



Narration, Memory, and the Construction of Self Fatna El Bouih's *Talk of Darkness* as a Case Study

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Abstract

This paper investigates the intricate interplay between Memory and Literature as two interconnected symbolic systems that significantly conjure up in their representational capacities. It posits that literature transcends its marginalization in contemporary discourses by asserting its pivotal role in preserving and articulating both personal and collective memories. Literature's unique ability to transform historical events, cultural identities, and collective experiences into enduring textual forms underpins its capacity as a mnemonic medium. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's theory of mimesis and Astrid Erll's studies on memory, the paper examines how literature, particularly autobiography, mediates the reconstruction of Self and Memory within the frameworks of time and power structures. The analysis delves into the dual capacity of literature as both a locus of memory and a framework for organizing disparate experiences into coherent narratives, emphasizing its role in identity construction. It critically engages with Dariush Shayegan's concept of "double fascination," which highlights the dynamic correlation of past and present in collective memory, alongside Ricoeur's tripartite model of mimesis that elucidates the narrative dimensions of memory. The article further critiques the tensions between individual and collective representations of memory, exploring how literature navigates these through emplotment and imaginative engagement with history. By foregrounding the relationship between time, narrative, and memory, the article underscores literature's enduring relevance in preserving and interrogating cultural histories and identities, resisting homogenized narratives, and fostering a nuanced understanding of collective and individual consciousness. The article concludes by situating literature as a dynamic mediator that reshapes the past to resonate with present realities, thus contributing to both individual and collective consciousness in memory culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

By and large, this article is based on the idea that there is a close relationship between Memory¹ and Literature as two distinct symbolic systems. These two distinct blocks of knowledge are

¹ The issue of Memory has consumed a lot of ink. It is a complex and dynamic process that cannot be reduced to one single definition. The ambiguity that obscures the concept of Memory arises with the emergence of Memory Studies as a burgeoning interdisciplinary field of inquiry. The problem with the concept of Memory results from its linkages with other fields as diverse as Memory Studies. Memory Studies has grown in importance in the late 1980s and is still moving forward. It comes at the intersection of the individual and the collective, the private and the public, the social and the cognizant. This transformative character constitutive to Memory helps shift concern from Memory to Memory Studies. One of the significant studies that underline the problem and difficulty of coming up with a clear-cut definition of Memory is Maurice Halbwachs's critical insight into the social frameworks of Memory. Halbwachs problematizes the question of Memory by emphasizing that it flourishes at the intersection of the individual and the collective. The processes of remembrance and forgetting are located at the junction where the social bonds are operated. He declares that "the memory is usually considered a properly individual faculty [...] it is impossible to deny that we often replace our remembrances within a space and time whose demarcations we share with others"

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significantly linked at the level of (re)presentation. Although literature seems to be confused and nudged aside by discourse, it holds its significant position as a universal phenomenon in whose capacity humans articulate their grapples and concerns with ontological questions and existential displacement. Literary works represent "a kind of praxis of knowledge-in-action" (Eagleton, 2012, p. 64). Indeed, literature is not an instrument humans use to embellish their existence; neither is it something adjunct to human experience. Better yet, literature is and has always been a bulwark that holds the people of a nation together. It may not object to being associated with literary forms of entertainment, but it certainly refutes to place its credit at the margin of knowledge. In its capacity, humans can communicate ancestors' histories and memories with those of the present. Dignified with this virtue, literature has the power to transfer a nation's past into artistic and textual edifices that stand the test of time, preserving knowledge, history, and cultural identity. This distinctive characteristic of Literature in terms of its ability to preserve collective histories, memories, stories, modes and modalities of being intersects with Memory at the level of Identity construction. That Literature and Memory seek to afford a rapprochement of the past which resonates with a knowledge each one of these symbolic systems aspires to establish is not by necessity an act of encroachment geared against history.

In this view, this article is designed to explore the complex interplay between Literature and Memory. Since its main focus is on the autobiographical (re)construction of Self and Memory, it should be underlined here that this article will tackle the importance of Literature to Memory in general; but it will investigate autobiography as a literary genre in vigorous detail. By narrowing the scope of literature to autobiography, this article seeks to investigate how Self and Memory are written into narrative forms. Since writing Self and Memory is not independent from power structures which include politics, power, religion and cultures, it can be argued that Moroccan autobiographical writings are informed by these structures in a manner that renders it difficult to consider writing the self as a matter of subjective choice based on writer's mere intent to share his or her life stories with readers for the sake of sharing. By zooming in on Fatna El Bouih's autobiography *Talk of Darkness*, this article hopes to highlight upon and contribute to the interlinks between literature and memory.

2. NAVIGATING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN NARRATION AND MEMORY

Although literature seems to be brushed aside by discourses that are brought by new forms of expression, it has now become clear that this marginalization of literature is under severe critique. The importance of literature resides in its power to evoke both personal and collective memories. The power of literature to preserve personal and collective memories allocated in different times and spaces allows people to reflect up on historical events of their nations, encounter diverse and rich experiences, and visit myriad galleries of time. This dual capacity of literature both as locus and pattern of articulating historical events, memories and experiences is analogously shared with Memory. In this vein, in her article on "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspect of Literature", Lachmann points out that "writing is both an act of memory and a new interpretation, by which every new text is etched into memory space" (Lachmann,

(Halbwachs, 1980, p. 54). For detailed information see Halbwachs, M. (1980). *The collective memory* (F. J. Ditter, Jr. & V. Y. Ditter, Trans.). Harper and Row.

