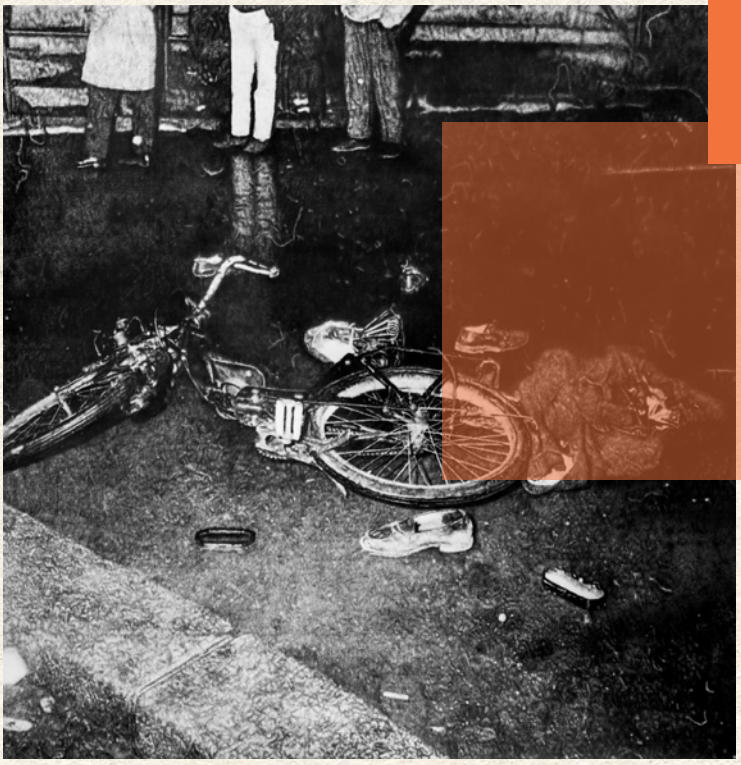
ROBERT DESJARLAIS

the visual afterlife of ABDELKADER BENNAHAR



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ABDELKADER BENNAHAR

THEORY IN FORMS

Series Editors
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ROBERT DESJARLAIS

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No one dies so poor that he leaves nothing behind.

—Blaise Pascal

Contents

Introduction

Traces of his life are in my life now. He is close to me and terrifically far away. I craft aspects of a life and death through scarce images and remnant shards, what lives on of a body, a face, name, memory, later, in time.

Most lives leave traces, at least a few. Memories kept alive within a family, pictures in a photo album, words inscribed in a journal, the lasting lessons of a teacher, the legacy of a name, and anything from the transfer of genetic traits to the ruins of a lost civilization—aspects of a life can remain, still remain, as flint marks and trace particles in the world. Within the modern age there is also the trail of singular existences left in the annals of bureaucratic records, archives, or any number of online forums or digital databases. Obscurity and enigma can likewise follow the end of a life; features of a life, its sensate forms and reasons, can be lost forever. A life leaves traces, along with an absence of traces and poorness in knowing and understanding. I note this intricate tracework at a time when, all around me, lives and deaths, tenuous and uncertain, have come under question; one quick viral infection or a violent act can bring it all to an end. I write these words aware that there is a good chance they could prove to be bit traces left in the current of my own life, once the vital arc of that life, diminishing faintly, slowly, with irrevocable force, is rubbed out and what remains is a residuum of trace and absence.

The Beast's Skeleton

This book touches on traces and the absence of vital traces within the flow of life and death. It attends to a few select images and lines of writing, as well as the physical remains of a deceased body, left in the wake of a man who apparently was born around 1919 in northwestern Algeria and who died on the outskirts of Paris in October 1961. This man's name was Abdelkader Bennahar. The circumstances of his life are relatively obscure to me and, it appears, most others, as are the circumstances of his death. There are just a few traces to go by, a few nick marks left of a life in its final hours, and vestiges of his death. Aspects of the historical record are fragmentary in nature, often contradictory, sometimes absent. From scant remnant traces I have been trying to grasp certain features of Bennahar's life and death as well as the social and political terrains that informed this life death, alongside others.

Abdelkader Bennahar lived and died within a harsh climate of French colonial control of North Africa and military and governmental domination of the peoples who lived there or came to reside and work in France proper. He is known most, if he is known at all, for being the subject, often unnamed, of a series of photographs taken by Jewish-French photographer Élie Kagan the night of 17 October 1961 in Nanterre, a commune on the western outskirts of Paris. The photos show Bennahar as he lay on the ground, bleeding, probably after being attacked by officers of the Paris police, and then he is shown standing, wincing in pain, and then being brought to a hospital. By the next night Bennahar was dead, apparently in relation to actions undertaken by members of the Paris police force. The circumstances of his death and its causes remain vague and unclear. And so this book is also about the ways in which forms of political struggle and state violence shape the tenor of particular lives and deaths in situations of colonialism and political domination. It considers politically charged situations of life, death, burial, and uncertain mourning in situations of state and police violence against Algerians in France in the late 1950s and early 1960s, during the Algerian war of liberation.

I write of life and death, those most intense and sobering of topics, in colonial and postcolonial times. Achille Mbembe (2006, 119) speaks of how "postcolonial thinking aims to take the beast's skeleton apart to flush out its favorite places of habitation. More radically, it seeks to know what it is to live under the beast's regime, what kind of life it offers, and what sort of death people die from."[1] The current work follows the spirit of such postcolonial thought in trying to grasp what kinds of lives and deaths occurred under the French colonial regime in North Africa and elsewhere in the twentieth century. In focusing on a few

specific lives and situations from that colonial era—and their reverberations, years later—one might gain a better understanding of the forces that shaped many lives and deaths at that time and in times since then.

A key locus of this inquiry is Paris, France, in 1961, particularly October of that year. On Tuesday, the seventeenth of October, between twenty and forty thousand North Africans who lived in various shantytown bidonvilles and urban suburbs set along the outskirts of Paris approached the center of the city, by foot, bus, or Métro train, to demonstrate peacefully against illegal curfews imposed upon North Africans by the Paris police force. This collective *manifestation* was supported and organized by the leadership of the FLN in France (Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale, or FF-FLN), which compelled all able-bodied adult Algerians residing in the Paris region to participate in a unified, peaceful show of defiance and resistance; members of the FF-FLN leadership tried to make sure that no demonstrators carried weapons of any sort. Police officers and auxiliary police officers based in Paris learned about the plans for the demonstration sometime that day. Armed with guns and long clubs, they were waiting at bridges, Métro stations, and other strategic points when demonstrators arrived and tried to move more fully into the city center. Many of these police officers were enraged by the deaths of a number of their colleagues, some of whom in recent months had been assassinated by members of the FF-FLN. Their commanding officers, including Maurice Papon, prefect of the Paris police, apparently conveyed that there would be no repercussions against them if they acted aggressively toward any Algerians they encountered. Earlier that month, Papon set the tone and scale for violent retribution. "For every blow we receive, we will give them ten in return," he said at the funeral of an assassinated police officer (Cole 2003, 24).

During the course of the police's violent repression of the protests, through rainy hours that night, approximately thirty to two hundred men and women were killed, apparently by French police forces, chiefly through beatings, shootings, or drownings in the Seine.[2] Many of those killed went unidentified; corpses were buried in unmarked graves in cemeteries outside of Paris. Other bodies were reportedly buried in woods near the city. That same night the police rounded up thousands of Algerian men and transported them to temporary detention centers set up in stadiums and amphitheaters in Paris, where they remained in harrowing conditions for several days. Over five hundred of those detained were then sent by plane from Orly Airport to Algeria, banished from life and employment in France.[3] Others remained in prison until the war ended in March 1962 (Cole 2003, 24). Jim House and Neil MacMaster (2006, 6) observe that the "wave of murderous attacks" unleashed by security forces

signify "the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history."

