing to mind Duras's novella *L'homme assis dans le couloir* (1980), an enigmatic 36-page narrative filled with morbid sexual cruelty in addition to deflective writing, that is, writing that once again avoids qualifying a relationship.

C'est d'abord sur la bouche qu'il le fait. Le jet s'écrase sur les lèvres, sur les dents offertes, il éclabousse les yeux, les cheveux et puis il descend le long du corps, inonde les seins, déjà lent à venir. Lorsqu'il atteint le sexe il a un regain de force, il s'écrase dans sa chaleur, se mélange à son foutre, écume, et puis il se tarit. Les yeux de la femme s'entrouvrent sans regard et se referment (LADC 16),

begins the short story. It is unclear whether the narrator, an unsettling "je"¹² watching the scene as a peeping Tom, describes what is, arguably, either a consensual carnal encounter between *l'homme* and *la femme*, or a rape, not to say a concupiscent murder of *la femme* by *l'homme*.

Indeed, the violence of the engagement escalates throughout the text pointing more acutely to the latter two possibilities:

il la pénètre, reste encore là, sans mouvements, tandis qu'elle pleure. . . . Il se retourne lentement vers elle et de sa jambe la prend contre lui. Ils restent ainsi. Il lui dit qu'il voudrait ne plus l'aimer. Elle ne lui répond pas. Il lui dit qu'un jour il va la tuer (LADC 31).

In this text, as in Duras's writing concerning wartime atrocity observed above – not devoid of eroticism either – truths pertaining to the nature of the relationship between the protagonists are once again deflected. Instead of clarity shed on the event that is their sexual confrontation, focus is lent to details of a seeming secondary importance. The first page of the text, representative of the generally descriptive nature of *L'homme assis dans le couloir*, reads as follows:

¹² Incidentally, the pronouns of this text are overall confounding: *il, elle, je, nous, on* – personal and impersonal subject pronouns abound and make fluid, in all appearance unattributed, transitions from one to the other.

L'homme aurait été assis dans l'ombre du couloir face à la porte ouverte sur le dehors. Il regarde une femme qui est couchée à quelques mètres de lui sur un chemin de pierres. Autour d'eux il y a un jardin qui tombe dans une déclivité brutale sur une plaine, de larges vallonnements sans arbres, des champs qui bordent un fleuve. On voit le paysage jusqu'au fleuve (LADC 7).

In this passage, an illustration of the surrounding scenery is prioritized and exceedingly detailed, offering a certitude solely of the determinate couloir – *le couloir*, *du couloir* – of the title and not, for instance, the woman, as seen through her indefinite article – *une femme* – or the time of the event, as observed from usage of the conditional verb mood throughout the story. Moreover, in this text in much the same way as in the analyses above, the woman, *la femme*, *une femme*, of *L'homme assis dans le couloir* is the epitome of an indeterminate subject, impersonal, anonymous. Abjected through the erasure of her person, essentialized libidinally, she remains nothing more than “une bouche vomissante, viscérale” (LADC 15).

Sensualized death, macabre sex, the coming together of pleasure and pain, that is, “une douleur érotisée,”¹³ all are tropes in Duras's work.¹⁴ In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” what do we do with the fact that the narrator is not only frightened of and by death, and condemning Rabier to a death sentence, but that she equally feels pleasure at the thought of this act, finds

¹³ Kristeva, Julia. *Soleil noir: Dépression et mélancolie*, op. cit., 242.

¹⁴ For more examples of this see, for instance, *Moderato cantabile* (1958) and *La Maladie de la mort* (1982), as well as *Hiroshima mon amour*. Kristeva summarizes the latter in the following way: “Amour grevé de mort ou amour de la mort? Amour rendu impossible ou passion nécrophile pour la mort? *Mon amour est un Hiroshima*, ou bien: *J'aime Hiroshima car sa douleur est mon éros*? *Hiroshima mon amour* maintient cette ambiguïté qui est, peut-être, la version après-guerre de l'amour” (*ibid.*, 240). Bataille deftly recapitulates the relation of pain to pleasure in his poem aptly named “Douleur,” making use of this word repeatedly only to render it perverse in the last two lines of the text in order to underscore the affinity between desire and death, pain and passion. “Douleur/douleur/douleur/ô douleur/ô douleur/ô mes pleurs de poix/ma queue de safran/ô me déculotter/me pisser” (*L'Archangélique et autres poèmes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2008, 109), he writes, and indeed Duras's oeuvre also frequently relates lust to loss of life. It is perhaps surprising to learn that Bataille wrote poetry, but indeed (and far less surprisingly!) he has an entire collection of erotic poems veering on pornography published under the title *L'Archangélique et autres poèmes* (1944) and dedicated to a reflection on sexual morbidity and morbid sexuality. The first section of *L'Archangélique*, “Le Tombeau,” was previously published in 1943 as *La Douleur*, underscoring yet again the significance of this word in Bataille's imaginary, especially as it relates to sex. See Thadée Klossowski's notes for more on the history of Bataille's poetic writings (*ibid.*, 158).

pleasure in knowing that she is the one sending him off to die? It is in this sentence – “C’est celle de cette même peur, certes, mais qui parfois verse dans la délectation d’avoir décidé de sa mort” (MX 86-87) – that death, fear, and pleasure collide, and are most obviously related. Though I do not have the space to unpack whether fear more generally is a function of the sadistic, psychic operation at the basis of cruelty, this particular moment’s pleasure in the face of death is, in fact, not all that surprising. This momentary link between an obsessive fear of dying and a perverted euphoria can actually be seen, from a Freudian perspective, as a manifestation of the tensions between the life instinct and the death instinct, between Eros, the son of Aphrodite, and Thanatos, the son of Nyx, between the sexual drive and the death drive.¹⁵ As Derrida explains in *La vie la mort*, “Menace de mort: plus de principe de plaisir, donc plus de différance modifiante en principe de réalité. La liaison – la stricture liante – produit donc le plaisir en le limitant. Elle joue entre deux infinis.”¹⁶ This is entirely applicable to “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier”: it is not that the threat of death automatically conjures up pleasure, but that it actually limits it, increasing a desire for pleasure and in turn producing it. Indeed, death and pleasure come together in the short story in a perverse way not so different from Kristeva’s characterization of the abject.

As she does with fear, Kristeva sheds light on abjection, the process or experience of rendering abject, in various ways. “L’abjection – carrefour de phobie, d’obsession et de perversion,”¹⁷ she writes at one moment in *Pouvoirs de l’horreur*, a statement that is remarkably close to the state of mind of the narrator of “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” as described

¹⁵ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to undertake an analysis of Freud and the death and life/sexual drives/tensions, or the reception of these theories today. For more on this see Otto Kernberg’s “The Concept of the Death Drive: A Clinical Perspective.” Freud, Sigmund, *et al. On Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Routledge, 2011.

¹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *La vie la mort*, *op. cit.*, 357.

¹⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection*, *op. cit.*, 57.

above. At another, Kristeva upholds once again a conceptualization of abjection that is in line with Duras's narrative procedure and the narrator's physical defense strategies: "L'abject et l'abjection sont là mes garde-fous."¹⁸ In this latter articulation, abjection includes the idea of protection; it functions as a guardrail against a given danger. Furthermore, Kristeva finally declares: "Il y a, dans l'abjection, une de ces violentes et obscures révoltes de l'être contre ce qui le menace et qui lui paraît venir d'un dehors ou d'un dedans exorbitant, jeté à côté du possible, du tolérable, du pensable."¹⁹ Indeed, the narrator's desire to condemn her *bourreau* to death is a way of protecting herself, a way of responding to the danger that he represents, even revolting against this threat, coming from both outside herself in the form of the separate, foreign body that is Pierre Rabier, but also from within: the narrator's obvious desires to engage with him are perversely, abjectly frightening to and threatening toward her. These three Kristevian elucidations on abjection – and my challenge to, or reinterpretation of, them – are, as I will show in what follows, key to understanding the links between fear, form, impersonality and, most importantly, cruelty in Duras.