2008, p. 301). In contrast, a literary text is often thought of as a communal framework wherein individual and collective interpretations of national events, experiences, histories and memories are brought into circulation through imagination in a manner explained by Eagleton as the following "imagination makes absent things present, it is through that we have a sense of futurity, without which we would be unable to act at all" (Eagleton, 2012b, p. 61). This artistic capacity of literature has created confusion about the limits between Memory and Literature.

In this context, this article will explore the complex nexuses between Literature and Memory in light of Paul Ricoeur's and Astrid Erll's theorization of the mnemonic aspects of literature. It would thus be significant to pose the following questions: how does Literature relate to Memory, mainly autobiographical memory? What are the characteristics of literature as a mnemonic medium? How does a specific literary text become a 'mediator' for collective memory?

For the purpose of attending to the role that literature plays in the process of preserving, remembering, and understanding of the past, I shall set off with Paul Ricoeur's critical insights into this subject. Ricoeur's conceptualization of the disposition of a literary text in terms of its metaphorical treatment of the question of time is grounded in his study of the literary plot². Time matters because it is at the heart of Memory. However, time is also paradoxical. The paradox that consumes time is that it tends to measure human consciousness on account of time's three primary constituents that are: past, present and future. But, any attempt at measuring these elements, that are indeed definitive to time, would end in vain. That's because what is measurable must have a concrete form in the real world. Notwithstanding this paradox, it is within the frame work of time that memory has largely been studied and theorized in an attempt to understand the links that bring together the temporal character of human experience and the act of articulating that same experience in a narrative mode³.

I am here using the concept of time to highlight what Dariush Shayegan calls "double fascination"⁴ that marks our engagement with collective memories and experiences in coterminous correlation of past and present. The concept of 'double fascination', as we will

² Literary plot and memory are interconnected in the sense that while the former seeks to place events in an order that is being revealed in a given a narrative, the latter focuses on the (re)collection of those events. This relational aspect influences and shapes the ways in which a story is constructed, presented and accessed. It is a process that is worked out through a set of literary techniques such as setting, characters and time. For a detailed understanding of what distinguishes a story from a plot see Abrams (1999). *A Glossary of Literary* (7th ed). Boston: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. pp. 224-28. By way of unravelling the links between literature and memory, Paul Ricoeur's insight into the question of emplotment is crucial to understand how literary representation of memory has recently brought more focus. Ricoeur draws upon Aristotle's conception of plot in the *Poetics* as mimesis of action, and he develops it into three mimeses that are constitutive to the literary plot. Aristotle's main point is that plot is a kind of modus operandi that artists use to translate aspects of the real world into a form of art. The mimetic modes that Ricoeur suggests are: mimesis-1 that refers to "prefiguration", mimesis-2 that refers to "configuration", and mimesis-3 that refers to "refiguration", see Ricoeur, (2009) *Time and Narrative*. (McLaughlin & Pellauer, Trans., Vol.1, pp.52-87). University of Chicago Press.

³ The concept of narrative is an essential aspect of human culture. There has never been a human community without a narrative. It involves the ability of human beings to express and expose their being in the world through stories. This trait attributed to narrative is also constitutive to memory. The way we understand each other involves narrative and memory. It therefore provides a framework for interpreting our experiences. For a general literary understanding of Narrative and Narratology see Geoffrey Galt Harpman and M.H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (Abrams, PP.172-73). For a comprehensive understanding of the concept Narrative see Barker, C. (2004b). *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. (SAGE, P.131). The order of remembering takes place within the narrative structures. Illuminatingly, Paul Ricoeur proposes in his *Time and Narrative* that: "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 51).

⁴ Dariush Shayegan uses the concept of 'double fascination' in his *Cultural Schizophrenia* (1997) to highlight the cultural and psychological fissures the non-Western world, with particular focus on Arab-Muslim World, has to bear because it couldn't settle out decisively with the question of Modernity. Dariush's analyses of cultural references that define the collective memory leads him to conclude that disorientation and dislocation associated with the Eastern Culture derive from the encounter of two incompatible worlds. One that seems to have a grip over the course of its history, while the other strives to survive the shock of Modernity. I am borrowing the same concept to see into the kind of relationship there is between literature and memory. We express our fascination and/or anger toward certain historical events doomed memorial through a narrative.

see with Paul Riceour, helps us to anticipate the future into coherent and meaningful whole. In Shayegan's words, this double fascination is manifested in "the enchanted vision of a world still infused with the aura of collective memory, and the equally compelling allure of the new and unknow" (Shayegan, 1997, p. 4). With respect to the question of time and narrative, Shayegan draws upon the division between Tradition and Modernity to examine and interpret modes and modalities that help construct collective memory. My concern with Dariush Shayegan's argument is that it helps understand the socio-historical manners in whose aegis people negotiate their experiences, communicate memories at the national level and with the world at large. On the basis of this negotiation people seek to understand personal identities, while also constituting a collective identity in ways that may not be comprehensible to the interlocutors from both sides of the negotiation of competing memories.