One person's account of what he went through the night of 17 October 1961 speaks to select forms of violence enacted by the Paris police. The account is drawn from a set of records and testimonies collected by the FLN in the aftermath of the violent events of October 1961. Jean-Luc Einaudi later received a copy of these materials in writing his book *La bataille de Paris: 17 Octobre 1961*, which, once published in 1991, alerted many readers in France and elsewhere to the violence wielded by Paris police officers that night. Ahmed Djoughlal's account of that fearful night is recounted in Einaudi's book, and now is retold here—this time in English translation.[4]

When Ahmed Djoughlal finished with work that Tuesday (17 October), he went to the train station of Villiers-le-Bel, a commune to the north of Paris where he lived. There he met with some forty other Algerian men, each dressed in their best clothes for meetings. The group had planned to take a train to Gare du Nord, to join in on the demonstrations in Paris, but when they arrived at the station in Villiers-le-Bel they found that the trains weren't running that day due to a strike. The group therefore decided to take buses to Porte de la Chapelle. From there, they intended to go to the rallying point of Place de la Concorde. When they arrived at Porte de la Chapelle, they were met by police forces concentrated in Place de la Chapelle and in the Métro stations nearby.

"We didn't have the possibility to avoid them and, by mutual agreement, our whole group, supervised by a leader, went toward the Métro station, head high and silently," Djoughlal related in a testimony recorded by members of the FLN, dated 22 October 1961.

> The forces of repression [the police] came to meet us, surrounded us and pushed us toward the police buses parked in the square. We walked in single file between two rows of police officers armed with clubs, some of them holding their submachine guns by the barrel and hitting us on all parts of the body. This went on all the way to the buses, approximately one hundred and fifty meters. Some brothers bent their knees under the blows, others fainted and got up a few seconds later under the insistence of the blows. This was also the case throughout the entire journey to a police station nearby. There, we found Harki auxiliaries who took over from the police. They beat us even more savagely than the police themselves. After identity and status checks, all the brothers present were taken away by bus to an unknown destination. Of all our group, only one unfortunate

Algerian whom I did not know and myself were left. We were both seriously injured.

The police told us they were taking us to a doctor. We both got into the car. There was the driver and an officer with a machine gun. When the car started, I don't know if the policeman was seized by an attack of madness or if he acted out of repressive spirit, in any case, he had drool in his mouth, his eyes were crazy. He raised his club to the height of his head and hit us with all his strength on all the limbs of our bodies. The brother who was with me fell unconscious under the blows. When the car stopped, the driver got out and told us to get out. Still under the threat of the machine gun, we got out and what we saw made us realize that our death was near. We started to say prayers, we understood. The cold water of the Seine was two meters away. This is the doctor to end our suffering.

We could not move, we had two hallucinating visions: the barrel of the machine gun and the implacable cold water.

One of the policemen raised his white baton and began his abuse. He was bludgeoning us in the hope of making us lose consciousness in order to sink us faster and have a certain death. In a supreme impulse of conservation, the Algerian brother and I embraced each other and we invoked our mothers and God to help us. The policeman, mad with hatred and seeing that we were united even in the face of death, struck a blow with his truncheon so terrible, yes, so terrible that the brain of my poor companion splattered on my face. I could only hear an agonized groan, the martyred brother died in my arm. Seeing this, the policeman gave me a final blow on the back of the neck. Before I fell unconscious I heard the policeman say, "They're dead, throw them away!"

When I came to my senses I thought it was raining, I was simply in the water. I was floating at the water's edge and it's providence that I did not sink. There were bloodstains on the water, my poor companion sank. The police car had disappeared. I was able to get back to the shore and, with superhuman efforts, I returned to the dock and fell back into unconsciousness. I had no sense of time, I don't know how long I was unconscious. In any case, I took my courage in both hands and, despite the damage which blinded me, I returned in the night to a home in Stains where the few surviving brothers took care of me, dressed me in clean linen and offered me a bed. I spent the rest of the night in the home, and in the morning I was able to return to my home in Villiers-le-Bel.

My brothers, I bring to your attention that the repression [the police] took my wallet and my identity papers. They also took my money. For the moment, I can hardly move about since I have no proof of my identity.

I have only two regrets, that of having lost my companion in suffering and of not having seen the demonstration.[5]

On 17 October 1961 police officers anticipated the arrival of Algerians in the center of Paris. They corralled off groups of men, preventing them from demonstrating peacefully, forced men to walk past rows of police officers, and beat those who walked past. They rounded up scores of men and confined them in demeaning conditions in detention centers. Police officers beat many of those taken into custody with guns and truncheons. Some officers threw men into the Seine, leaving their bodies to sink or drift away in its waters. These harsh methods and their damaging effects recurred throughout that night of state violence and other nights in Paris that October. Days after his ordeal, Ahmed Djoughlal recalled the crazed frenzy of the police, the hallucinatory waters of the Seine, the death of another man unknown to him clasped together in a dying embrace. Through the dark of that night emerged a twinning of life and death: one man perished, killed by the police; the other survived, having regained consciousness on the river's edge. Djoughlal's regret tied into two absences: not having participated directly in the demonstrations that night, and the loss of his "companion in suffering."

To my knowledge, the name of this second man has gone unknown and uninscribed in archival records.

In the days following the demonstration and violence of 17 October 1961, French police and national and city governments worked to prevent and censor any journalist accounts of the state violence and terror, and they denied claims by eyewitnesses to the amount and intensity of violent acts by police officers against unarmed participants. Partly as a result of these forms of state censorship and silence, and complicated processes of forgetting and effacement, many of those living in France and elsewhere did not learn of the violent attacks against Algerians in October 1961 until years later, if at all. As Joshua Cole (2003, 29) remarks, "In so far as one can measure the collective memory of an event by tracing its presence in public discussion, it is safe to say that many French people and many Algerians largely 'forgot' about 17 October almost immediately after it occurred. The reasons for this are simple and complex." Since the 1990s, there has been sustained interest in some circles to document and bring to public recognition the violence of that time. Until recently, however, details on the circumstances of the state-sanctioned violence have not been

well known. In conversations with residents of Paris in recent years, I have found that most of these friends and acquaintances have heard of the events involved, and they understand that, at most, some thirty or fifty persons died the night of 17 October 1961; many did not know that it's likely that up to two hundred men and women were killed. I learned of the violence only a few years ago. Many of the Algerian participants in the demonstrations have tended not to talk much about those painful times and memories, including with their children or grandchildren, for complicated reasons. Those who were involved in the war of liberation or were troubled by the hardships and violence of those days have tended not to relate their experiences to younger family members, and often they have not passed on memories of those events to later generations in direct ways. "Li fat met," goes a Kabyle expression: "The past is dead."[6] "One doesn't speak of painful things."[7] With more recent generations, however, there has been an interest in learning about the events of the colonial era and the Algerian war of independence.