Undeniably, as already mentioned, "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier" does not easily yield to a "classical" reading based on abjection. If abjection is when, to again quote Kristeva, "[u]rine, sang, sperme, excrément viennent alors rassurer un sujet en manque de son 'propre,'"²⁰ Duras's short story is far from representing it. It is neither the scatological universe of Ferdinand Bardamu nor the verbal and literal diarrhea of a Max Aue nor the sanguinary emesis and ejaculations of Bataillean teenage lovers that are described in the text.²¹ On the contrary, there is

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

²¹ See Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932), filled with passages like the following one, where eroticism is juxtaposed to violence: "On est puceau de l'Horreur comme on l'est de la volupté," (Paris: Gallimard, 2006, 19). At another moment, describing the butchering of pigs and the distribution of meat to the regiment, Céline

noticeably no obscenity in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.” There is no mention of the body as such nor of its functions or excretions. And furthermore, it is specifically the fear passages in the story that make the narrator more “proper,” for it is fear in the text that suppresses any indecent description. In other words, it is the scenes in which the word “peur” is named that are the most intimate, yet paradoxically free of any sensual details. If the abject, then, is a form of retaliation to a threat that manifests through vomiting, dirtiness, rubbish, body trash, that “chutent pour que je vive, jusqu’à ce que, de perte en perte, il ne m’en reste rien, et que mon corps tombe tout entier au-delà de la limite, *cadere*, cadaver,”²² the narrator of “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” does not display it. Indeed, the narration is free of these obvious instances of abjection – and atrocity – because of its purified, impersonal language that is a result of Duras’s “fear device.”²³ But, as I read it, it is paradoxically through this erasure of obvious atrocities and through abjection as the persistent repetition of fear that the text *is* abject. “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” becomes abject not through an overflow of feces and vomit, but through “peur,” its constant reiteration as if spilling over the margins of the page. And, through rendering abject

writes, utilizing a gory vocabulary: “On s’engueulait ferme entre escouades à propos de graisses, et de rognons surtout, au milieu des mouches comme on en voit que dans ces moments-là, importantes et musicales comme des petits oiseaux. Et puis du sang encore et partout, à travers l’herbe, en flaques molles et confluentes qui cherchaient la bonne pente” (26). Or consider Jonathan Littell’s *Les Bienveillantes* (2006) and its linguistic and fecal inundation: “En expédition, lorsque les coliques me prenaient, je chiais n’importe où, dans des couloirs, des cuisines, des chambres à coucher, voire, au hasard des ruines, accroupi sur une cuvette des W-C, pas toujours raccordée à un tuyau, il est vrai” (Paris: Gallimard, 2006, 558); “Une crampe lourde me saisit le ventre et je baissai mon pantalon et m’accroupis, et déjà tandis que la merde coulait, liquide, j’étais loin, je pensais aux flots, à la mer sous la quille du bateau, deux enfants assis à l’avant face à cette mer, moi-même et ma sœur jumelle Una, le regard et les deux mains qui se touchent sans que personne s’en aperçoive, et l’amour alors encore plus vaste et sans fin que cette mer bleue et que l’amertume et la douleur des années meurtries, un splendeur solaire, un abîme volontaire. Mes crampes, ma diarrhée, mes poussées de fièvre blanche, ma peur aussi, tout cela s’était effacé, s’était dissous dans ce retour inouï” (578-579); “Je vomissais presque tous mes repas, j’avais peur que la fièvre me reprenne” (1229). Finally, see Bataille’s *Histoire de l’œil* for vivid accounts of blood, urine, semen, vomit, dirt: “J’étais pâle, taché de sang, habillé de travers. Des corps sales et dénudés gisaient derrière moi, dans un désordre hagard. . . . [U]ne jeune fille vomissait; des fous rires si violents nous avaient pris que nous avions mouillé qui ses vêtements, qui son fauteuil ou le plancher; il en résultait une odeur de sang, de sperme, d’urine et de vomit qui faisait reculer d’horreur” (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 2014, 100).

²² Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection*, op. cit., 11.

²³ In French I would further specify this purified writing of fear as an *écriture de la peur épurée, purifiée, peurifiée*.

– as Kristeva explains, “[c]e n’est plus moi qui expulse, “je” est expulsé”²⁴ – the subject is expelled, the residue of which in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” is this repeated fear. Through the continuous repetition of fear, the narrator is abjectified and consequently rendered impersonal.

But how are we to understand the impersonal? In an effort to answer that question, I will begin by exploring a genealogy of the impersonal; then, continue to examine precisely how abjectification through reiteration renders characters in my chosen texts by Duras impersonal; and, finally, address how the impersonal returns us to my thesis. Indeed, the impersonal is the result of a carefully constructed repetition device in Duras’s works, one, I argue, that brings to the foreground cruelty – just like the impersonal itself – as a notion that challenges the fault line between the human and inhuman.

Durasian Impersonality: Reading with Sharon Cameron

In seven essays entitled *Impersonality* (2007), Cameron delimits her argument and defines, or precisely highlights the lack of definition of, the term “impersonality” in the work of William Empson, Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Simone Weil, T.S. Eliot, and Herman Melville as follows, emphasizing that each manifestation of impersonality in these works is specific to its author, ultimately as unique as the writers themselves:

One way of approaching impersonality is to say it is not the negation of the person, but rather a penetration through or a falling outside of the boundary of the human particular. Impersonality disrupts elementary categories we suppose to be fundamental to specifying human distinctiveness. Or rather, we don’t know what the *im* of impersonality means. I shall argue it means different things for different authors. Representations of impersonality suspend, eclipse, and even destroy the idea of the person as such. . . . We see disintegration in

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the dissociation of Emerson's sentences; in Weil's unmaking of the "I," a practice she called "de-creation. . . ."²⁵

Overall, impersonality is a nebulous concept in *Impersonality*. Here I present yet another understanding of it that imbricates the human and inhuman, this time in a manner unique to Duras, all the while clarifying impersonality in terms of its importance for a discussion of cruelty.

Cameron begins her study of the impersonal by accentuating the various manifestations of violence within it. As she states:

For Emerson, . . . violence is the dramatization of the slide of the personal to the impersonal, when the dissociation of a particular, personal experience (grief at the death of his five-year-old child) becomes the spectacularly undifferentiated common denominator of *all* experience – the mirror in which the features of all experience can be read. In Eliot's *Four Quartets* violence is a consequence of the reduction of voice to a manifestation which is particular without being personal – a reduction relentlessly reiterated across four poems until its heuristic understandings are made conclusive.²⁶

For Weil, as Cameron further explains, "violence is what enables a shattering of the unified entity thought of as the self,"²⁷ seen in "Weil's splittings of the person, characteristically dramatized by an embodying and disembodying of an 'I.'"²⁸ Ultimately, Cameron outlines how

²⁵ Cameron, Sharon. *Impersonality: Seven Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, ix. Addressing various forms of impersonality, Cameron's text, for this precise reason, does not provide a unifying definition of the term "impersonality" or much of a history of the concept. She does state, however, that "[m]odern criticism shows the point at which the idea of the impersonal is completely detached from religion, which initially gave it life (either traditionally defined as sourced from God or Law, or alternatively defined – as Whitman, Dickinson, Melville define it – as sourced by a spectacle of the real apprehended by a person)" (104). And yet, with Simon Weil, impersonality takes on a more spiritual dimension. As Cameron underscores, "The passages in Weil's notebooks unfeature the 'I,' render it faceless, and simultaneously unfeature the idea of a God" (112). Indeed, though there are moments in *Impersonality* that echo and certainly complement my study of Duras's impersonality, in practice the elements I examine are distinct forms of the notion.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii. Cameron reiterates this point as follows: "when persons are represented in relation to a force that effaces what individuates them, their surrender to that power . . . is directly linked to violence, as Weil and Melville most extremely demonstrate" (12). For more on impersonality through lack of individuation in Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1941), see Chapter 6 of *Impersonality*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

according to Weil “a ‘violent operation’ eradicate[s] . . . not only the personal but also the human,”²⁹ listing literal examples of a suppression of the human such as “writing procedures that transform a person’s state of mind into ‘dead wood.’”³⁰ There are thus three dimensions to the violence of the impersonal according to Weil and as explained by Cameron. The first two are the violence of the event itself – for example a death – that prompts the impersonal, and, more importantly, the violence of dissociation, that is, the actual effect of being rendered impersonal produced by the violent event.

Take, for instance, Lol’s deadpan emotional state in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* to illustrate how a violent event may prompt this second dimension of the violence of the impersonal, that is, (further) violence through dissociation. Prior to the novel’s central event with which the story begins, and which fuels the entire plot – Lol’s public abandonment at a ball by Michael Richardson who leaves her for Anne-Marie Stretter – Lol is said to already embody an impersonal state. As is attested in a key passage:

Tatiana ne croit pas au rôle prépondérant de ce fameux bal de T. Beach dans la maladie de Lol V. Stein. . . . Au collège dit-elle, et elle n’était pas la seule à le penser, il manquait déjà quelque chose à Lol pour être – elle dit: là. . . Gloire de douceur mais aussi d’indifférence, découvrait-on très vite, jamais elle n’avait paru souffrir ou être peinée, jamais on ne lui avait vu une larme de jeune fille (RLVS 12).³¹

Identified as an illness, Lol’s indifference, her emotional absence, is her defining quality. And yet after the violent event that is Richardson’s unfaithfulness, Lol’s state of dissociation becomes even more pronounced. Though it is obvious that Richardson has decided to begin a new life, “[c]ette vision et cette certitude ne parurent pas s’accompagner chez Lol de souffrance. Tatiana

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

³¹ A similar passage is reiterated RLVS 80.

la trouva elle-même changée” (RLVS 17). Blocking out, suppressing, or simply ignoring this violent reality, Lol is even more emotionally distant than before the act of betrayal, perhaps even entirely devoid of any personal affect following the T. Beach ball of her youth, as her lack of suffering shows.

Impersonality’s third violent indication as explained by Cameron is the erasure of the human that ensues from the impersonal – resulting in either a putting into crisis of the limit of the human or in fact an entire eradication of the human. Cameron underscores the “elision of impersonal and nonhuman,”³² the “erosion of the distinction between the impersonal and the inhuman,”³³ and yet by doing so largely identifies parallels between the nonhuman and objectification. “[T]he impersonal is marked by the nonhuman, and even the inanimate,” she writes, providing several such examples including:

In Melville’s *Billy Budd* a category crossing between the human and the nonhuman results in characters possessing the same plastic and contradictory features of the universe to which the characterological is irrelevant. This has a corollary in Eliot’s *Four Quartets* in the erosion of the distinction between animate and inanimate entities – in a face and a street which transiently share the same properties of disfigurement.³⁴

Indeed, a similar process can be seen in Duras in so far as what should be human has the human expelled from it, and yet, there is in her oeuvre no transformation of the human into the inanimate. With Duras impersonality manifests itself less literally – there is no equation to objects through the impersonal in her texts,³⁵ nor is impersonality a direct event of

³² Cameron, Sharon. *Impersonality*, *op. cit.*, xi.