Despite a plethora of critique with which Shayegan's ideas have been received with; they afford a valuable analysis of the distortions and paradoxes that underline collective consciousness of people in the non-Western world, especially in the Muslim world. Shayegan's critique is predicated on the examination of the dialogic intersection of two paradigms of knowledge grounded in distinct cultures, memories and histories. These patterns are saturated with meanings identifiable to the local cultures and values. The collective experience of being that a society compels individuals distorts and stagnates the development of individual consciousness. This is why Shayegan would insist that "consciousness rooted in the subsoil of the collective psyche can only trail behind an idea freshly emerged from the metamorphoses of history. This time-lapse occurs at the intersection of two orders of knowledge whose mode of deployment are radically opposed" (Shayegan, 1997, p. 61).

It follows that Shayegan renders the question of Memory very problematic. He indicates that memory should not be dealt with in a homogeneous manner that a collective understanding seems to indicate, neither should it be interpreted to mean that memory is built on precarious grounds. Just because we are born into collective cultural and symbolic systems that set the frames of our sensing, thinking and being, is not an ipso facto condition to shelter these frames from critic and doubt. The sublation of the individual into the collective will morph into the domination of one narrative. One that is often based on selectivity and exclusion of others' narratives, because it appeals to more power. The relevance of Shayegan's analyses of cultural paradigms to the relationship between literature and memory is that it provides a firm critical ground where one would be safe from being hooked into bogus dichotomies that may shadow a serious understanding of structures and norms eventually morphed into a source of distortion. In his wording, Shayegan asserts that "to return to the subject of distortions, we should add that they are not restricted to the area of conceptual hybridization which we have been examining, but also to be in objects, literatures and art" (Shayegan, 1997, p. 102). It follows that this can help us understand how memory and literature are intricately linked to establish a kind of framework that sets and defines the boundaries not to be transgressed. In other words, a collective representation of the past tends to privilege a particular reading of the past, while subordinating others which do not contour with the national narrative that governs the process(es) of remembering and representing. However one cannot fail to see that Shayegan's analyzes falls into the same trap it seeks to transcend. Suffice it to say that, any narrative that is built on biased discourses and marginalization of other's histories and memories will waste not only the test time but also the moral authority.

3. MIMESIS, TEMPORALITY AND MEMORY

I am taking as my guideline for investigating the literary representation of memory Astrid Erll's studies on memory and Paul Ricoeur's theory of mimeses. Introducing Ricoeur's theory of *Time and Narrative* is of much importance to attend to the significant role that literature plays in the preservation and construction of both individual and collective memories. The (re)constructive view of memory that Ricoeur suggests has underlined the intricate features literature and memory have in common. Related to these characteristics is the plot. The latter is not only a mere technique of literary narrative but also an essential constituent of memory. The latter is formed by events and incidents we encounter. Memory achieves recognizability by being shared with others in the sense that, as Ricoeur would remind us, "to remember, we need others" (Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* 120). The sequence of events that a plot requires intertwines with memory on the scale of remembering. That is to say, plot-related remembering involves the act of organizing events and experiences into a meaningful narrative. Hence, it is pertinent to argue that a narrative structure, as a process of emplotment, provides a necessary and useful framework for how we remember the past and make sense of it. In his rigorous investigation of narrative theory, Ricoeur argues against Aristotle's understanding of mythos or narrative emplotment as a kind of imitation where fiction and fact are fused in a manner that seems to disregard the human condition. It is a sort of synthesis that favors a fictive explanation of events, put into action by humans, to establish poetical aspects for mimetic purposes. In his *Time and Narrative* (2009) Ricoeur goes further to suggest that "the mimetic function of narrative poses a problem exactly parallel to the problem of metaphorical reference. It is, in fact, one particular application of the latter to the sphere of human action. Plot, says Aristotle, is the mimesis of action" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. xi).

The paradox that Ricoeur highlights in Aristotle's conception of mythos is that it keeps a blind eye on the incongruity underlying two distinct incompatible worlds: one that belongs to raw events, while another is but a constructed narrative. This paradox operates at the level of imitation or the representation of action. That is to say, to transmit the real world into an allegorical world by linguistic means implies the distortion of the real when it is mediated. The term emplotment or mythos in Aristotle's *Poetics*, argues Ricoeur, is not an easy term to translate because it couldn't tell in what way art can imitate life concerning the temporality of human experience. For this purpose, Ricoeur broadens the concept of emplotment to embrace the temporality of human experience and its articulation into narrative form; he hence argues that,

Aristotle discerns in the poetic act par excellence- the composing of tragic poems- the triumph of concordance over discordance. It goes without saying that it is I, the reader of Augustine and Aristotle, who establishes this relationship between a lived experience where discordance rends concordance and eminently verbal experience where concordance mends discordance. (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 31)

Ricoeur's explanation of how narrative embodies human actions in its complex manifestation and expression is approached in terms of 'discordance' and 'concordance'. Both are informed by emplotment in the sense that the latter is a synthetic activity which is according to Ricoeur "a synthesis of the heterogeneous" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 66) that configures "praxis as it is ordered by this or that plot articulated in our literature" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 83). He introduces a synthesis of the heterogeneous to show us that the mimetic representation of the world is

hinged on exegesis that is grounded in fragmented and disparate experiences. Ricoeur's main concern is to analyze the links that bring together an action, which took place in the past, and its mimetic representation via the process of narration. In this view, the narration is identified with memory because both fall back on the past as an endeavour to establish a form of remembering. In taking up the links that connect narration and memory as explored in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricoeur's insight into the "dialectic of representation and action" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 349) is introduced through the mimetic operation that involves tripartite modes of mimeses that can help understand how memory and narration are interlaced. In this respect, emplotment plays a vital role not only in the arrangement of experiences and events into a narrative structure but is also constitutive of memory. Yet, enough attention should be paid to the discrepancies Ricoeur draws between mythos and mimesis. While mythos is understood as an act of configuration of events into a plot, mimesis is associated with the representation of characters and their action as Ricoeur writes in his *Time and Narrative* (2009) "we hold tightly to the guideline of defining mimesis by mythos ... the correlate of the mimetic activity governed by the organization of the events (into a system)" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 34).