In general, there has been a kind of collective "amnesia" or "aphasia" around the events of Paris in 1961.[8] For many, it has been difficult to bring to mind or talk about what took place in those days, as well as about France's colonial conquest and domination of Algeria and the Algerian war of liberation. It was only in the late 1980s, and continuing in the 1990s, that the events of 17 October 1961 "entered history," as Joshua Cole (2003, 42; 2006, 127) puts it. Only from the late 1990s on have there been concerted efforts to delineate a clear historical record of what took place in October 1961 and to establish forms of collective memory around the state violence involved and resulting deaths, injuries, and traumatic legacies. Still, the events of that time present exceedingly difficult complexities and political positionings in the interpretation of the events involved. Cole (2003, 43) reflects on some of these challenges in historiographic understanding:

> No matter how one decides to tell this story, it seems impossible to render it on its own terms. What would these terms be? When one relates the events of 17 October 1961 can one really discern if the protestors were Algerians demanding independence, or French people demanding their rights to public space in the city, or simply frightened laborers and their families with few options, caught between the fear of punishment by the FLN for not participating and fear of certain violence from a police force that had been unhinged by attacks on its members? All of these possibilities are both more or less true, and more or less inadequate to address the complexities of a situation that cannot be entirely mastered by any particular historical account—or any particular act of commemoration.

Cole (2003, 43) ends his article with this cautionary statement: "The work of history, like the work of citizenship, requires an ability to hear the multiplicity of voices that constitute the social realm, and to be self-conscious about the ways in which the necessary institutions of public life—governments, political parties, universities, archives—determine which voices are more easily discerned, and which are forgotten."

Anyone trying to gain a clear and comprehensive understanding of 17 October 1961 needs to engage with multiple interpretive modalities, scales of history, and the politics of representation to make approximate sense of what happened and the complicated aftereffects and histories involved. Casting the events and eventualities of 17 October in broad strokes, one might speak of several temporal periods at work, several intersecting and partially overlapping domains of knowing and nonknowing, memory, forgetting, erasure, and inscription that have emerged through time: (a) the events themselves, and efforts soon after to document, publicize, or censor and silence communication about those events, circa Paris 1961; (b) years of relative silence and oblivion, unknowing and noninscription, for many, from 1961 to the early 1980s; (c) waves of historical research accounts and collective memory work and historical-societal reckoning, from the late 1980s into the 1990s; and (d) subsequent historiographic research, literary and artistic representations, and works of collective and personal remembrance, from the late 1990s on.[9] The current work proceeds within the throes of the contemporary moment, in all its complex histories and political positionings and entangled strands of painful recollection, while retracing tracts of inscription and erasure, absence, forgetting, memory, and political strivings that gird understandings of French colonialism in Algeria and elsewhere.

The events of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Paris, and 17 October 1961 specifically—that October date lingers as a *cicatrice* (scar) in time and memory—now stand as lasting wounds in the collective memory and political landscapes of France and North Africa, particularly among Algerians living in or around Paris, in Algeria, and elsewhere. With this, new abrasions repeatedly incise past and present harms in bodies, minds, and spaces of memory.

What wounds, theirs or others, did the police officers that night carry with them as they left desperate scenes and returned to their homes? Did they find themselves justified in any terror inflicted, with blows and killings retribution for fallen colleagues? Did they take themselves to be criminals—or righteous defenders of colonial rule, defiantly proud of their pasts? Did those who refused to take part in the massacres remain disturbed by the cruelty of their fellow officers? Were others

haunted by dreams of those autumnal nights, pursued by frenzied anger and manhunts? Or perhaps it would be too simplistic to cast the police officers who violated that night as solely bad or good, as if someone is either one or the other, without complex granulations in life death. Can it be said that members of the French police forces were themselves victims of colonial violence?

While in Denmark one summer I met a man from France who told me that, in the 1950s and 1960s, his father had served in the French gendarmerie, a military force with law enforcement duties among the civilian population. This man said that he had tried to get his father to talk about what it was like for him when he worked as a gendarme in Algeria during the Algerian war, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the former soldier always declined to speak about what he did or saw while in Algeria. Tears would come into his eyes when asked about it. "You don't need to know this. It's too painful," L's mother told him. The mother had heard at the time about the father's experiences, as she was the only one he would talk to about them. "He doesn't talk about it," said L. "It's like that for many of those who were in Algeria during the war, or for police officers who worked in Paris. They don't want to talk about it. It's too painful to recall."

This man spoke of an obscure memory of his father watching as others around him were killed and injured, Algerians and French alike.

Biothanatography

Writing often comes from disturbance. I first learned of Abdelkader Bennahar's existence through the photographs that Kagan took in Nanterre the night of 17 October 1961. Affected by their imaginal force and valences in wounding, I became interested in knowing more about the person portrayed in the photographs. This awareness came into play while I was writing a coauthored book that explores histories of political violence in contemporary Paris, particularly those that have emerged out of state forms of governance and sovereignty, which often have an oppressive cast.[10] As Khalil Habrih and I delved into traces of violence and lingering wounds embedded within the palimpsestic histories of Paris, Kagan's photographs of the man wounded the night of 17 October 1961 held a singular hold on me. The more I learned (and did not learn) about the life and death of the man photographed, the more I wrote, the more I wanted to write, in a shifting desire to grasp the trace lines of another, with all this taking place within shoals of partial knowing.

The motives for such writing are manifold. In reading into what took place in France in 1961, I felt anger and indignation toward the Paris police for their murderous violence and the governmental regime that made that possible, and

the collective erasures that ensued. That anger seeped into words. These words now strive to document what happened, in what might be called acts of secondary, or tertiary, prosthetic witnessing—the phantom of a witness, bearing witness. It could be that I have also been seeking to secure and sustain a trace of Bennahar's existence on earth. A single unique life compels me. There is also the intellectual and affective challenge in trying to know the life of another person, removed in time and place from one's own existence. I have become deeply concerned with the onetime actuality of a life and trace elements of that life in the years since its end.

The visceral force of the photographic images has led to rounds of intensive writing. This writing proceeds through words and images that are at once historiographic (the writing of a history), biographic (the writing of a life), and thanatographic (the writing of a death) in form and content. To consider the singular existence of a life is to consider the life and death of that (once) living being. Death is an integral element of any life, as life is a component of death. The death of a person is an intensive part of the life, and thus the biography, of that person, even if the person is not yet dead. This biographic orientation implies a *biothanatography*, a writing of life death, which entails an overlapping mix of the biographical and the thanatographical. Herein lies a *bios/thanatos/graphē*. A number of biothanatographies appear through this work, in fact. I write of how certain lives and deaths are related in time, in association, and in intensive significance through discontinuous flows of time.

Singularities are subject and method here. It's a matter of a few fragments, a few images and lines in life and death, as though an excavator-palynologist was tending to the remnant shards and dispersed pollen particles of an archaeological site from which certain patterns of life and death can be discerned. There are now a number of empirically sound and important historical accounts and political analyses of the violent events of Paris 1961 and of the role that French police and governmental apparatuses played in the violence.[11] Historians and other scholars have written of the violence of that night and its aftermaths in comprehensive and knowing terms, and of the terrain of "the colonial field" more broadly, chronicling the histories and politics involved and developing astute theories of colonial forms and forces and postcolonial political formations.[12] The current work is indebted to these studies at almost every turn, while advancing a different kind of inquiry. I return again and again to the words and images of others, to deepen understandings of the events and histories involved. My approach in writing is rather singular and precise—rather "micro," if you will: I write of a life and death or two, set within the broader context of such histories. I draw from a range of published accounts and archived texts

and images to trace out a few singular pathways in life and death. In engaging with passages found in existing historiographies and archival texts, grafting onto the grafts of others, the current inquiry traces out lines of thought and significance in the histories involved for the purpose of telling an idiosyncratic story. (Motifs of *grafts* and *grafting* recur here in the sense of taking elements from one domain of life and grafting them onto another field of life, as with the grafts of plants or trees, or living tissue, or texts and writing. "To write means to graft. It's the same word," Derrida [1981, 355] observes). At hand is a certain "technique of nearness" (Benjamin), and a reading of archives that "brings the state *near*, to make it perceptive through reading sounds, images, persons, and moods," as Nancy Rose Hunt (2016, 9) proposes.[13] With these brief elements and archived lives there are entire worlds.