³³ *Ibid.*, xvi.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, x. Though she does so differently from my analysis here, Cameron too discusses form in her study of impersonality. She states for example: “Melville’s meditation on character inflects the last three novels which precede *Billy Budd*, novels which progressively interlineate questions of character with questions of grammaticality” (193).

³⁵ And yet in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, such an equivalence does at times come to light: “Ses cheveux avaient la même odeur que sa main, d’objet inutilisé” (RLVS 29). Here, parts of Lol’s body are not only compared but

dehumanization, an act of reducing the humanity of a victim to vermin, for instance, as we saw in previous chapters. Instead it presents something more narratively, grammatically neutral, an apathetic *parole* that is not linked to a psychic entity; rather it is a generative architecture of dissociation from within the narrative.³⁶ Residing outside of affect, Duras's impersonality gestures to inhumanity through a rhetorical device – abjectifying repetition – that forces the rethinking of categories by perturbing us with an exclusion of the human from what we would expect to be the most human of all descriptions, compelling us to ask what of the human remains in the text; indeed, what is the human after all. To put it differently, Duras's impersonality is an aesthetic structure of the inhuman that removes humanity from the narrative itself, the result of a narrative strategy that prompts us to rethink what constitutes human ontology when persons dissolve into the impersonality of a writing. Keeping in mind these divergences and resonances between Duras's impersonality and Cameron's thinking, let us continue by paying attention to the term “impersonality” and by refocusing on “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.”

To recapitulate, then, abjectifying fear is the manner through which impersonality is produced in this story. Indeed, abjection erases traces of the subject, works to expel the “I” and imbricate the categories of subject, object, and abject. The supposed I-human-subject of the narrative is thus subverted: fear produces an erasure of not only the subject, but of the human, replacing it instead with a logorrheic word. As analyzed above, even when subject-defining, when functioning in part as a limit, as a means of protection that facilitates the narrator's delimitation from Rabier, fear in that case also renders the narrator impersonal, prompting us to

nearly equated to the inanimate: an unused object. At another moment, Lol is described as “ni Dieu ni personne” (RLVS 49), once again underlining her inhuman nature.

³⁶ Though beyond the scope of this project, such a procedure reflects Maurice Blanchot's definition of impersonality as “une parole neutre qui se parle seule” (“Où maintenant? Qui maintenant?” *Le livre à venir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1959, 290).

ask: what do we actually know about her? Other than being acutely aware of the fact that she is afraid – *a peur* – we know nothing of her other internal thoughts or state of mind. Indeed, unlike, for instance, sadness, happiness, irritation, embarrassment – *je suis triste, je suis heureux/euse, je suis énervé(e), je suis gêné(e)* – fear in French is expressed as belonging to the speaker, to the feeler, as though it were a feeling hosted by, even besieging its enunciator through the operation of the present indicative of “avoir,” the verb “to have.” And yet to have is not to be; ultimately we have no knowledge of the narrator’s *être*, of whether she even has one. Even when constructing herself, when laying claim to her subjectivity by edifying herself as a subject – by stating *j’ai peur* – as she lives through a highly intimate relationship with Rabier, the narrator does so through fear and fear alone. One only has to think of Benveniste’s discursive “I”: the “I” can be uttered by anyone, but it must be filled at every moment. As he writes, “je . . . peut être assumé par chaque locuteur, à condition qu’il ne renvoie chaque fois qu’à l’instance de son propre discours.”³⁷ Consequently, if, according to Benveniste, the uttering subject [*sujet d’énonciation*] is defined by a reiteration of the pronoun “I,” a deictic that refers to the person using it,³⁸ the narrator does not define herself, does not construct herself, by only saying, by only reiterating “I.” Instead she offers “peur” in its place, “peur” takes over the “I”: the word replaces the human subject. This overflow of fear, this impersonality through which the text is also, paradoxically, simultaneously “silent,” is equally what renders it abject because it leaves the narrator of “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” “[n]i sujet ni objet,”³⁹ a state that is by its very definition abject.

³⁷ Benveniste, Émile. *Problèmes de linguistique générale I*. Paris: Gallimard, 2006, 254.

³⁸ See Benveniste’s chapter “L’appareil formel de l’énonciation” in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. There he states that “[l]’énonciation est cette mise en fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individuel d’utilisation” (*ibid.*, 80) where “le terme *je* dénot[e] l’individu qui profère l’énonciation” (82).

³⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection*, *op. cit.*, 9.

But how does this impersonality and strategy of abjectifying fear affect the presence – or lack thereof – of atrocity in the text? Where does cruelty fit into this schema? It is precisely through this contradictory idea of silence that I have just mentioned, occurring by means of repetition as erasure. Any and all cruelty of war gets displaced, deflected by fear. In order to analyze this narrative procedure, I would like to take a look at the passages in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” where the mention of anything gruesome is even slightly insinuated, noting, first, that there is a very limited number of such passages – indeed the four listed below are exhaustive – and, second, that they are altogether free of any descriptive detail.

“[Rabier] est habillé comme un monsieur. Lui qui frappe, qui se bat, qui travaille avec les armes, le sang, les larmes, on dirait qu’il opère en gants blancs, il a des mains de chirurgien” (MX 99), states the narrator when giving a portrait of Rabier halfway through the short story. Here, form and content become inseparable in Duras’s text. Her sober, bare, barely-there description of Rabier’s atrocious acts is just as surgical and sterile as the white gloves that the Gestapo agent’s aseptic manner of being represents. Another passage on Rabier is similarly deprived of feeling:

[Rabier] regarde Paris avec amour, il le connaît très bien. Dans des rues pareilles à celles-ci il a arrêté des gens. À chaque rue, ses souvenirs, ses hurlements, ses cris, ses sanglots. Ces souvenirs ne font pas souffrir Rabier. . . . Il ne se souvient que de ses bonnes actions, il n’a aucun souvenir d’avoir été brutal. Quand il parle des gens qu’il a arrêtés, il s’attendrit: tous ont compris la triste obligation dans laquelle il était de le faire, ils n’ont jamais fait de difficultés, tous, charmants (MX 100).

Even here, even with the mention of cries, there is little or no emotion in the barren excerpt: *ces souvenirs ne font pas souffrir Rabier*. And indeed, an evolution of erasure from the original manuscript to the final version is yet again witnessed in this passage. Duras writes in the first version of the short story: “Il regarde Paris avec amour, il règne sur Paris, dans des rues pareilles

à celles-ci il a déjà répandu le désastre, l[es] hurlements de douleur [de la séparation], l[es] sanglots, le sang,”⁴⁰ making mention of the more startling, material, and unequivocally cruel substance that is blood and providing more descriptive language with respect to the shrieks and howls heard: *des hurlements de douleur de la separation*. But the most extreme part of the above passage comes at its end. Who is speaking the words following the colon: *tous ont compris la triste obligation dans laquelle il était de le faire, ils n’ont jamais fait de difficultés, tous, charmants?* This is a classic example of free indirect discourse. We do not know if it is the narrator’s line of thinking that we are reading or the thoughts the narrator gives to Rabier. Indeed it seems as though Rabier’s focalization slides into the free indirect discourse at this moment, producing a hybrid point of view. This is impersonalization at its most skillful in Duras. Instead of getting a clear affective response from Rabier, a narrative apparatus intersects his consciousness and shrouds any and all human feeling, providing instead an apathetic discourse.

At yet another moment, the narrator describes the following scene:

Rabier parle: “Hier, voyez-vous, j’ai arrêté un jeune homme de vingt ans, du côté des Invalides. La mère de ce jeune homme était là. C’était terrible. Nous avons arrêté ce jeune homme en présence de sa mère.”

Un garçon est venu à leur table, ils lisent le menu. Je mange, je ne sais plus ce que c’est. Rabier continue: “C’était terrible. Elle hurlait cette femme. Elle nous expliquait que son enfant était un bon enfant, qu’elle sa mère, elle le savait, qu’il fallait la croire, elle. Mais vous voyez, lui, l’enfant, il ne disait rien.”

Un violoniste arrive dans le restaurant (MX 109).

In this sequence, essentially erased descriptions and only slight allusions to arrest, and its implied cruel consequences, made through the desperation of the mother are interspersed with “atmospheric” details. On the one hand, these “surrounding” elements offer clues to what is going on in the scene psychologically. For instance, the suppression of naming what is most

⁴⁰ Duras, Marguerite. *Monsieur X ici dit Pierre Rabier: Manuscrit*, 17.76 DRS 15.2, the IMEC.

likely some kind of flesh with *Je mange, je ne sais plus ce que c'est* is an avoidance, a displacement that in turn equates to evoking the flesh of an arrested and most likely subsequently tortured body. But on the other, these details can also be seen as entirely irrelevant, frankly irreverent, scene-setting interjections: a man waits on Rabier and the narrator's table, a menu is read, a violinist appears. Rabier mentions twice that the arrest was terrible, but nowhere is its cruelty *felt*.