According to Ricoeur, the tripartite mimeses are the following: mimesis-1, mimesis-2, and mimesis-3. Basically, the first refers to prefiguration. That is the temporal experience being independent of the literary work. It is prefigured in the mind of the author before being transformed into a text. It frames a preunderstanding of a narrative act. This prefigurative level defines human action and rises it to a level of meaning. At this initial stage of imitation, remembering memories and understanding stories we tell about events and experiences can be accomplished on account that "to understand a story is to understand both the language of 'doing something' and the cultural tradition from which proceeds the typology of plots" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 57). Mimesis-1 seeks to establish a form of understanding grounded in the relationship between representation and what it represents with regard to the intersection of personal experience with cultural context. At this level, the focus is on mimesis as a direct imitation or representation of reality. Ricoeur points out that:

We can see the richness in the meaning of mimesis-1. To imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human acting is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this preunderstanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimetics. (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 67)

Mimesis-2 refers to the configuration of the world of action. It is a transformative point of emplotment in the sense that it encompasses both the act of telling and the act of receiving a story. It is established as "a turning point" that "opens up the world of the plot and constitutes [...] the literariness of the work of literature" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 53). Ricoeur places mimesis-2 between mimesis-1 and mimesis-3 in order to highlight its mediating function or use Ricoeur's words "its intermediary position between the two operations" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 53). In other words, the importance given to mimesis-2 aims to emphasize an active engagement with reality through refiguration and reinterpretation. It cannot lend itself to a traditional correspondence between imitation and what it imitates as is the case in mimesis-1. At the level of refiguration, that is mimesis-2, interpretation reaches its imaginative aspect because the focus is on getting enmeshed in the world that allows more meanings to unfurl. It is at this stage that events are translated into a coherent plot. In this sense, Ricoeur's conception of emplotment being identified with mimesis-2 aka configuration is very dynamic. This dynamism results in

mimesis-2 thanks to being placed between preunderstanding wherein cultural context plays a significant rule, and postunderstanding which configuration emphasizes.

Concerning the last mimetic mode, mimesis-3 corresponds to the refiguration. It comes at "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 71). Mostly, the world of the reader constitutes the stage at which imagination flourishes. At the level of refiguration, the reader will be able to get involved in a dialogue with incidents and events that belong to the past. Hence, mimesis-3 offers a flexible ground for intelligible interpretation of the text. It is an intelligibility that involves dialogue with preexisting cultural symbols. In this process, cultural symbols will eventually be imbued with new meanings and innovative perceptions. According to Ricoeur, mimesis-3, also known as refiguration, enables a creative comprehension of emplotment because it, that is refiguration, allows symbols and texts to be approached in an entirely different light with respect to the connections it creates between the fictional world of the text and the real world of human action and sufferings. To affirm this, Ricoeur argues that "narrative has its full meaning when it is restored to the time of action and of suffering in mimesis-3" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 70).

Significantly enough, Ricoeur's theory of narrative and mimesis offers a rigorous understanding of the relationship between memory and literature. In light of Ricoeur's insights, these blocks of knowledge, namely Memory and Literature, are intricately connected in a manner that renders it difficult to subordinate one to another. It is a kind of connectedness that is grounded in the emphasis both literature and memory place on human experience; besides the projection of events and incidents onto narrative forms to the extent that "literature would be incomprehensible if it did not give a configuration to what was already a figure of human action" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 64). In this vein, narrative plays a central role as a mediator of memory. This "mediating function of narrative" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 448), to cite from Ricoeur's *Memory, History and Forgetting*, implies the transformation of past events and experiences into stories. In this transformative process, the mimetic representation which Ricoeur deciphers as "creative imitation" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 31) is distinct from Aristotle's understanding of art as an imitating action. Explicably, then, we can understand why Ricoeur broadened the meaning of mimetic representation to address the temporality of human action.

Viewed as a narrative form, literature has the power to bridge the gap between memories marked by disjunction and the temporal aspect of human understanding. The explication Ricoeur offers to explain the mediatory function of narrative with regard to memory is examined in terms of diachronic and synchronic aspects of time. That is to say, narrative is mediatory because memories are remembered/narrated under the pressure and rubric of temporal experiences. Hence, memories are subject to (r)interpretation we develop through interaction with present circumstances. Ricoeur develops the concept of "interweaving reference [référence croisée]" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 32) to highlight this point. The concept of 'interweaving reference' implies a web of cultural and symbolic references involved in the process of remembering/narrating. In other words, remembering the past entails the interplay between memory and interweaving references. It is an intersection that allows us to (r)reinterpret our experiences in light of the cultural and symbolic references of the nation we belong to.