The focus on a single life reflects an analytic spirit akin to that conveyed through the autobiographical examples developed by Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman in their writings on Black precarity and the afterlife of slavery.[14] Hartman explains that such an autobiographical example "is not a personal story that folds onto itself; it's not about navel gazing; it's really about trying to look at historical and social process and one's own formation as a window onto social and historical processes, as an example of them."[15] For Hartman (2008, 7), such an approach can help "to tell a story capable of engaging and countering the violence of abstraction." I strive for a like-minded biographical example in these pages.

The tenor of this writing compares to many biographical accounts, as well as the time-tested genre of life history research in anthropology, in which features of someone's life are portrayed in efforts to say something incisive about that person's existence and the cultural and sociopolitical forces that shape that life and others like it. Here, the most minimal of life histories is pressed into these pages. Inscribed are the reported date and place of birth of Bennahar, a reported residence on the outskirts of Paris, the remote absence-presence of a family, a handful of photographs, and a few obscure findings. Despite these few remaining vestiges of a past life, there is much that can be said about the circumstances of this singular life and death. The research and writing are multisited and multitimed, with many places and institutions, histories and temporalities involved. I follow the story of a particular life and death—as it makes its way through a number of domains, from Parisian streets and Métro stations to morgue examination rooms to a city's archives—and of images recurrent through photographs.[16] These excursions imply a "willful exposure to archive fever," as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay writes of similar kinds of researches.[17] They lead to a microhistory and counterhistory of a certain kind, one with an anthropological sensibility to it.

I explore certain events and situations within a revamped mode of "thick description," tracing out what's at stake, much like an anthropologist might delve into the intricacies of a ritual or violent event or a cultural historian might render the cosmos of a miller in sixteenth-century Friuli or the social world of a clog maker in nineteenth-century France.[18]

This is "history in the ethnographic grain," and ethnography as historiography (Darnton 1985, 1).[19] Rather than offering a straightforward historical account of the events involved (as if any such account could, in fact, be straightforward), I try, like an ethnographer striving to make sense of the nuances of a field site, to grasp the significance of particular moments, images, and strands of meaning, along with the seemingly incidental details that speak to the powers of a colonial state. The stress here is on the plural. There are not any unified social or intellectual-cultural worlds to speak of, but rather complex arrays of competing political positionings, assemblages of governmental techniques and police regimes, forms of knowledge and techniques of observation, and varying uses of photographs and archival records, with all of this churning through time.

One way to think about a life is to consider the many traces it generates during a long or relatively brief tract of existence, elements that spread out in different directions, disperse into various domains of life, or get cut short, dissipate; traces erased or disappeared, or re-marked; marks and remnants of a life that linger in the wake of a death, in how that person is remembered, recalled, or forgotten. The name and remnant memory and materialia and life death of a person might be regrafted, or obliterated, become nearly forgotten or last for centuries, millennia even.

There is something spore-like in all of this. Much as the spores of non-seed-bearing plants (such as liverworts, hornworts, mosses, and ferns) or eukaryotic organisms (fungi such as yeasts, molds, and mushrooms) or endospore-forming bacteria disperse throughout the world—where these reproductive cells might scatter explosively into the wind, shed into water, settle into sediment, or land on leaves, trees, or soil, and through such trajectories land or burrow elsewhere and sprout forth new life, with some spores germinating after years of dormancy—so trace elements of a life or a death disperse into myriad domains and environments, sprout forth in forms of life and inscription and materialia, graft onto new surfaces and recombinant possibilities, and germinate in hours or days or after years of dormancy. In life as in death, spore-like particles proceed like microscopic grains from a life, disperse freely and travel long distances, like so many waves of "viral shedding"—a kind of "self-shedding" (a language of emergence, contagion, contact, host, immunity, and diffusion is not, by analogy, unfounded here)—and then come to germinate or regerminate, are grafted

into new situations and new sprouted forms of life; or they remain attached to other forms of life, living or inert, like burrs that stick to a patch of clothing. And once the spore lives and spore paths of other beings and species are thrown into this fecund mix—as with the pollen storms of a rain-bright spring day—what becomes evident is an expansive field of ever-shifting vitalities, survival and cessation, inheritance and errancy.[20]

Life Death, Survivance, Cessance

The terrain is one of *life death*. I use that term much as Jacques Derrida did in speaking of what he called *la vie la mort*, "life death." This phrasing does not include the usual coordinating conjunctures *and* or *or*, as with the phrases *life and death*, *life or death*, while also not saying that life *is* death, that life and death are the same thing, with no difference between them (Derrida 1987; 2011; 2020, 1–6).[21] There is neither opposition nor identification. The concept of life death is geared toward avoiding the static reproduction of a life/death positional or oppositional logic, while emphasizing the close relationship of life and death—the intricate play of life death, even—in forms of existence, reproduction, and inheritance, within heterogeneous fields of shifting valences, deferrals, difference, displacements, repetition, traces, survival, revenants, and ghostly hauntings.[22] It's not a matter of either life *or* death, or life *and* death, or of any kind of steadfast binary division between the two, but rather a complicated multiplicity of connections, possibilities, and intershadings shifting between different forms of existence, inexistence, and spectrality, "a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead," with all of this intertwined with myriad events, processes, technologies, imaginings, and temporalities in life death (Derrida 2008, 31). As Derrida (1985, 6) couches the matter in *The Ear of the Other*, "What one calls life—the thing or object of biology and biography—does not stand face to face with something that would be its opposable ob-ject: death, the thanatological or thanatographical. This is the first complication." This complication is of signal importance to considerations of biology, survival, and extinction and the serious play of life and death in the Anthropocene, to reflections on the blurred margins between animate and inanimate forms of existence, and in efforts to grasp patterns of life death in singular and collective forms of existence.

It's important to mark out life death as a complex terrain and to plunge into this complicated terrain when writing about someone's life or a number of interrelated lives. In these pages, I write within the methods and sense and terrain of "life death." I work within its folds and contours and shifting multiplicities while wanting to strike down any presumed steadfast partitions between

what is often called "life" and "death." With this, we move back and forth between a more general, philosophical sense of life death and considerations of specific instances of singular life deaths. I apply this way of thinking to the work of biography, of writing not just of a life—as the word "bio-graphy" might strictly imply (such as the Byzantine Greek *βιογραφία*, "writing of lives," etymologically suggests)—but of writing of the life death of a particular person or the life deaths of any number of persons or subjects. While elsewhere one tends to write biographically of "the life of ___," here I gravitate toward the phrasing "the life death of ___." Admittedly uncommon and slightly awkward, the phrasing gets at something crucial: that a life is more extensively, more accurately, considered a life death. To think of a life as a life only, as a positive value, without the death named or included in its realm of play, is to cut short the processes and graphic dimensions involved, including the complex play of survival and cessation that can run on for years past the biological endpoint of a life. Let's think of life death, then, as an open-ended, expansive field of relations rather than as a fixed entity or a finite state or process.

Life is grafted onto death, and death entangled with life. There is variably life-in-death and death-in-life; there can be moribund flesh or subjectivity, the living dead, or a negative, cancelling out social death in life, or bare life; while death can entail a sporadic or continuous emergence beyond the vital terms and biological terminus of a singular life, an excess of life beyond life itself.[23] There is also the matter of technology involved in any given field of life, a necessary substrate of technicity or materiality, inert and vibrant matter, which makes any given lives constituted and sustained by complex fields of vitality and technicity. Such biotechnological assemblances in themselves blur distinctions between vital forms and inert matter, living and nonliving. "Neither life nor death," writes Derrida (2001, 41), "but the haunting of the one by the other."