Perhaps the most obvious revelation of cruelty in the short story occurs when the narrator directly mentions torture. This passage, which is found toward the end of the text, refers to an episode the narrator witnesses at the very beginning of "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier" when a semi-conscious woman is stated as having wet clothes – a detail in the narrative of equal importance to or even lesser significance than Rabier's smile: "[Rabier] tient dans ses bras une femme à moitié évanouie et d'une grande pâleur, ses vêtements sont trempés. Il me sourit, disparaît. Il revient quelques minutes plus tard, il sourit encore" (MX 81). Though torture is never mentioned initially in the text, in her moment of drunkenness toward the end, the narrator does address it bluntly:

Pour la première fois je lui parle de la femme évanouie qu'il tenait dans ses bras dans les couloirs de la Gestapo, lorsque je l'ai revu. Je dis que je sais qu'il s'agissait de la torture de la baignoire. Il rit comme il le ferait devant la naïveté d'un enfant. Il dit que ce n'est rien, mais rien, que c'est tout juste désagréable, qu'on a exagéré là-dessus, beaucoup. Je le regarde. Déjà il a moins d'importance. Il n'est plus rien. Il n'est qu'un agent de la police allemande, plus personne. . . . D. m'a dit qu'ils essayeraient de l'abattre dans les jours qui viennent (MX 105-106).

Once again, however, there is no divulgence with respect to the affect, even effect, of torture here. With this distant tone, used even with the direct mention of torture – it being nothing but that, a mention – there also comes an impersonalization of Rabier himself. He is stripped of his

humanness, becoming nothing, a nobody, not even a person nor even a human as the French could imply: *rien, plus personne*.

Duras's striking narrative effects of impersonality, insidiously stripping her texts of any and all affect, does not simply point to the difficulty of describing atrocity – from separation and displacement to torture, the cruelty in all its variants that this polysemic word has come to be understood to mean in this dissertation – but precisely to the play, the interplay, between the human and the inhuman when confronted with such cruelty. Duras's formal textual choices mirror the complex conceptualization of the human in times of war, what the human becomes when confronted with cruelty: laid bare of emotion, less clearly the privileged sentient being that we presume it to be, an expelled non-subject abject figure. In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” as I have demonstrated, this impersonality is achieved through a repetition of fear that abjectifies the narrator and narrative, and as a result expels traces of the human from the work, replacing it with an impersonal force of writing. Similar effects of lack of affect are reached in Duras's other works. In what follows I will extend this analysis of impersonality in the face of cruelty by discussing comparable strategies – though focalized differently and therein lies their richness – in “La douleur” and “Albert des Capitales.”

Other Instances of Durasian Narrative Cruelty

From the very beginning of *La douleur*, Duras admits that she cannot recognize what she has written or name the events her writing describes: “Comment ai-je pu écrire cette chose que je ne sais pas encore nommer et qui m'épouvante quand je la relis” (LaD 12), she asks in the prelude to “La douleur,” surprised at her ability to put into words something – *cette chose* – that four decades later she still cannot conceptualize. The text itself and the war she lived through are encapsulated in her choice of the noun “chose,” a vague word that is picked once again in her

preface in order to reference, in no certain terms, pain: “La douleur est une des choses les plus importantes de ma vie” (LaD 12). The short story that ensues, “La douleur,” shows us precisely how *La douleur* in general is an obsession with pain, even an embodiment of it – Duras’s and the narrator Marguerite’s pain, the pain of war and its atrocities, the pain of waiting. Indeed “La douleur” specifically recounts Duras’s painful wait for the return of her husband, Robert Antelme identified only as Robert L. in the text, after his deportation during the Second World War. As a result, Duras’s strategy of abjectifying repetition in “La douleur” is seen through the inseparable notions of waiting and pain. In much the same way as fear in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” waiting and pain are repeated to the point of purging any affect from “La douleur,” replacing most descriptions of the cruelties and atrocities of war with “attendre” and “douleur.” But such a procedure is not only a blanketing, it is also a blanking, a blacking out. When Duras activates a repetition, it is like spilling ink – in two opposing ways. On the one hand, repetition produces an excessive presence, but on the other it is like redaction, blocking out, obstructing from view. We wait for her characters and narrators to say something, to explicitly name that which is around them, and so when they do not, it is remarkable, and we find ourselves duped by paralipsis. In other words, Duras is trying so hard to obstruct the horror of war that we end up getting an overabundance of a certain signifier. And yet the more the word is repeated, the less it seems to signify; it thickens, signaling something other than the meaning of, say, fear or pain, becoming the work of blocking out, producing a change in the function of language to no longer denote but instead hide.

Continuous, reiterative writing of waiting that does precisely this is at the heart of “La douleur” so much so that its conceivable termination is, in a thematically germane fashion, fear-inducing. At the train station waiting for the arrival of deportees, the narrator states: “J’ai peur de

voir surgir Robert L. Lorsqu'on annonce des déportés je sors du centre, c'est entendu avec mes camarades, je ne reviens que lorsque les déportés sont partis" (LaD 23), pointing to a near-desire for Robert not to come back, as his return would bring about a world-changing end to Marguerite's wait. Robert's homecoming would mean coming to terms with the events of the war: speculation and rumor of what goes on at the concentration camps would become undeniable reality, and Marguerite would have to come face to face with his altered body and mind. Though acutely realizing this, at another moment Marguerite appears to have equally had enough of this wait: "Il me semble que j'ai assez attendu. Nous sommes fatiguées. Il va y avoir une autre arrivée de déportés de Buchenwald. Une boulangerie ouverte, il faudrait peut-être acheter du pain, ne pas laisser perdre les tickets. C'est criminel de laisser perdre les tickets" (LaD 33), she muses, the thought of bread and the "criminal" waste of food stamps perversely counterposed to the famine and actual criminal atrocity of Buchenwald. But the comment seems backhanded, uncertain. The narrator only *seems* to think that she has waited enough, quickly changing topics and later directly stating that Robert's arrival from the camps will be the cause of her death: "Dès son retour je mourrai, impossible qu'il en soit autrement, c'est mon secret. D. ne le sais pas. J'ai choisi de l'attendre comme je l'attends, jusqu'à en mourir" (LaD 36); her very existence appears to be captioned by waiting.⁴¹

Indeed Marguerite herself addresses this act of waiting and its ontological importance when she affirms:

Je suis sur le point de comprendre qu'il n'y a plus rien de commun entre cet homme et moi. Autant en attendre un autre. Je n'existe plus. Alors du moment que je n'existe plus, pourquoi attendre Robert L.? Autant en attendre un autre

⁴¹ In much the same way as Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) – "Let's go./We can't./Why not?/We're waiting for Godot" (Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove Press, 2011, 91-94) – or reflective of the waiting fundamental to and at the very heart of Julien Gracq's *Le Rivage des Syrtes* (1951), or like the waiting of love in Roland Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977), her very existence appears to be defined by the action of inaction.

si ça fait plaisir d'attendre? Plus rien de commun entre cet homme et elle (LaD 44).

Here, the narrator's internal monologue once again underlines an interconnection of waiting and existence. Experiencing a crisis of being, she equates a questioning of her existence with a questioning of why she should wait for Robert's return. And yet it is not specifically waiting for Robert, she admits, that gives her purpose, but the waiting itself: *autant en attendre un autre*. It is in this passage also that we clearly witness a writing of the impersonal since in it Marguerite refers to herself in both the first and third person. Displaying a move from "je" to "elle," this excerpt is a striking *mise en scène* of impersonalization such as one often encounters in Duras.⁴² "Mon identité s'est déplacée. Je suis seulement celle qui a peur quand elle se réveille" (LaD 68), she writes, not only pointing to dissociation caused by the wait, but underlining once again the place of fear in the very fiber of *La douleur*. Both manifestations of the unknown, of something to come, fear and painful waiting come to embody an abject form in Duras's texts.

La douleur (2018), Emmanuel Finkiel's film adaptation of "La douleur" and "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier," is a poignant rendition of Duras's painful wait for Robert's return. The film is a rich accompaniment to Duras's texts, further probing how to depict atrocity and offering another look at the in-human reality of WWII. Paced in such a way as to embody the protagonist's agonizing wait, the sequence of slow-moving scenes allows the spectator to fully

⁴² For example, this distance is apparent throughout Duras's *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. The narrator sometimes refers to himself in the first person and then at other times in the third. As he states, "Enlancées elles montent les marches du perron. Tatiana présente à Lol Pierre Beugner, son mari, et Jacques Hold, un de leurs amis, la distance est couverte, moi" (RLVS 74). Notice the transition from Jacques Hold to *moi*, a moment where the narrator himself recognizes this distance and reduces it within the space of a sentence. And yet, immediately afterwards, he switches back to the first person in the following chapter: "Je suis dans le service de Pierre Beugner à l'Hôpital départemental. Je suis l'amant de Tatiana Karl" (*ibid.*, 75). There are many other examples throughout the text such as "Je n'ai pas inventé. Il cache le visage de Tatiana Karl" (*ibid.*, 134), a moment that illustrates, once again, how within the space of a sentence, the distance between self, "je," and self as other, "il," is created. (See RLVS 162 for another very clear instance of this.)

appreciate the dilation of time in the face of the unknown. Whether or not Robert will return is unclear until the end of the film; the moratorium we impose on our quotidian lives by watching the narrative unfold, unsure of how it will end, replicates the much longer suspension of life that is felt by the protagonist.⁴³ Through the rhythm of the film, we feel the very wait experienced by Marguerite, only to ask the same question that Dionys, the former's friend and ostensible lover, poses toward the end of the story: is it Robert or her pain that Marguerite is more attached to?