Ricoeur's emphasis on the temporality of human experience and the influence it has on human disposition is at the heart of his narrative theory. According to Ricoeur there is a reciprocal connection between time and narrative that constitutes our understanding of human

experience in variegated forms. That is to say, time becomes human when it is translated into a narrative, and the former can be intelligible because it has the power to unfold the human experience of time, or as Ricoeur would have it "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 52). The narrativization of time paves the way for memory to play a crucial role in the process of constructing both individual and collective consciousness. Our consciousness gains its place in the process of identity construction by virtue of the link it generates between past and present. Indeed, such a link is driven by what Dariush Shayegan calls, as I have already mentioned above, 'double-fascination'. The latter is analogous to what Ricoeur calls the "points of reference"⁵ (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 21) that allows us to identify with particular memories and events. The links that bring memory and narrative together are anchored in the cultural and symbolic patterns through which we tend to establish relationships with the past. Furthermore, the literary narrativization of experience, be it individual or collective, is as an endeavour to bring the past into the present thereby introducing order and coherence to 'our' lives; life that is always in constant change. It is an act of memorialization for the sake of posterity.

It is in line with the exploration of Ricoeur's insights into narration and memory, that I would like to introduce Astrid Erll's inquiry about the literary representation of memory. Erll's investigation into *Memory in Culture* (2011) is as significantly important as Ricoeur's theory of mimetic representation of memory. Erll has developed her argument in light of Ricoeur's theory of emplotment to underline how past events and experiences are remembered and narrated within a certain sociocultural context. The provisional definition she has suggested in her introduction to *Cultural memory studies: an international and interdisciplinary handbook* (2008) conceives memory as "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (Erll, 2008, p. 2). In this respect, literature and memory share features and characteristics that can help attend to the modes and modalities of remembering with regard to social-cultural contexts. If literature and memory are culturally and socially inflected phenomena; they become ipso facto situated ones. Much memory is contextual as Susan Engel's *Context is Every Thing: The Nature of Memory* (1999) explicitly indicates. In this respect, Erll proposes that the 'circle of mimesis' as developed by Paul Ricoeur can be reformulated to highlight a mnemonic aspect of a literary text. Mimesis in the context of memory refers to the mediatory function of cultural practices. Through mimesis, memories can be transferred from ancestors to their heirs. To illustrate this transformative function of mimesis, Erll suggests that literary emplotment is also constitutive to memory in the sense that for a literary text to be remembered it invites a web of cultural practices. The former set the ground for both individual and collective remembrance.

In considering the relationship between memory and literary emplotment, Erll declares that the former constitutes the framework wherein memories are encountered. The act of remembrance is experienced in the presence of a literary emplotment. The literary formation of the world as explained by Ricoeur is premised on the mimetic process that operates at the level of prefiguration, refiguration and configuration definitive and constitutive to the narrative structure. In parallel with this active process, Erll introduces three mimeses of memory that

⁵ In the context of Ricoeur's conception of mimetic representation, the concept of "points of reference" refers to a numerous incidents and events definitive to a narrative. Being included into a narrative, these events define the framework within which temporal ordering of events can be understood. The sequential order of events is not, Ricoeur would argue, enough for a narrative to testify as a reference of truth. The overall meaning of a narrative is rather defined by the involvement of a diverse elements such as language, history and temporality. In the context of my investigation in this section, the concept of the "points of reference" refers to an arm of cultural, symbolic and historical attributes identified with memory.

correspond to the cultural construction of memory. By extending the meaning of literary emplotment, with respect to the modes of mimeses as analyzed by Ricoeur, to embrace the mnemonic aspects of the literary text in the culture of remembrance, Erll suggests a subtle understanding of literature as a mediator of collective memory. She, therefore, argues in her book *Memory and Culture* (2011) that "literature permeates and resonates in memory culture" (Erll, 2011, p. 144). As such, Erll emphasizes on the idea that memory as a cultural construct that operates upon imitation and reproduction, invites attention to the cultural and social foundations of memory.

Indeed, memory is a "transdisciplinary problem" (Erll, 2011, p. 2) that can no longer be approached within the purview of one single discipline; however, being placed at the intersection of multidisciplinary approaches should not render memory, as Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering would alert us in their introduction to *Research Method for Memory Studies* (2013), into a "swag-bag" (Keightley & Pickering, 2013, p. 3) occurrence. Instead, Erll takes a step further suggesting that memory should be treated in terms of its constitution as a "discursive construct" (Erll, 2011, p. 6). In the course of constructing memory discursively, a number of categories partake in a competing manner to gain a grip control over not only how to remember the past, but also how to circulate it within a society and in the world at large. In this ambit, literature plays an active role in the processes of identity construction and remembering since it enables people to imagine the past in a manner that may correspond to the present issues, troubles and realities. What Memory and Literature share in this sense is that they both place a great focus on the importance of imagination.

To shed more light on the intersections between memory and literature, Erll emphasizes on three key concepts which are the following 'condensation', 'narration' and "genre" (Erll, 2011, p. 147). In the context of literature, condensation is a kind of strategy that gives the memory narrative a sense of coherency and intelligibility. Related to Memory Studies, condensation refers to "the compression of several complex ideas, feelings or images into a single, fused or composite object" (Erll, 2011, p. 145). It implies a thick meaning condensed in the process of remembering where reception and interpretation are played out. Within the purview of Memory Studies, narration refers to the process of storytelling through which past events and experiences are communicated both individually and at a collective level. At the level of narration in relation to memory, strategies definitive to literary narrative can also be applied to memory considering that, as Erll writes, "large parts of cultural memory seem to be configured in much the same structure, namely narrative, that we encounter in large parts of literature" (Erll, 2011, p. 147). That is to say, no memory is 'Cultural Memory'⁶ if it does not fit into cultural aspects of society where narratives are imbricated and loaded with meanings and associations. To be remembered and encoded, memories have to go under the process of selection and combination which give meaning to the temporal order of life.