The subject is particular life deaths, singular or in association, linked in human striving or in annihilating violence, as well as the afterlives of a life; with this subject matter comes an array of forces and forms at work in these life deaths. And *survivance*—to relay another term of Derrida's, one invoked in his writings, especially in the later years of his life, to get at the kinds of "survival" and "sur-viving" or "living on" (*sur-vivre*) that are crucial dimensions of life death. "Survivance in a sense of survival that is neither life nor death pure and simple, a sense that is not thinkable on the basis of the opposition between life and death" (Derrida 2011, 130–31).[24] As a "movement of survival," *survivance* speaks to the ways that elements or vestiges of life, or life death, "live on" in life, continue

on, even past the vital arc of a life, be they the lasting traces of something written or the physical remains of a once-living body (Derrida 1984, 28).

In tracing out pathways of survivance in any given life or death, one can consider the many intricate ways in which a life "lives on" in life death, even after the most direct and tangible biological forms of the life have expired. Vestiges of a life remain in writing or in material remainders, in forms of an afterlife as memory of trace remnants in the lives of others; memories recur and evolve through time; residual traces of a life often appear well past the actual living of that life. A kind of "survivance effect" kicks in with so much of life death; it's as if elements of a life (or a death) can break off, disperse in space and time, get rerouted or regrafted or appear in new forms, new graphic traces, or vanish altogether (Wills 2016, 99, 100).

Life death is characterized by forms of both trace and absence, recollection and forgetting, survival and cessation, and this in intricate, interfolding ways. I therefore find that, along with the concept of survivance, a concept of *cessance* is needed.[25] In writing within the terrain of life death or a singular life death, one needs to consider forces and forms of cessance as much as those of survivance. Aspects of a life cease to exist; traces are severed; there is annihilation, stoppage, oblivion, dissolution. Certain traces and dimensions of a life do not continue on. Survivance can be denied. The stilled end of a heartbeat, the end of speech, the disappearance of a body. Not everything lives on.

Life death involves an intricate weave of survivance and cessance in which the two processes fold into one another, pattern one another, such that life and death cannot be grasped as polar opposites. A cessance effect goes along with any kind of survivance effect. In many circumstances, there is a complicated play between movements of survival and cessation, including instances where there occurs an erasure of traces, or there recur trace effects of cessation or the ghostly inkling of a former presence. Often this implies complicated situations in which survival is not quite survival and death not quite death; "a survival that is not a survival, and a death that does not end anything," as Maurice Blanchot (1995, 340) puts it. There is a vast politics to both kinds of effects in life death, far beyond the interests or agency of any given lives at hand, be it the history of a singular life, or within a family or household or colonized peoples, or in the holdings of an archive or a field of collective memory or oblivion. This, in effect, is the subject of this book: the politics of trace and absence within the meshwork of life death. The work moves along a trajectory reflecting charged gradations in life and death. Intensities in life death emerge and dissolve within the opaque histories of a troubled existence.

Biophantasmatics

The processes and effects of life death and survivance include not just what is biographically actual—what actually happened in a life and what is recalled of it—but also the imagined and fantasized, the conjectured, the dreamed of, the possible and impossible. For the imagined, conjectured, and fantasized are integral aspects of life death. If "phantasm" can be considered in the variable sense of "an apparition or illusion; a ghost or phantom; an imaginary construct; a fantastical image or vision; a haunting memory; a fanciful idea; or a cohering fantasy, momentary or lifelong, conscious or unconscious"—as the phantom of a scholar once proposed—then such phantasmal aspects can be said to course through myriad thoughts, perceptions and encounters and imaginings in and of a life (Desjarlais 2018, ix).[26]

A *biophantasmatics* is in play with any given field of life death. Biophantasmatics, the phantasmal flows and currents of life, can be taken as a counterpart to biopolitics, the field of biopower, politics of life. The phantasmal is as much a part of life and death as are power and the phantasmal reach of power. In what ways do the politics of life death intersect with phantasms and imaginings of life death? These biophantasmatic considerations point to the phantasmal imaginings of and in life; of what a life is, or is not; of what a life could be or should be. Such phantasms and phantasmatics of life are at work at both an individual and a collective level, from a singular life to the life deaths of a population. This implies phantasms of death as well, imaginings and phantasms of the death of a person or of a colonized people. If necropolitics refers to "who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not," as Achille Mbembe (2003, 26; 2019) avers, then necrophantasmatics, the phantasmal phantasmatics of death and nonlife, lights on powerful imaginings of who matters and who does not, of who dies, how, and why, along with phantasms of burial, the treatment and disposal of corpses, and any phantasmal inklings of trace afterpresences.

We also have to consider the idea that life is phantasmal in its makings and operations, at least to a degree; that large portions of life operate through processes of a fantastical, imaginal sort, including the phantasmatics of memory, forgetting, denial, obsolescence. Much of a life—or *bios*, life, more generally—is built out of conjecture, revery and fantasy, crafted memories, fictions of selves and scurrying interpretations, illusions and allusions propelled by personal and collective desires, fears, hopes, anxieties. A biography is a phantasm as much as it is anything else—the phantasms of the thread of a life, its winding course, events, and significance, biophantasmally inscribed within the "exact fantasy" of a bounded script.[27] I go beyond the actual, the strictly historical, because the

imaginal and virtual are implicit in the actual. What if we thought of a human life not as the locus of a finite series of actions, tethered to a distinct body, but as the ground of an open-ended, indeterminate, multidimensional field of events, potentialities, and imaginings?

And so I write of phantasms and spectrality. "One must stop believing that the dead are just the departed and that the departed do nothing. One must stop pretending to know what is meant by 'to die' and especially by 'dying.' One has, then, to talk about spectrality" (Derrida 1995, 30). With events, effects, phantasms, revenants, and remnants of a life living on, surviving, remaining in some ways or not, life and death become altogether intertwined and interimplicated and, in a certain sense, indissociable.[28] A biothanatography does not separate life and death as such but rather keeps in mind vast interchanges and blurred boundaries.

Once completely unknown to me, he appeared in a sequence of images, a series of flashes and marks of wounding. His life and death have since tied into my own. I render him so, search through the dust. Track the spores, mark pollen residue of remaindered life.

A Shifting Series of Exergues

The prose exceeds the typical structures and textual conventions and psychology of most biographic accounts (many of which I find to be rather conventional, bound at the seams). In tracing the course of a particular life death, mapping the lands that surround and shape that riverine flow, the writing overflows its banks. With this biographical canvas come different overflows, displacements, blurred borders between one life and others, a crossing of limits and thresholds, intersecting relations among various forms of life death. Life is always in excess of itself. Death, too, for that matter. A life involves much more than the life itself; life is never lived on its own. There is life beyond life, after life, before life, alongside life, against life, life death transformed. I write of overflowing excesses in life death in a spirit of affirmative transgression.

These excursions go beyond the directly biographic. Each supplemental graft-text proceeds as an *exergue* on biographic and historiographic writing so-called proper. An exergue, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word, is "a small space usually on the reverse of a coin or medal, below the principal device, for any minor inscription, the date, engraver's initials, etc. Also, the inscription there inserted."[29] As Akira Mizuta Lippit (2012, 1) contends in his book *Ex-Cinema*, which considers the ways in which experimental films and

videos operate on the outside of more standard forms of filmmaking, "An *exergue*, from the Greek *ex* (outside) and *ergon* (work), refers to a space outside the work, outside the essential body of the work, and yet part of it, even essentially—a part and apart. An exergue locates an outside space that is included in the work as its outside."