Formally, Finkiel's *La douleur* remains true to the aesthetics of Duras's text.⁴⁴ With an appropriately somber soundtrack that reflects the anxiety of the time, not all is explicitly said or represented in the film, and yet pain, fear, uncertainty, desire – elements all present in Duras's work – come through in Finkiel's adaptation. Most notably *La douleur* questions the limits of representation by including out-of-focus scenes that indicate an inability to show the atrocities of war. Where in her text Duras describes an emaciated prisoner come back from the camps as “autre chose, il reste très peu de lui-même, si peu qu'on doute qu'il soit en vie” (LaD 28) – yet another use of the word *chose* – the film presents scenes dominated by *bokeh*, or blurriness, that conveys the indescribable encapsulated by Duras's *autre chose*. The scene in which Robert is carried back from Dachau, for instance, is entirely obfuscated in the film. In the text Marguerite states how, upon his return, “cette forme [Robert] n'était pas encore morte, elle flottait entre la vie et la mort et on l'avait appelé, le docteur, pour qu'il essaye de la faire vivre encore”⁴⁵ (LaD

⁴³ Finkiel's *La douleur* moreover captures Marguerite's ambiguous relationship with Rabier during her wait. The dubious nature of their encounters is accurately depicted precisely through a lack of any clear depiction. In the film they share a kiss in a restaurant, but we are not privy to any of their possible other intimate moments – neither in the film nor, as already seen, in the short story.

⁴⁴ With many close-ups of Marguerite's face, *La douleur*'s filmography also reflects that of *Hiroshima mon amour*, where *Elle* is seen grabbing her hair, hunched over and crying, her face largely filling the screen in much the same way as Marguerite's in *La douleur*. There is even a scene where Marguerite nearly licks the side of a limestone building, immediately bringing to mind the imprisonment in a cellar where *Elle* licks salt off of a limestone wall following the discovery of her liaison with a German soldier, and her subsequent public shaming after his death.

⁴⁵ Here is the passage in full: “Le docteur est arrivé. Il s'est arrêté net, la main sur la poignée, très pâle. Il nous a regardé puis il a regardé la forme sur le divan. Il ne comprenait pas. Et puis il a compris: cette forme n'était pas

61). The inhuman feces he produces – “Pendant dix-sept jours, l’aspect de cette merde resta le même. Elle était inhumaine” (LaD 64) – become a genuine synecdoche: his inhuman excrement is a substitute for his inhuman bodily state, echoing Kristeva’s abject. And yet in the film, these elements are removed since Robert’s condition when he returns from the camps, barely existent, is unrepresentable. Residing between life and death, inhabiting the fault line between the human and inhuman, Robert is nothing more precise than a *forme*, unable to be visually represented in its vagueness with anything other than what is ultimately a type of invisibility.

The two passages quoted above are excerpted from ten pages in which the narrator describes Robert’s return in “La douleur”: from his emaciation and fight with death to his struggles with eating food – none at all, or dangerously too much in any quantity due to the fragility of his body (LaD 62). Robert is “réduit à ce déchet” (LaD 60), a *Muselman* as explained by Primo Levi,⁴⁶ and in turn the blurred scenes in the film reveal a being that is neither human nor inhuman, seeming to inhabit both of these categories. But this is precisely what Duras’s narrative – even narratological – mechanism of abjectifying repetition does, here through waiting and pain, in “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier” through fear. Stripping the text of affect by abjectly repeating her wait, Duras has rendered the writing impersonal, and it is during this excessive reiteration, which paradoxically erases any and all feeling, that Robert has been simultaneously dehumanized to the point of no longer being clearly human. Though the content of the story does not describe this as it is happening, the abjectifying repetition encoded

encore morte, elle flottait entre la vie et la mort et on l’avait appelé, le docteur, pour qu’il essaye de la faire vivre encore” (LaD 61).

⁴⁶ As Levi writes, “the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence. . . . One hesitates to call them living” (*Survival in Auschwitz*. Translated by Stuart Woolf. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, 90).

in the text's form reflects this inhumanity, staging the way in which Robert's state and status are called into question.

I would like to draw attention to the perspective from which that operation is seen. A form of cruelty is represented in its immediacy, namely Robert's suffering and emaciation. But it also seems to be eschewed. "La Douleur" is a complication of the impersonal of a different type. Before, the reiterations impersonalized the narrator who produced them; now they are doing the same for the object of the enunciation. When he arrives home, Robert is seen, experienced, described as an object of cruelty. Granted, before that, the narrator avoids that prospect by emphasizing her waiting, but there is a certain narrative logic to that, in the sense that the anticipation of trauma is different from the experience of trauma itself. In addition, Robert seems to complicate the abject by embodying it but, as it were, sympathetically. Here are the political and ethical stakes of this aesthetics: how indeed does one describe the indescribable? One wonders what would constitute an emotionally or narratively more "appropriate" representation of violence on this scale. For it is not simply reticence that the narrative displays, but the fact that cruelty *cannot* be expressed and so has to be deflected. That said, clear descriptions of atrocity are provided.

Indeed like the few instances of concrete indications of cruelty in "Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier," "La douleur" too offers more direct mentions of atrocity in the three passages quoted below:

Nous sommes de la race de ceux qui ont brûlés dans les crématoires et des gazés de Maïdanek, nous sommes aussi de la race des nazis. Fonction égalitaire des crématoires de Buchenwald, de la faim, des fosses communes de Bergen-Belsen. . . . (LaD 53);
Ils sont très nombreux, les morts sont vraiment très nombreux. Sept millions de juifs ont été exterminés, transportés en fourgons à bestiaux, et puis gazés dans les chambres à gaz faites à cet effet et puis brûlés dans les fours crématoires

faites à cet effet. On ne parle pas encore des juifs à Paris. Leurs nouveau-nés ont été confiés au corps des FEMMES PRÉPOSÉES À L'ÉTRANGLEMENT DES ENFANTS JUIFS expertes en l'art de tuer à partir d'une pression sur les carotides. Dans un sourire, c'est sans douleur, elles disent. Ce nouveau visage de la mort organisée, rationalisée, découvert en Allemagne déconcerte avant que d'indigner. On est étonné. Comment être encore Allemand? On cherche des équivalences ailleurs, dans d'autres temps. Il n'y a rien. . . . Une des plus grandes nations civilisées du monde, la capitale de la musique de tous les temps vient d'assassiner onze millions d'êtres humains à la façon méthodique, parfaite, d'une industrie d'état. (LaD 56); Robert L. n'a accusé personne, aucune race, aucun peuple, il a accusé l'homme (LaD 59).

And yet these passages too are dissociative. Even what is meant to come across as an expression of feeling – *on est étonné* – is emotionally restrained. The tone of the excerpts is sober; their fact-giving nature is methodical: the accounts do not try to evoke a strongly poignant response. Indeed, we feel less horror than confusion at the juxtaposition of Germany as the music capital of the world to the Nazi's assassination of eleven million people. The actions described in the selections above are clear atrocities and irregular acts of war – acts that in the previous chapters are seen as cruel and monstrous – and yet the accused, just like the victims, are identified as humans: *Robert L. a accusé l'homme*. “Comment être encore Allemand?” asks the narrator. *Comment être encore humain?* is a possible other question, just as relevant, to raise after the brutality of WWII.

From Observer to Actor

The most gruesome text in Duras's *La douleur* and perhaps her entire oeuvre is “Albert des Capitales,” characterized by its abjectifying repetition of the word “donneur,” that is, informer. Nonetheless, even this short story finds itself succeeded by another, far less explicit and highly deflective narrative about detained informants, “Ter le milicien.” Where the former story is overt in its description of torture – though still impersonal as I will come to show

momentarily – the latter is much more subtle in its account of violent (mis)treatment. “Ter le milicien” begins in a center detaining members of the Gestapo and focuses on the young Ter and his impending execution. Indeed it is unclear to what extent Ter is interrogated during or preceding the onset of the narrative. The information we have on this is reduced to the following: “Il y a huit jours D. et Roger ont interrogé Ter. Thérèse a assisté à son interrogatoire. Ceux qui ont assisté à l’interrogatoire de Ter le connaissaient aussi bien que s’ils l’avaient toujours connu” (TleM 152-153). Though “Ter le milicien” does not employ a strategy of abjectifying repetition, Duras resorts to the use of “chose,” as in “La douleur,” to blanket atrocity. In the following excerpt, “chose” identifies a body-cadaver residing between life and death or even entirely beyond such categorizations. This brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s descriptions of the camps: “There are no parallels to the life in the concentration camps. Its horror can never be fully embraced by the imagination for the very reason that it stands outside of life and death.”⁴⁷

Witness the passage:

La chose apparaît. Blanche. Blanche et allongée par terre. Les hommes se rangent de chaque côté d’elle le long du couloir. Deux d’entre eux s’en emparent, la soulèvent et l’emportent. . . . La chose est molle et frissonne à chacun des pas des porteurs, comme de la bouillie (TleM 147).