⁶ The concept of Cultural Memory refers to the processes of remembering and recollecting events that are associated with places, objects and people. Its main concern is to describe/explain how processes of remembering and forgetting operate at the individual and collective levels in the literary and media contexts. In view of it, Astrid Erll's conception of Cultural Memory is slightly different from Maurice Halbwachs's Collective Memory. Although both are designed to address the sociocultural foundations of memory, Erll opts for the concept of cultural memory to distinguish it from collective memory as a way of avoiding the confusion collective memory seems to create. The former seems to limit the cultural findings of memory within the social matrix. Cultural memory invites us think about the anthropological associations culture carries with it. It suggests an understanding that "allows for an inclusion of a broad spectrum of phenomena ... ranging from individual acts of remembering in social context to group memory (of family, friends, veterans, etc.) to national memory with its 'invented tradition'" (Erll, 2008, p. 2).

The last but not least kind of intersection that Erll proposes to investigate the links between memory and literature is called 'genre'. She means by it forms and conventions involved in the cultural expression of identity and memory construction. These conventions and instances enable people to depict their experiences and give their lives some sort of meaning and order. Accordingly, genres are "conventionalized formats we use to encode events and experiences; and repertoires of genre conventions are themselves contents of memory" (Erll, 2011, pp. 147–148). In a brief, through exploring genres Erll seeks to fathom how memory influences/shapes and is influenced/shaped by genres in terms of incongruent interpretations and expectations people employ to explain the course of their lives. By way of referring to "genre schemata" (Erll, 2011, p. 148) people are invited to participate actively in the process of producing cultural expressions. At this point, the close link between literature and memory is evidently displayed in the former's capability not only to embrace people's experiences and memories but also to transfer them into cultural memory. Erll goes further to suggest that genres can play a pivotal role in turbulent times of trouble and danger like when a nation confronts challenges that have to do with the remembrance of national events. Eventually, she argues that "genres are also a method of dealing with challenges that is faced by a memory culture" (Erll, 2011, p. 148). Being identified with method, genres such as diaries, memories, films novels and monuments can lend themselves useful tools to be explored in a critical situation when coherence and discipline are much needed to introduce and explain how memory works.

Having highlighted the links in-between condensation, narration, and genres in memory culture, I now need to delve into the three mnemonic mimeses that Astrid Erll has suggested to understand the mediatory function of literature in memory culture. It is a mediatory function that results from trying to bridge the gaps between the fictional, the imaginary and the real as an endeavour to understand forms and patterns of remembrance. In this view, literature represents what Birgit Neumani clarifies, in an article on "The Literary Representation of Memory" he contributed to the *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (2008), as "constructive a way to encounter the world and create its own memory worlds with specifically literary techniques" (Neumani, 2008, p. 344). Neumann's insights into the literary representation of memory provide an overview of how memory is represented in and through literature, using a narratological approach to decipher the forms and functions of a 'mimesis of memory'. Given that the culture of remembrance hinges upon representation that takes multifarious shapes, it is in the interest of cultural remembrance to pin down how these representational forms intricately interplay to produce a version of reality that is neither real nor fictional since the world they aspire to represent/imitate is always in a constant change.

Initially, one of the mnemonic mimeses that Erll suggests in *Culture in Memory* (2011) to understand the cultural processes by which memories are communicated and remembered, refers to "the prefiguration of a literary text by memory" (Erll, 2011, p. 152). In his regard, remembering is evoked by a primary understanding of human praxis. The sociocultural contexts within which remembering takes place are already marked by "the symbolic mediations of the prenarrative resources of human acting" (Ricœur, 2009, p. 81). The repertoire of a literary text is constituted by social symbols and practices before being transmitted into a narrative form. In this meaning, literature refers to "the material dimension of memory culture" (Erll, 2011, p. 153). In the act of mnemonic prefiguration, we are able to see the impact of

cultural practices and symbols that mediate the culture of remembrance. On this account, "mnemonic prefiguration means focusing attention on those areas of pre-understanding that concern cultural memory" (Erll, 2011, p. 153).

Concerning the second aspect of mnemonic mimesis that Erll proposes, it refers to "the literary configuration of new memory narratives" (Erll, 2011, p. 152). In the process of emplotment, Ricoeur places mimesis-2 between pre-understanding and post-understanding in order to underline the dynamic nature of configuration. It suggests a representation of the real world of action by the formation of the text. Seen in the light of the active mediating function it plays, mimesis-2 is capable of constituting the "kingdom of as if" (Ricoeur, 2009, p. 64). With respect to this aspect of mnemonic configuration as a substitute for Ricoeur's mimesis-2, literature is recognized as a "medium of cultural memory" (Erll, 2011, p. 154).

In the matter of mimesis-3 as "collective refiguration" (Erll, 2011, p. 155) of the text to meet the needs of the recipients, it displays the intersection of the world of the reader and the world of the text. Taking her cue from Ricoeur's refiguration, Erll conceives collective refiguration as the site where intersection stimulates the actualization of the text through the act of reading. This actualization is brought about by the interaction with events, experiences and memories that are inscribed into a literary text via mimesis-3. Careful attention should be paid to the fact that "social institutions may attempt to monitor, force or curtail the collective refiguration of literary texts" (Erll, 2011, p. 155). Plainly, this quote seeks to shed light on the active role readers play through (re)interpretation of memories and events which should be sheltered from institutional manipulation.