In literature and philosophy, an exergue usually appears at the interstitial beginning of a work. Here, the exergues are multiple. They appear throughout the text as moments of conjectural, exploratory writing, like spectral marginalia, separated and marked in italics, and interspersed within the more direct historiographic and biographic writing (as with the passage in italics above). These passages relate in chiasmatic ways to the writing found in the main text, with each line of writing implicitly crossing into and informing the other. Occasionally the words inscribed are addressed to potential interlocutors or within the imaginal intimacy of a possible, spectral readership. Quiet voices whisper to the side, sotto voce, not necessarily in my name. The more imaginal of these passages stem from recent phantasmal inquiries of mine.[30] They also bear an affinity with the "critical fabulation" explored by Saidiya Hartman in her recent writings, such as "Venus in Two Acts" (2008) and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), in which this historian essays a creative semifictional style of writing that recalls the lives and suppressed voices of the past through a critical engagement with the histories and silences involved. "Lack and absence made poesis necessary," Hartman remarks in reflecting on the literary approaches to the histories of Black life that have inspired her, in which novelists create "fictions of the archive."[31] Yet the poetics of the current approach refract in ways different from Hartman's critical fabulation, for I do not imagine the intimate richness of lives through vivid, historically informed narratives so much as I ruminate, partially and tentatively, on a few possibilities in life and death. A marginal method is made of these shifting intensities, which can be read as being outside the essential body of the work, yet also integral parts of it, to the point where inside and outside, corpus and ex-corpus, text and margin become blurred and nearly interchangeable.[32] I ask readers to give thought not only to historical events and interpretive assessments but also the many imaginings and conjectures that swirl about a life death—and thus consider the ways that the actual and the phantasmal are imbricated within one another.

Beyond the specifics of any writing with exergues, several notable dimensions are involved in the blurred borderlands of these pages. One pertains to the interpolations between life and death. Death informs a life, and life, death. Each life told is implicitly biothanatographic, a writing of life death, anticipatory or after the fact. Along with the intergraftings of life death come relations, affinities, and

interconnections among different lives and deaths. Lives are related to other lives, deaths to other deaths, and certain lives to specific deaths.

To write biothanatographically is to write of the historical and the genealogical. Specific tracts of life death in colonial and postcolonial times are considered here within the complex historical formations in which certain lives took form and fell away. The delivery of a corpse to a forensic morgue in Paris in October 1961, for instance, prompts considerations of the history of that morgue and the various practices of recordkeeping, inscription, and visuality in place during that time, practices that emerged out of long-standing political and cultural sensibilities related to the postmortem care, tracking, and burial of the dead in France and elsewhere. The riverine flow of a life death is grasped within the terrains that shape that flow.

Throughout this work I adopt a first-person narrative voice in reflecting on my engagements with the subject matter at hand and how these research inquiries have affected me through the course of the research. I also explore questions tied to the ethical and epistemological challenges involved in trying to understand and portray the lives and deaths of persons outside of my own circumstances in life. This self-reflexive approach, interlaced with the more direct inquiries found in the text, is in line with forms of reflexivity in contemporary ethnographic writing, in which moral quandaries and complex relations with one's interlocutors are crucial aspects of the inquiries at hand (such as with Anthony Stavrianakis's *Leaving* [2019], Todd Meyers's *All That Was Not Her* [2022], and Alexa Hagerty's *Still Life with Bones* [2023]).[33] In engaging with self-reflexive modes of anthropological thought and writing—or with reflexive historiographic writing, for that matter—readers of such works might in effect experience something of what a researcher has encountered and, ideally, learn by traveling alongside the author for a while. This is far from narcissistic self-indulgence or subjective "navel-gazing"—labels that can make any memorist wince. Such writings can delve into the cauldron heat of relating to others. Accordingly, around the edges of the more direct historiographic and analytic writing I write of the pressing thoughts, unsettled anxieties and concerns, tentative knowings, and shape-shifting imaginaries that have come my way in trying to comprehend the lives of others. If anything is particularly distinctive with the reflexivity found in these pages, it might relate to the stress on the imaginal—phantasm as subject and method.[34]

Inscribed is the busy interchange between biography and biographer, between the life death of a biographical subject and the life (and yet to come, but anticipated, known of, shadowed by) death of the biographer. With any biography, two lives are implicitly involved, to begin with: the life death of the

person written about, and the scribe of another's life death. These two lives can become linked in all sorts of ways: scriptive, imaginative, political, psychodynamic, ethical, hauntological, or nearly obsessional. When one writes of another's life death, a certain biographical immersion can be in effect, in which the histories and imaginaries involved in the life death of another affect one's own life, and certain thoughts and imaginings flow into the subject matter at hand. One life death grafts onto another.

There is an intricate play between the biographical and the phantasmal, the actual and the imagined. All biographies and autobiographies carry a strong measure of spectrality and imaginative rendering. Portraying a life, conjuring its forms and features, speculating on its rhythms and reasons—such interpretive endeavors bring forth all sorts of phantasmal depictions and imaginings of life events. These phantasmal lines of thought and speculative renderings run alongside apparently more empirical observations on so-called historical actualities. In this writing near the margins, one finds spectral echoes and phantasmal musings and inscriptions, for the phantasmal and the spectral are integral parts of a life death. A condition of spectrality informs terrains of life death, like a coefficient or a governing law—the allusive, wavering law of spectrality. Anyone meandering though these pages might encounter myriad fantasies germinating in mind and body and tracks of writing—cryptic fantasies, say, of a family's uncertain mourning or ghostly images in an archive, in which a biographer reconstructs violence and repair in a number of lives. With this comes a speculative thanatography; a speculative writing of the features and possibilities of a man's death and its aftermath proceeds uncertainly, in unproven ways.

Running through these pages are thus several threads of thought and imagery, each interwoven with the others. One thread speaks to the shifting intensities of life and death emergent in the historical and biographical grounds of the existence and afterlives of Abdelkader Bennahar, in relation to other, intersecting life deaths. A second, related thread traces the visceral engagements and movements of Bennahar's body, from the visual record of that body on the night of 17 October 1961 through the days that followed, as a body-in-life death moved from the obscure moments of a death to the institutional structures of a governmental morgue in Paris to the subsequent burial of the corpse in a cemetery outside the city. Yet another thread relates to the histories of the photographs taken by Kagan in Paris and Nanterre in October 1961, potent images that have circulated in recurrent ways since that time and taken on various significances and affective intensities. And then, roaming about this tissue of connected threads, like ghostly apparitions, are reflections on the phantasmal and spectral

dimensions of these histories. Held in your hands, then, is a knotted interweave of life death, body, image, and phantasm.

It's a simple idea, at first glance: retrace remnants of a life and death. This becomes infinitely more complex the more one gets into it. Such an endeavor opens into vast recesses of life death and, along the way, touches on the forces that shape and embody a life death in relation to other lives and deaths. A winding path is set, for once an author or reader gets going with this, they soon delve into a vertiginous shadow play of living and dying.

I came upon the trace of a life and followed that trace into the graph of a death.

The more I shadow one person's life death, soaking up the remnants involved, the more an unghosted nonpresence specters my own.

Lest anyone think that the histories involved here are a matter of the distant past, far removed from present-day concerns, we need only consider the fact that police violence has been a recurrent theme for many years now in the Paris metropole and in France more generally. Time and again, young men of African and Arab descent have suffered from the violence enacted by French police officers. On 19 July 2016, Adam Traoré, a twenty-four-year-old Black man, died while in custody after being apprehended and detained by the police. On 14 June 2023, Alhousssein Camara, a nineteen-year-old whose family hailed from Guinea, was killed during a road check in Angoulême, a city in southwestern France.