Concealing any and all detail about the cruel actions that led to such a state and eschewing the humanness of one who is most likely a victim of torture, *chose* here names what is not clearly nameable.

Markedly less denotatively subdued, Duras’s “Albert des Capitales” would then seem like the obvious choice to discuss torture and atrocity since the text is entirely about interrogating an informer. And yet this short story too is another example of a highly impersonal text,

⁴⁷ Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harvest, 1966, 444.

paradoxically both providing blunt facts about torture while also veiling it. Having captured a *donneur*, D. asks Thérèse if she wants to question him. Though she nonchalantly replies with “Comme tu voudras. Je m’en fous” (AdesC 124), what follows is 16 pages describing the torture process – from the *donneur* first getting undressed,⁴⁸ stark naked,⁴⁹ to his being continually hit, beaten up, bloody: “Son œil est abîmé, le sang coule sur sa figure. Il pleure. De la morve ensanglantée sort de son nez. . . . Il se frotte toujours avec les mains et se barbouille de sang” (AdesC 132). It is undeniable that the acts add up to torture: “Maintenant, c’est entamé, c’est bien en train, les gars ont bien frappé. C’est sérieux, c’est vrai: on torture un homme. On peut ne pas être d’accord mais on ne peut ni se moquer, ni douter, ni en être gêné” (AdesC 131), affirms the narrator. Indeed, “Albert des Capitales” vividly depicts cruel treatment marked by the repetition of *sang*, *ensanglanté(e)*, *saigne*, the bloody descriptions of torture abounding in the text and permeating through the narrative like a bad odor: “[d]e son corps il monte une drôle d’odeur, écœurante et douceâtre, celle de la peau grasse mal lavée mêlée à celle du sang” (AdesC 137).

But even in this text where torture is so apparent, a single torturous act making up the entirety of the narrative, wholly narratological strategies that culminate in the impersonal, and an accentuation of the inhuman, structure the short story. Within the span of 24 pages, the word *donneur* is reiterated a staggering 64 times, accompanied by an emphasis put on the verb *donner*, including instances that describe the *donneur*’s activity of turning in Resistance fighters and Jews to the Gestapo in exchange for money. Consider the following single passage that highlights the extent to which the word “donneur” is used in “Albert des Capitales”:

⁴⁸ “Déshabille-toi, et en vitesse” (AdesC 126).

⁴⁹ “Maintenant il est nu” (AdesC 129, 130).

[D.] s'approche du donneur les mains vides. Il le fixe, calme. . . . [Thérèse] repose le carnet et, à son tour, fixe le donneur. Les camarades se sont tus. D. est face au donneur.
 "Tu ne te rappelles pas?", demande D.
 Il se rapproche encore un peu plus du donneur.
 Le donneur recule. Ses yeux se troublent.
 "Ah! oui, dit le donneur, que je suis bête! C'est Albert, le garçon des Capitales. . . ." . . .
 "Comment est-il cet Albert?" demande D. au donneur.
 – C'est un petit blond. Bien gentil," dit le donneur en souriant, conciliant. . . .
 Le donneur regarde D. Il cesse de sourire (AdesC 121).

The ludicrous frequency of the locution deconstructs language in a way that echoes Elaine Scarry's analysis of what happens to body and voice and world in the event of torture: "Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it."⁵⁰ Moreover, the word "donneur" is repeated so often that it erases any other defining quality or even simple identification of the *donneur* as an individual. This label thus not only renders him impersonal but the very repetition of "donneur" deconstructs the *donneur*'s humanness. In other words, "donneur" is reiterated so excessively throughout the narrative that it abjectifies the *donneur*. The *donneur* is no longer a subject and not quite an object; he is not a person or man, but a *donneur* and solely a *donneur*. Four other attributes, all profanities – *salaud* (AdesC 121, 132x3, 137x3), *fumier* (AdesC 121, 132x2, 137), *ordure* (AdesC 121, 132, 137), and *cochon* (AdesC 132) – that are used to identify him in the short story only further underscore how the *donneur*'s humanness is called into question during his cruel interrogation; less a human, his being is more in conformity with waste or swine.

⁵⁰ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 4.

Gradually reduced to something subhuman, whining and moaning – “Il geint: ‘Aïe, aïe, oh, oh,’ sans arrêt” (AdesC 132) – the *donneur* throughout the torture process becomes more and more devoid of anything human:

C’est fait: qu’il en meure ou qu’il s’en tire, cela ne dépend plus de Thérèse. Cela n’a plus aucune importance. Il est devenu un homme qui n’a plus rien en commun avec les autres hommes. À chaque minute, la différence augmente, s’installe (AdesC 133).

As the narrator further explains, still during the torture scene,

Il saigne beaucoup de la figure. Ce n’était déjà pas un homme comme les autres. C’était un donneur d’hommes. Il ne se préoccupait pas de savoir pour quelles raisons on lui en demandait. Même ceux qui le payaient n’étaient pas ses amis. Mais maintenant on ne peut plus le comparer à rien de vivant. Même mort, il ne rassemblera pas à un homme mort. Il encombrera le hall. Peut-être que c’est du temps perdu. Il faudrait en finir. Ce n’est pas la peine de le tuer. Ce n’est pas non plus la peine de le laisser vivre. Il ne peut servir à rien. Il est complètement hors d’usage. Justement parce que ce n’est pas la peine de la tuer on peut y aller (AdesC 137).

C’était un donneur d’hommes: he is not a man himself, but a denouncer of men, his not-entirely-human status further confirmed with his inhumanness extending even into death. The above passages, moreover, bear witness not only to an impersonalization of the “donneur,” but also to the overall detached narrative style of “Albert des Capitales.” Short, disengaged, matter-of-fact sentences proliferate in the story – *Il encombrera le hall. Peut-être que c’est du temps perdu. Il faudrait en finir. Ce n’est pas la peine de le tuer* – and erase affect through their mathematical timbre. But this passage is remarkable beyond this sentence structure. There is in this story not only the narration of a scene of torture but also an *analysis* of what is at work in such a scene. As the *donneur* is rendered inhuman through the act of torture, the narrative itself is depersonalized while the narrator reflects on what is happening throughout the torture process. Here too we witness a case of free indirect discourse, or rather a flickering between the narrator’s focalization – *Il saigne beaucoup de la figure, Il encombrera le hall* – and a much less clear point of view. *Il*

ne se préoccupait pas de savoir pour quelles raisons on lui en demandait. From whose point of view is this piece of information given? Though we may not have an answer to this question, it is undeniable that in “Albert des Capitales” also, it is *how* the story is told that points to the degree to which the events it describes are cruel without their necessarily being labelled as such in the narrative itself. Moreover, this short story, like the others studied above, illustrates how abject repetition to the point of narrative impersonalization inflects the human with the inhuman.

Duras even uses a pseudonym in this text, pointing to yet another strategy of impersonalization: “Thérèse c’est moi. Celle qui torture le donneur, c’est moi” (AdesC 116), she writes in the preface to “Albert des Capitales.” And indeed, this particular form of the impersonal – that is, authorial distancing – is evident throughout *La douleur*. In addition to a story told in the first person that slips into the third as witnessed in “La douleur,” “Albert des Capitales” reveals an alter ego providing even more distance with respect to its author. As a result, Duras not only renders her characters impersonal but distances her very self from the events at the heart of her narratives, their atrocity perhaps too much to handle otherwise. Indeed, once the act is completed and the *donneur* broken, Thérèse/Duras experiences a change of heart:

“Il faut le laisser partir, dit Thérèse. Il peut marcher.” Roger n’est pas sûr qu’il faille le laisser partir. “Qu’on ne le voie plus, dit Thérèse. – Un gibier pareil, dit Roger, ils ne voudront pas le lâcher. Je leur expliquerai,” dit D. Thérèse se met à pleurer (AdesC 141).

The short story ends abruptly – in mid-conversation about whether to release or retain the *donneur* – and with an exceptional expression of emotion: Thérèse crying. But it is only now, once the act is over and done with, that Thérèse shows any emotivity. Stylistically speaking, the abrupt end produces a heightened emotivity whose impact could be greater than would be any attempt to indulge or explain it. More literally, though, it is at this very moment during which Thérèse has an emotional outburst that the text simply ends. The narrator’s breakdown is met

with a breakdown of the narration itself; Duras simply stops writing. Consequently, once again, even with Thérèse's sobs, we are not privy to any subjective affect. Paradoxically, the text thus ends on both an emotional note and an impersonal tone.

With these various examples of Duras's fundamentally narratological impersonality explored, my hope is that the power of literature, and particular Duras's writing, have been underscored. To draw this chapter to a close, we may question the motivation behind such a strategy: what are the stakes of such impersonal writing? The reasons for dissociative writing are many and varied. Indeed, it is perhaps inevitable to write in an emotionally distant manner when describing the indescribable, as texts raised in Chapter 3 like Henri Alleg's *La Question* – also testifying to a sober tone – have shown. In a 1998 opinion piece for *Le Monde*, Jean-Pierre Rioux writes about Alleg in these terms: “son style nu, sa sècheresse de procès-verbal qui dénonçait nommément les tortionnaires sous des initiales qui ne trompaient personne [highlight] la vérité humaine de son écriture, aussi éloignée de l'exagération.”⁵¹ Rioux's assessment was further underlined by the French government's adamant desire to ban the text and put its publisher on trial.⁵² We have seen other writers too employ narrative devices to achieve an understanding or purposeful lack thereof of atrocity in this dissertation. Gilbert Gatore, for instance, as I underlined in conversation with Josias Semujanga in the previous chapter, never explicitly describes the Rwandan genocide or even names it directly, forcing us to think about how one is to bear witness to atrocity in literature.