By and large, the complex interplay between literature and memory is fundamentally concerned with individual and collective remembrance. Unpacking the links between memory and literature not only helps understand modes and modalities of remembrance, and how they shape and constantly reshape identities, and preserve experiences based on individual and collective memories. It, nevertheless, helps navigate the creative quality of memory. This qualitative aspect of literature in the course of memory construction corrects the view that literature is mimetic by definition. In this respect, Neumann takes a step further suggesting that "literature is therefore never a simple reflection of pre-existing cultural discourses; rather, it proactively contributes to the negotiation of cultural memory" (Neumann, 2008, p. 335). The potentialities associated with literature dwells in its capacity to represent manifold voices. Unlike other narratives, the literary narrative is distinguished and characterized by what Erll has introduced in *Culture in Memory* (2011) as the "interdiscursivity" (Erll, 2011, p. 150) of voices with which a literary text is identified. Erll's use of the notion of 'interdiscursivity' resonates with Mikhail M. Bakhtin's notion of "polyphony"⁷ (Bahtin, 1984, p. 10) for they both insist on the point that voices are dialogically interrelated. As a representative aspect of a literary text, 'interdiscursivity' is seen as a pattern through which voices are interrelated to produce a version of past events/experiences allocated in different times and places. In this

⁷ Russian linguist and literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin is known for using the concept of polyphony to emphasize the fact that a language evolves under the influence of culture. In the context of literature, polyphony implies that a literary text can be conceived of as a chorus of distinct voices, perspectives and characters. These voices get involved in a dialogic conversation over the interpretation of events and human actions. In view of this, I am referring to the concept of polyphony in order to highlight upon the fact that different ways of addressing the past are played out only in literary text. Multiple voices within a literary text indicate multiple perspectives which results in a multiple readings/remembrings of the past. For further understanding of the concept of polyphony see Mikhail M. Bakhtin's work on *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Vol.8 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

way, literature designates a "medium which brings together, and re-connects, in a single space the manifold discrete parlances about the past" (Erll, 2011, p. 151).

3.1. Narrative(s) of Incarcerated Corporeal Memory

In *Talk of Darkness*, Fatna El Bouih adroitly weaves personal narrative with political memory, providing profound insights into shadowy and censured facets of Moroccan post-colonial history, overtly notorious Years of Lead during which political dissents had been crushed by the brutal and repressive measures of the government under Hassan II. Under the aegis of this oppressive system, the political incarceration during "Years of Lead"⁸ entrenched layers of subtle, insidious and deep-seated forms of trauma and violence. These cunning forces wielded a cumulative and deeply transformative impact that shattered and dismantled not only the lives of the victims but also reverberated through the lives of their families, relatives and the community at large. In the grip of such a repressive political regime, few dared to express their opinions about/against political issues, critique the troubled economy, or confront the pervasive violence and repression, while the fear of disappearance and detention cast a long scary shadow over society. Fadoua Loudiy reminds us that "soon after the country gained independence and even before Hassan II came to power, violence was used against political adversaries as a means to silence them and scare off potential opponents" (Loudiy, 2014, p. 72). In this view, *Talk of Darkness* is to be read as an indispensable conduit to fathom the mechanisms of state violence and the manners in which individual and collective memories and experiences are entangled in order to (re)write the self and resist political violence. As such, *Talk of Darkness* is a form of self-representation that engages conscious navigation of political violence in the sense that it shows the very antagonist strategic position writers and activists have taken in order to dismantle ubiquitous coercive and manipulative practices and discourses that have shaped "postcolonial subjectivity" (Varadharajan, 1995, p. 133).

Because there is a strong and close link between memory, literature and history at the level of (re)pressing the past, the state will always intervene through its apparatuses to ascertain that whatever is written and/or remembered does not place its credibility and legitimacy under the radar of doubt. Memory is at the centre of this process for it invites and requires a web of social, cultural and political practices to understand why the Moroccan regime adopted violence, as embodied in arbitrary arrest, incarceration, disappearance and torturing, in order to silence and eliminate activist and political opponents. Evidently, memory and identity are two aspects of the same coin: the self. In essence, 'bodily memory' is endowed with uncontrollable energy to defy its entrapment in and by politics. This can explain why the Moroccan repressive regime treated activists' and detainees' bodies so viciously because what they, meaning bodies, symbolize is not just the body per se, but the self that seeks to liberate itself from oppression. Bodily memories are inherently creative and anarchic so that they can utterly defy conventional order and outperform the state in ways it cannot foresee or control. In this respect, it is worthy of exploration to delve into how the body structures remembrance, proposing that corporeal memory is an essential aspect of political memory. I coin the term

⁸ Numerous political and social events have shaped the literary and political history of the postcolonial Morocco. At the level the political sphere, the social upheavals and political uncertainties of that obscure period of Moroccan history (1956-1999) have formed the faith of Moroccan postcolonial subjects. In a sense, those events have had a deep impact on Moroccan subjects, and actually seem to have haunted the spirit of some thus far, despite, a huge change that is introduced by the new regime. For more information about the importance of El Bouih's testimony in understanding the issue of political violence that was directed against political activists, writers and students during the Years of Lead see Fatna El Bouih and Youssef Madad's *Atlasyate*. Éditions Le Fennec, 2015.

corporeal to designate that the body is a not mere walking skeleton but an active agentive participant in how experiences, particularly traumatic ones are remembered and preserved. In other words, the traumatized body, scars and wounds it carries with it attest to the past in ways that traditional narratives seem to undermine. This corporeal memory turns into in a crucial aspect of political memory because it encapsulates the lived experiences of those who endured violence and oppression. The following excerpt from *Talk of Darkness* meticulously describes the appalling ways in which violence was perpetrated on El Bouih's body and the bodies of her fellow inmates,

They used every means to extract information and confession, including beatings on every part of the body, the falaqa, and the "airplane," which instead of lifting you the heavens cast you even further into the ground.