On 27 June 2023, Nahel Merzouk, a French seventeen-year-old of Moroccan and Algerian descent, was shot at point-blank range and killed by Florian Menesplier, a French police officer. The shooting took place at Place Nelson Mandela in Nanterre, on lands that once provided homes for migrants from Algerians in the bidonvilles there. The site of the death is about two kilometers from where Abdelkader Bennahar was beaten and left for dead the night of 17 October 1961. The morning of 27 June 2023, police officers spotted Nahel Merzouk driving a Mercedes-Benz, reportedly at high speed. A police patrol stopped the car that he and two other youths were occupying. Two officers approached the car and spoke with Nahel Merzouk through the window area on the driver's side, while pointing a gun at him. When the car began to move away, Menesplier fired one round from his handgun. The bullet struck Merzouk as the car lurched forward and came to a stop. Merzouk died soon after. The incident led to widespread protests in the days that followed, including the destruction of many civil institutions and symbols of the state—town halls, schools, police stations. It also brought rounds of condemnation from various persons and institutions, including Emmanuel Macron, the

president of France, who called the killing "inexplicable" and "inexcusable" (Le Monde 2023). Menesplier was placed in custody with the charge of voluntary manslaughter. Others pointed out that Merzouk's death was one of many instances of police violence against people of African and Arab descent in France and called for assessments of the systemic racism in its police forces.

A video recording of the incident, taken by a bystander, served to document the criminal actions of the police officer who shot Nahel Merzouk, contradicting the claim that the officer acted in self-defense. At a memorial site at Place Nelson Mandela a sign read, "Combien de Nahel n'ont été filmés?" (How many Nahels have not been filmed?)

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See also Mbembe 2008.

2. It's entirely unclear how many persons from Algeria died the night of 17 October 1961 at the hands of the Paris police or in the days that preceded or followed that night of violence. In fact, several scholars have been engaged in what has been called a "numbers battle" in terms of accounts of the deaths resulting from the state violence in France in October 1961, with different researchers proposing significantly different tallies. Starting in the 1980s, Jean-Luc Einaudi conducted research into the events, drawing from documents provided to him from the FF-FLN, interviews he conducted with witnesses to the events, and evidence from the archives of the Paris morgue and the cemeteries of Paris. In his book *La bataille de Paris: 17 Octobre 1961*, Einaudi (1991) estimated that approximately two hundred people had died. This number largely confirmed the FLN's original estimate (Cole 2006, 120). In later publications Einaudi stood by this estimate of hundreds of deaths. Partly in response to Einaudi's findings and the sensational trial and court proceedings of Maurice Papon in the 1990s, the Ministry of Interior released a report in 1998 that proposed that no more than thirty-two people were killed by the police on 17 October. In turn, Jean-Paul Brunet, a historian at the École Normale Supérieure and the University of Paris, undertook research of his own; he worked largely with police reports to which he was given access by the Paris Prefecture of Police. In his book *Police contre FLN: Le drame d'octobre 1961*, published in 1999, Brunet determined that thirty-two persons had died. Several other historians have pointed out, however, that the police reports could not be trusted to give accurate, truthful, and comprehensive accounts of the events of October 1961 and any violence inflicted on Algerians by the Paris police (see, for instance, House and MacMaster 2006, 2008). To date, there is no clear consensus as to how many persons were killed by the Paris police. As House and MacMaster (2006, 166) note, "If there is one thing that we can be certain of in relation to the Paris massacre, it is that a conclusive or definitive figure as to the number of Algerian deaths will never be arrived at." A reflection offered by Joshua Cole in 2006 is still relevant today: "Ever mindful of France's libel laws, journalists have now resorted to the unwieldy formulation

of 'between thirty-two and two hundred' or simply 'dozens' to speak of the number of dead. It is not difficult to see how painful such approximations are to the families of victims, nor how much comfort they give to those whose political interests still require a degree of damage control" (Cole 2006, 121). For more on the estimates and accounts of the number of deaths resulting from the violence of 17 October 1961, see Thibaud (2001); House and MacMaster (2006, 161–68; 2008); Cole (2003); and Einaudi (2001, 2011).

3. For writings on the events of October 1961 in Paris, see, among others, Péju (2000), Einaudi (1991, 2001, 2009, 2011), Haroun (1986), Cole (2003, 2006), Tristan (1991), and House and MacMaster's comprehensive account, *Paris 1961* (2006). Documentary films on 17 October 1961 include Panijel (1962), Denis and Lallaoui (1991), Brooks and Hayling (1992), and Adi (2011). See also Leïla Sebbar's novel *La Seine était rouge* (1999) and William Gardner Smith's novel *The Stone Face* ([1963] 2021).

4. Testimonial account of Ahmed Djoughlal, recorded on 22 October 1961 (Einaudi 1991, 111–12, 168–69). This account is found, along with the testimonies of other Algerians, in a set of historical archives collected by the FLN. As Joshua Cole (2003, 33) notes, "Ali Haroun gave the historical archives of the Federation in 1986 to Georges Mattei, who had been an important clandestine supporter of the FLN during the war years in France. Georges Mattei passed the archives to his friend Jean-Luc Einaudi, who used the documents to write *La Bataille de Paris*." (On this, see in particular Einaudi 1991, 14–15.)

5. Djoughlal, quoted in Einaudi (1991, 111–12, 168–69). All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

6. As noted, for one, in House and MacMaster (2006, 271), in citing an interview that Jim House conducted with the journalist Farid Aïchoune: "Farid Aïchoune argues that Kabyle cultural codes forbid dwelling on the past, hence the expression 'the past is dead' (*li fat met*)."

7. To quote Algerian-French writer Leïla Sebbar on the matter (Mortimer 2008, xvii).

8. Ann Stoler (2016) aptly speaks of a "colonial aphasia" limiting speech and thought around the unruly histories of colonialism in France and elsewhere.

9. In her comprehensive study of the "anarchive" of cultural traces of the violence in Paris on 17 October 1961, Lia Brozgal (2020, 31–64) identifies several distinct waves of anarchival texts: the "first wave texts" that emerged in the months after October 1961 (including Jacques Panijel's 1962 documentary film *Octobre à Paris*); a second wave of novels, *beur* literature, and documentary works, from 1983 to 1989; and a third wave, from 1999 and beyond, which Brozgal glosses as "the post-Papon anarchive," involving the historiographic, cultural, and artistic representations that emerged in the wake of the trial of Maurice Papon in 1999 (including Leïla Sebbar's 1999 novel *La Seine était rouge*). The time frames noted in Brozgal's archaeology and excavation of "the anarchive" of cultural works on and representations of 17 October 1961 is consistent with the temporalities inscribed in the present work.

10. See Desjarlais and Habrih (2022) and Desjarlais (2020).

11. See, for instance, House and MacMaster (2006), Blanchard (2011), and Brozgal (2020).

12. See, for instance, Stora (1991), Shepard (2006), Silverstein (2014, 2018), and Stoler (2016).

13. In her 2016 book *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*, Nancy Rose Hunt draws from Walter Benjamin's (1999a, 545) invocation of a "technique of nearness" (*Technik der Nähe*) in historical analysis in considering closely the nervousness, reveries, and afterlives of violence and harm in King Leopold's Congo Free States. I employ a similar technique of nearness in this work, with this orientation possibly leading at times to a "pathos of nearness," as alluded to by Benjamin (1999a, 545).