⁵¹ Rioux, Jean-Pierre for *Le Monde*, April 27, 1998 in Alleg, Henri. *La Question*. Paris: Minuit, 2008, 92, 93.

⁵² Such pressure made it obvious that the text was true and accurate, a fact also recognized by the French military: “faire un procès à [Jérôme] Lindon, ajouter la rédaction de *La Question* aux charges dont Alleg était déjà accablé, reviendrait à faire davantage enquêter sur la vérité des faits dénoncés, à instruire les autres plaintes déposées pour torture, puis à tenir des procès qui serviraient de tribune trop commode aux dénonciateurs. C'est pourquoi le juge militaire qui instruisait l'affaire se garda bien de jamais convoquer Lindon et de clore l'instruction ouverte contre les tortionnaires” (*ibid.*, 88-89).

For Emerson, as Cameron brings to light, “[w]ith respect to grief, the manifestation of dissociation is stupor, the inability to feel.”⁵³ She is there referencing the death of Emerson’s five-year-old son, as mentioned above. Cameron further explains that this is the only way Emerson knows how to react to the death:

To take up the son’s death as a displacement – to deflect the discussion of the son into miscellaneous experiences that “second” the son’s loss, that reiterate or duplicate it – is to talk about the son in the only way he can be talked about: at the remove at which death has placed him.⁵⁴

Indeed, perhaps dissociation, that is, distance through repetition, is the only way in which Duras knows how to address the unfolding events of the war; we recall that *La douleur* was written forty years before its publication: “Comment ai-je pu de même abandonner ce texte pendant des années dans cette maison de campagne régulièrement inondée en hiver” (LaD 12), Duras asks in her preface to the volume. Simply put, bellicose violence poses a threat to the subject and, moreover, presents acute situations in which the human is frequently presented as inhuman. Duras’s tactics of impersonality through her paradoxically abject erasure highlight these threats, their oftentimes cruel realization, and shows how not only the events themselves, but the problem of representing them, even when that means eschewing representation of them, mobilizes a language through which the human subject elides in favor of something impersonal, or, as I have developed progressively throughout this dissertation, something *in-human*.

In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” dissociation is produced through repetitive fear become abject. Fear is repeated so often that it ends up being the only knowledge, certainty, that we have of the narrator and the events of the plot: Marguerite is scared; we do not know what has happened or will happen to Robert L. In “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” fear is the

⁵³ Cameron, Sharon. *Impersonality: Seven Essays*, op. cit., 58.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

acknowledgement of a closeness with the enemy, of a perverse intimacy. It appears to attempt to protect the subject from Rabier, but by way of its abjectifying repetitiveness; it also erases the subjectivity of the subject, rendering the narrator impersonal. A similar effect is produced in “La douleur” with both pain and waiting, and in “Albert des Capitales” with the word “donneur,” filling the narratives with deflective writing that simultaneously directly addresses and refuses to address atrocity head on, encapsulating the paradox of the in-human and the difficulty of describing, even simply defining, cruel events. Indeed, the repetitions want to erase the human from the atrocious acts that they deflect but they backfire – only showing the inhumanity of the human.

“Ce sera le silence et aucun mot pour le dire,”⁵⁵ writes Annie Ernaux in *Les Années* (2008), undertaking her reflection on memory, visual culture, and autobiography with a statement on the difficulty of naming silence, of filling the inevitable void of remembrance. And yet in Duras, and with this chapter’s study of the triangulation of the abject, the impersonal, and cruelty, we witness silence and nothing but words to say it. These words, paradoxically in their dismissive erasure, speak the frightening, atrocious reality of war and how violent acts, namely excessive, irregular acts of violence, complicate the notion of the human, extending it beyond our preconceived notions of what constitutes it, inviting inhuman elements into our understanding of it. Duras underscores the quandary of naming that problematic, in the final analysis underscoring how in literature on war, “all things scream silently.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ernaux, Annie. *Les années*. Paris: Gallimard, 2009, 19.

⁵⁶ Yevtushenko, Yevgeny. “Babi Yar.” *Liternaturnaya Gazeta*, 1961. See Figures 39-42, inclusive, in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for more on Babyn Yar.

CONCLUSION

WHAT THE HUMAN IS NOT: POSTHUMANISM AND THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN

his *partug* torn, blood-slick and beet red. he calls
out to someone; walls of mud surround him. arterial blood,
a flood of red life.
— Benjamin Hertwig, “July 22, 2006,” *Slow War*¹

Pour peu, j’imaginai la disparition de la guerre qui
nous emplissant de sa violence, la fin du terrorisme, le
retour à la paix civile, la démocratisation, la libération des
femmes que j’aimais.
— Salim Bachi (LCU 144)

My interest in this dissertation has taken the form of questioning the category of the human, revealed to be *in-human*, through an analysis of cruelty. This has occurred through examinations of literary representations of atrocities of war and their oftentimes exceedingly bloody results – whether actually represented in the literary texts or not, and hence these works’ interest. How, however, do we make sense of a project about the human, one focused on humanity, in an academic climate currently embracing posthumanism? First and foremost, my thesis concerning the in-human is not interested in salvaging humanism. Although a particular form of this ideology was a productive starting point to discuss cruelty in Chapter 2, it was also shown to be problem-ridden as I developed through my study of Saint-Exupéry. And yet, “posthumanism,” the obvious response to, even rejection of, humanism, has not made an appearance in the preceding five chapters either – and for a reason. Posthumanism is a fraught, perhaps even loaded term that means as many things as the number of people using it. Francesca Ferrando writes:

¹ *Slow War*, offering reflections on the War in Afghanistan and contemplating warfare and its traumatic aftermath more generally, was a shortlisted finalist for the Governor General’s Literary Awards and is Hertwig’s – a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces – first published collection of poetry. It is clear that the color red, to conclude with this image of *cruor*, is prevalent in the poem – with poppies too being mentioned following the quoted free verse above.

“Posthuman” has become an umbrella term to refer to a variety of different movements and schools of thought, including philosophical, cultural, and critical posthumanism; transhumanism (in its variations of extropianism, liberal and democratic transhumanism, among others); the feminist approach of new materialisms; the heterogeneous landscape of antihumanism, metahumanism, metahumanities, and posthumanities.²

Though my goal in this dissertation has not been to follow a humanist line of inquiry, this has also not been a study of the concepts or terms mentioned by Ferrando above precisely for the reason that they are so charged.

In the introduction to *What is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe nuances the notion of “posthumanism” and argues that “the point [of posthumanism] is not to reject humanism *tout court* . . . rather to show how those aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks use to conceptualize them.”³ He formulates this supposed acceptance of the human in our posthumanist era even more strongly when he affirms that posthumanism is “far from surpassing or rejecting the human. . . .”⁴ And yet, the very term *posthumanism* seems to indicate the contrary, while Wolfe’s emphasis on the fact that the human “at its core and in its very constitution, [is] radically ahuman and constitutively prosthetic”⁵ too gestures to a non-human human, to a human that isn’t, won’t be, and maybe never even was. How are we to read, moreover, the enthusiasm about the idea that Jacques Derrida and Niklas Luhmann, Wolfe asserts, “emerge as exemplary posthumanist theorists . . . because both refuse to locate meaning in the realm of either the human or, for that matter, the biological.”⁶ Derrida did in fact write about the ends of man, underlining in his essay, “Les fins de l’homme,” a juxtaposition of an

² Ferrando, Francesca. “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations.” *Existenz* 8/2 (2013), 26.

³ Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, xvi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

⁶ *Ibid.*

existentialist humanism in post-WWII France⁷ to the anti-humanist/anthropologist stance in the 60s that fused Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger with humanist metaphysics.⁸ Derrida's choice of epigraphs points to a thinking of the end of man already in Kant (and Sartre and Foucault),⁹ however, and he argues in the essay that the end of man is always already prescribed in metaphysics: "*La pensée de la fin de l'homme est donc toujours déjà prescrite dans la métaphysique, dans la pensée de la vérité de l'homme.*"¹⁰ Whatever the timeline of posthumanism may be – that is, whether this is a notion born of, say, Kant or, rather, the dawn of machine learning – one thing is clear: the expression "les fins de l'homme" does not only reference the possible end(s) of man, but, more importantly, the *limits* of the human. And if anything has been clear in this work, it is cruelty's investment in these very limits. Cruelty occurs at the limits of the human, destabilizing that ontology and forcing us to avow the constitutive inhumanity of the human.

⁷ "Après la guerre, sous le nom d'existentialisme, chrétien ou athée, et conjointe avec un personnalisme fondamentalement chrétien, la pensée qui dominait en France se donnait pour essentiellement humaniste" (Derrida, Jacques. "Les fins de l'homme." *Marges de la philosophie*. Paris: Minuit, 1972, 135).