14. See Hartman (2007, 2008), for instance. In the opening pages of her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), Christina Sharpe writes in compelling ways about the challenges faced by members of her family through several generations.

15. As quoted in Saunders (2008, 7).

16. See George Marcus (1998) on the idea of "multi-sited ethnography," the methods of which Marcus advocates include "follow the plot, story, the allegory" and "follow the life or biography" (93, 94).

17. To invoke the title, in English translation, of Derrida's *Mal d'archive*, "Archive Fever" (1996); and to cite the words of Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2017), who, in her essay "Archive," remarks that "'archive fever' is not simply a problematic translation of a book title, Derrida's *Mal d'archive*. It is a real phenomenon that Derrida ignores. It is the result of numerous individual initiatives of creating new archives and depositories, and of claiming the right to re-arrange and use existing ones. . . . Archive fever is also the claim to revolutionize the archive; the claim to a different understanding of the documents it holds, of its supposed purpose, of the right to see them and to act accordingly; the claim to the forms and ways of categorizing presenting, and using these documents."

18. To note two well-known studies in social history and cultural history, which have since been identified as being exemplars in the field of "microhistory": Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (1980) and Alain Corbin's *The Life of an Unknown: The Rediscovered World of a Clog Maker in Nineteenth-Century France* (2001). The latter has particular relevance for the current work, as Corbin examines the circumstances of life and society in nineteenth-century rural France, building his interpretive work on the historical records of a single man, "a forester and clog maker," chosen at random from historical records. See also Davis (1983, 1988).

19. The relevant works that come to mind within the field of historiographic writing known as "microhistory" include Jonathan Spence's *The Death of Woman Wang* (1978) and Colin Jones's *The Fall of Robespierre: 24 Hours in Revolutionary Paris* (2021). For the theory and practice of microhistory, see Magnússon and Szijártó (2013) and Ginzburg (1989, 2012). Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007), Ivan Jablonka's *A History of the Grandparents I Never Had* (2016), Javier Cercas's *Lord of All the Dead* (2020), and Guillaume Lachenal's *The Doctor Who Would Be King* (2022) have been important resources for me, along with more conceptual overviews of the textual strategies of contemporary historiographic writing with a literary sensibility, such as Jablonka (2018), Carrard (2017), and Traverso (2020).

As Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt (2000, 52) note, "Counterhistory opposes itself not only to dominant narratives, but also to prevailing modes of historical

thought and methods of research"; such counterhistories "make apparent the slippages, cracks, fault lines, and surprising absences in the monumental structures that dominated a more traditional historicism" (17). On the idea of anthropological inquiry and interpretation as a mode of "thick description," see Geertz (1973). The current inquiry also bears some affinities with the "histoire des mentalités" approach that emerged in historiography in the late twentieth century.

20. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015, 227–28) writes of spores in her polyphonic ethnography, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*: "Both in forests and in sciences, spores open our imaginations to another cosmopolitan topology. Spores take off toward unknown destinations, mate across types, and, at least occasionally, give rise to new organisms—a beginning for new kinds. Spores are hard to pin down; that is their grace. In thinking out landscapes, spores guide us to in-population heterogeneity. In thinking about science, spores model open-ended communication and excess: the pleasure of speculation."

21. See also Lynes (2018), McCance (2019), Wills (2016), Vitale (2018), and Trumbull (2022).

22. As Derrida (2008, 31) puts it in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, "Beyond the edge of the so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than 'the Animal' or 'Animal life' there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say 'the living' is already to say too much or not enough), a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and the abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified."

23. On the concept of social death, see Patterson (1982). On bare life, see Agamben (1998).

24. In his later writings, Derrida tended to switch from exploring the implications of the French verb *survivre*, "to survive," to philosophical reflections on the word *survivance*. (For specifics on Derrida's use of the terms *survivre* and *survivance,* see Naas [2012] and Saghafi [2020].) Derrida (2011, 131) remarked that he preferred "the middle voice 'survivance' to the active voice of the active infinitive 'to survive' or the substantualizing substantive *survival.*" This usage is similar in linguistic spirit to Derrida's creative use of words such as *différance* and *revenance*, for the *-ance* ending in each of these terms "marks a suspended status between the active and passive voice" (Saghafi 2015, 21). *Survivance* could be translated into English as "survival," but I keep the spelling of the French word *survivance* here, as that phrasing works well in its nonactive middle voice.

25. And *cessance*, here, rather than the more active gerund "ceasing" or more substantive noun "cessation," to match in counterpart the suspended, not quite active or passive grammatical phrasing of *survivance*.

26. See Desjarlais (2018) for an exploration of the concepts of phantasms and "phantasmography" as they apply to perception and anthropological inquiry in the contemporary world.

27. To invoke a phrase from Adorno (2000, 27).

28. As Derrida (2011, 117) notes, "But the logic of this banality of survival that begins even before our death is that of a survival of the remainder, the remains, that does not

even wait for death to make life and death indissociable, and thus the *unheimlich* and fantasmatic experience of the spectrality of the living dead. Life and death as such are not separable as such."

29. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), s.v. "exergue."

30. Such as with *The Blind Man: A Phantasmography* (Desjarlais 2018) and *Traces of Violence: Writings on the Disaster in Paris, France*, coauthored with Khalil Habrih (2012).

31. As quoted in Hartman and Nelson (2022).

32. See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2012) on the "unruly edges" of interspecies relations and assemblages in the world.

33. Notable earlier works of reflexive anthropology include Paul Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), Jeanne Favret-Saada's *Deadly Words* (2010), and Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami* (1980).

34. For an earlier focus on an anthropological approach to the phantasmal in life, see Desjarlais (2018) and Desjarlais and Habrih (2022).

CHAPTER 1. WOUND IMAGES

1. On the idea of "the right to look" and forms of "countervisuality" that can work to contest political forms of visuality and silence among state and colonial arrangements of power, see Mirzoeff (2011).

2. Thanks go to Todd Meyers for prompting me to consider the "time signature" of the subject matters of this inquiry.

3. To quote the subtitle of Crapanzano's book, *The Harkis: The Wound That Never Heals* (2011).

4. To draw from Lisa Stevenson (2014, 14), who writes of the affective and imaginal force of images from dreams, in uncertain moments in life and death, "life beside itself."

5. The digital archive of Kagan's photographs can be found at the Argonnaute, the digital library of La Contemporaine, https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/tpwf7vjs31m8?cbs=b25ab502-4dd6-4b28-8d36-8011fd7ea9da.

6. See Pinney (2012, 2023) for incisive reflections on "world-system photography."

7. See, for instance, Poole (1997), Pinney (1997, 2023), Edwards (2001), Strassler (2010, 2020), Wright (2013), Didi-Huberman (2008), and Silverman (2009, 2015).

8. On the "social life of things," see Appadurai (1988). On "the social life of Indian photographs," see Pinney (1997). Other works that trace out the many uses and significances of specific photographic images through *longues durées* of cultural history include Shamoon Zamir's *The Gift of the Face* (2020); Georges Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria* (2004) and *Images in Spite of All* (2008); Krista Thompson's essay "'I was here but I disappear': Ivanhoe 'Rhygin' Martin and Photographic Disappearance in Jamaica" (2018); Sampada Aranke's *Death's Futurity* (2023); and the 2020 volume edited by Ilisa Barbash, Molly Rogers, and Deborah Willis, *To Make Their Own Way in the World*.

9. On this, see Silverman (2015, 39–66).

10. As Silverman remarks (2015, 52–53).

11. Talbot (1841), as quoted by Silverman (2015, 52–53).