⁸ "Après la vague humaniste et anthropologiste qui a recouvert la philosophie française, on aurait donc pu croire que le reflux anti-humaniste et anti-anthropologiste qui suivit, et dans lequel nous sommes, allait redécouvrir l'héritage des pensées qui avaient ainsi été défigurées ou plutôt dans lesquelles on avait trop vite reconnu la figure de l'homme. . . . La critique de l'humanisme et de l'anthropologisme . . . semble au contraire . . . amalgamer Hegel, Husserl et – de manière plus ambiguë – Heidegger, avec la vieille métaphysique humaniste" (*ibid.*, 140-141).

⁹ Kant, *Fondement de la métaphysique des mœurs*: "Or je dis: l'homme, et en général tout être raisonnable, existe comme fin en soi, et non pas simplement comme moyen dont telle ou telle volonté puisse user à son gré; dans toute ses actions, aussi bien dans celles qui le concernent lui-même que dans celles qui concernent d'autres êtres raisonnables, il doit toujours être considéré en même temps comme fin." Sartre, *L'être et le néant*: "Elle [l'ontologie] nous a simplement permis de déterminer les fins dernières de la réalité humaine, ses possibilités fondamentales et la valeur qui la hantent." Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*: "L'homme est une invention dont l'archéologie de notre pensée montre aisément la date récente. Et peut-être la fin prochaine" (*ibid.*, 131).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 144. Heidegger himself in his *Letter on Humanism* explains the limitations of metaphysics: "The first humanism, and every kind that has emerged from that time to the present, has presupposed the most universal 'essence' of man to be obvious. Man is considered to be an *animal rationale*. This definition is not simply the Latin translation of the Greek *zōon logon echon* but rather a metaphysical interpretation of it. This essential definition of man is not false. But it is conditioned by metaphysics. The essential provenance of metaphysics, and not just its limits, became questionable in *Being and Time*" (Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008, 226).

Obviously, various contemporary discourses take the interrogation of the human in the direction of “posthuman” states of being (e.g. animal, plant or machine ontologies), or toward the decentering that emerges in discussion of the Anthropocene. As Achille Mbembe writes, “Nous sommes donc passés de la condition humaine à la condition terrestre. [Un des traits caractéristiques] de notre temps est la redéfinition – en cours – de l’inhumain dans le cadre d’une écologie générale et d’une géographie désormais élargie, sphérique, irréversiblement planétaire.”¹¹ Dominick LaCapra in *History and its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* calls for a paradigm shift in human-animal relations, asking for a turning away from anthropocentrism and the inadequacies of “rights” discourse for both humans and animals. We are additionally, of course, in an era that necessitates for a discussion of machines and artificial intelligence, perhaps even the unison of human and technology.¹²

I am in complete support of such discourses and in fact do not believe them to be in contradiction with my analyses. Perhaps counterintuitively, to better understand the human and humanity at large, it is in fact vital to move away from *anthropocentrism* and precisely toward the limits of humanity, to the excesses of and beyond the human, which in turn elucidate the non-excesses into which these excesses are always already inscribed. In this project, the *beyond* of the “beyond human” has at times been a bleeding into the animal; or, sometimes a cruel human has turned monstrous because of the kind and degree of atrocity enacted, as a result of the motivation or lack thereof behind the action. Ultimately, the literary examples studied here have highlighted an opacity between the human and itself as something other in the face of cruel acts. By focusing on these other states, these states of otherness, I have attempted to shed light on the

¹¹ Mbembe, Achille. *Politiques de l'inimitié*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016, 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

power of literary cruelty to redefine the human, to redraw its boundaries and limits, and to show that the beyond was never beyond, but rather a complex imbrication with the human.

The preceding five chapters, then, have not been a discussion of what comes after the human when the human is no more. I am less interested in the end of the human or what, ontologically, comes after the human, but in *what the human is*. And it is in comparison to what the human is supposedly not that the notion of humanity has here gained clarity. I began this project by promising that my study of cruelty, equally interrogating monstrosity and the inhuman more largely, would ultimately illuminate the concept of the human. The first thing I highlighted, however, was the fact that cruelty has no opposite. Indeed, if anything has become clear in my previous chapter, it is that the human has no simple opposite either. Sometimes a feigned human antonym has appeared in my inquiries as the monstrous, sometimes as a dehumanized animal, sometimes as a technologized machine – but these apparent human antitheses have systematically overlapped with the human. These imbrications become even more obvious and salient in a martial context, especially when acts of irregular war are witnessed, when statutes pertaining to war crimes and crimes against humanity are infringed upon. As Ian Balfour and Eduardo Cadava argue in their discussion of human rights, “[i]f Benjamin were alive today, he might remind us that there is no document of humanitarianism that is not at the same time a document of inhumanity, inequality, and violence. . . .”¹³ Certainly, upholding the rights of some inevitably violates the rights of others and thus acts of humanitarianism can translate to inhumane treatment. But in a more literal and perhaps radical sense, what this quote is also formulating is the idea that any text about the human will simultaneously be about the inhuman.

¹³ Balfour, Ian, and Eduardo Cadava. “The Claims of Human Rights: An Introduction.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 (2004), 293.

This is precisely because, as we have seen, the inhuman informs the human.

It has therefore become clear in this project that in the face of extreme violence, when the questions *what is humanity?* and *what is the human in the face of this atrocity?* are asked, the question of inhumanity is simultaneously posed. When it comes to cruelty, then, one must simultaneously address both the human and the inhuman: hence my use of the term *in-human*. That hyphen has been the generative force behind the last five chapters seeking to shed light on the categories of being in war. Cruelty, as I have endeavored to show, is what permits us to better understand these classifications: cruelty identifies the fault line between human and inhuman as shifting, consequently marking the category of the inhuman as enmeshed within the human, from the monstrous to the animal. Cruelty is what permits us to see the overlay of human and inhuman as well as the staunch disavowal of the inhuman part of humanity – and the need to acknowledge it.

In addition to endeavoring to provide a better understanding of the human, the literary analyses that have been laid out in these pages have intersected with real-life events, an archive, and testimony. These examinations of literature have thus also been an exercise in reflecting on history and in putting into practice the narration of history. “When I pronounce the word Future, the first syllable already belongs to the past./When I pronounce the word Silence, I destroy it,”¹⁴ writes 1996 Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska in her poem “The Three Oddest Words.” History is constantly generating itself and the need to acknowledge and address it – to break its silence – is thus in constant production also. My hope is that it has become clear that the need to

¹⁴ The poem’s final stanza reads “When I pronounce the word Nothing, I make something no non-being can hold” (Szymborska, Wisława. “*The Three Oddest Words*.” Translated by S. Baranczak & C. Cavanagh. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/25558-poetry-1996-7/>). See Figures 43 and 44 in the “Archival Photographic Appendix” at the end of this work for more.

discuss this future and present – by looking to the past and the insight that literature, especially, can provide to do so – is critical. “C’est la tâche de l’écriture, pensée, littérature, arts, de s’aventurer à en porter témoignage,”¹⁵ writes Jean-François Lyotard, speaking of a debt to childhood and the need to bear witness to this bygone time. In a different context, but one still resorting to the act of remembrance and documentation, writing, thinking, literature, art have tasked themselves with archiving the nature of atrocity, why it happens and how. How these works come to represent – both formally and conceptually – violence, torture, war, terror, loss illuminates affective reactions, ontologies, ethical debates. Wars will inevitably continue to rage, but I am convinced of the fact that literature contributes not only to understanding their violence but also to knowing better how to recuperate from them, if not reach a place of healing beyond them.

Of course, there is a risk involved in writing about what happens at the extreme. Maggie Nelson addresses some of the apprehensions. As she writes in *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*: “Many have expressed concern about the ethical or even spiritual effects of meditation on such questions [about cruelty]. I count myself among them. Contemporary Buddhist figures like Thich Nhat Hanh advise against taking in or meditating on cruelties and violent spectacles at all, as to do so, Hanh says, only sows seeds of aggression. . . .”¹⁶ Although later Nelson goes on to say that her book avoids “moralistic solutions to intractable ethical and aesthetic problems,”¹⁷ her former quote does seem to gesture toward an anxiety of *not* doing the contrary, that is, of not appearing to be informed by a moral stance, of eschewing the “dangers” of discussing cruelty.

As humans we have a proclivity for normativity, but we have to be aware and weary of

¹⁵ Lyotard, Jean-François. *L’inhumain: Causeries sur les temps*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2014, 18.

¹⁶ Nelson, Maggie. *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

the desire for hegemony and not to subscribe to it too strongly when writing about atrocities. Indeed, when we denounce horrors and violence, we also have to be careful to not be moralizing, to not preordain people's moral stance. And yet, by the nature of asking such difficult question, we also risk being too aesthetic and *not moral enough* in our analyses. The texts that I have studied here and my examinations of them either symptomatize or address head on such questions, ultimately forcing us, and hopefully productively, to think about how to balance empathy and intellectual distance. I strongly believe in the power of cruelty to do exactly that and, in turn, to provide a deep awareness of the human and humanity. My intention in this work has been to underscore how it is precisely cruelty that can help us navigate a breadth of troubling questions. It is representations and analyses of cruelty that can, and do, uncover the complexities of war – namely war in its most extreme cases – and, in the final analysis, our own complexities, for those same extremes are reflected in the very fabric of our being.

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