With the falaqa, the beatings on the soles of the feet were so damaging that many were unable to stand upright for a long time. One day I was convinced that I would never walk again. Electric shocks on the soles of my feet under my nails put me at their mercy. The suffering was incredible. Enraged beasts surrounded me like a pack of wild dogs. I cannot count or remember: how many beatings? How many slaps? How much torture and destruction? how much humiliation did I suffer? How many times did I suffocate after torture sessions? What were the effects, what were the consequences? I don't know. All I know is that I was engulfed in torture and insults; I was defiled but my soul remained pure. (Bih, 2008, pp. 10–11)

Ostensibly, this quote highlights carefully the multifaceted and terrible political violence and torture that was inflicted on political detainees and activists. As political prisoners, the only law El Bouih and her inmates had broken was the 'unspoken' prohibition against disagreement with repressive power. It tells us how much pain their bodies had to endure because they believe in and risk their lives for the transparent practice of power and a just society. Of course, through these crucial acts of violence, namely electric shock, falaqa and mock trials, the Moroccan regime sought to have political activists' will to change power relations chastened. That political violence assumes various forms is of great note because it tells us more about the mechanisms used to 'rehabilitate' detainees and liquidate political opponents. In short, the political violence that was visited upon detainees and political activists aimed at shattering their subjectivity and political action. It follows that the persistent assault on the body, exemplified through the unbearable pain inflicted on the soles of the feet and the violation of bodily integrity, can be read as a significant metaphor for the deterioration and dehumanization employed by the regime not only to sustain order and discipline but also to (re)produce a certain type of narrative that echoes state discourse and protect the political interests of the regime. More importantly, the above excerpt illustrates how political events and historical information were not only manipulated, and shaped but also fabricated and deliberately misplaced, leaving many aspects of the past untold. Depriving the body of all qualities except its basic animal existence is an extreme form of violence that seeks not only to extract information but also strips the body of its subjectivity and individuality as a human being. As such, the carceral system asserts power by treating the body as an entirely reliant object. It reduces the body to an object of control.

Narration, Memory, and the Construction of Self Fatna El Bouih's Talk of Darkness as a Case Study

The narrator's perplexed and fragmented recollection, marked by a sense of overwhelming suffering followed by a flood of rhetorical questions: How much torture and destruction? How much humiliation did I suffer? How many times did I suffocate after torture sessions? Reflects the deep psychological fear and frustration left by such terrible experiences where the boundaries between past and present, memory and reality are blurred. In fact, El Bouih's compelling traumatized experience, translated through her writing, confirms her literary qualities and reveals an instinct sense of communication despite so many hindrances she had to overcome. Undoubtedly, her traumatized experience bears witness to a dark chapter of Moroccan history thereby raising challenging questions with regard to the relation between bodily disposition and political violence. As such, El Bouih is excellent at adeptly exploring the autobiographical genre as a powerful instrument of activism to expose the systematic ways in which the state inflicted violence against not only the corporeal and subjective realms of women but also the integrity of prisoners of conscience.

Accordingly, the body is mutated into a repository of trauma with memories of pain and suffering that persist with the detainees long after their bodies got recover from physical pain. Viewed through this lens, one can argue that *Talk of Darkness* marks out a trajectory from the infliction of physical violence to the appearance of a compelling form of communication, both within the confines of the prison right into the spectrums of society. This transformation exemplifies how the incarcerated body is morphed into a voice which subsequently progresses towards a reservoir of memory. That is to say, incarcerated memory as an aspect of political memory was designed to structure individual's understanding in a way that does not only thwart their hopes but also shapes their political imagination. Moreover, this narrative not only displays the depth of personal pain, but it also draws our attention to the manners in which such experiences configure political thought and action highlighting the intersection between personal suffering and collective political identity.

What El Bouih's traumatized experience underlines about corporeal memory is the way in which the state seeks to control prisoners as part of its broader governance and regulation of life, effectively (re)shaping the political memory. It follows that, as Gerard. A. Hauser's notes in his *Prisoners of Conscience: Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency* (2013), "each prisoner's body is a biopolitical node" (Hauser, 2012, p. 108). In the logic of incarceration, as presented by Hauser, the above-cited passage from *Talk of Darkness* can be read as a powerful testament to how the body, through its suffering, becomes a repository of political memory. In this perspective, the incarcerated body remains a form of memory that is not merely personal but deeply political. The torture that is visited upon the narrator and her inmates is not just a ferocious act of cruelty designed to 'teach' detainees discipline and/or instil a sense of belonging, but it is rather a deliberate exertion by the state to obliterate political resistance and impose compliance and submission. In reality, far from rehabilitating and 'reeducating' the individuals as the state would want 'us' to believe, the prison experience that El Bouih refers to as "crucifixion" (Bih, 2008, p. 6) of the body seeks to devastate human dignity at both psychological and physical levels to accomplish political ends. In the so-called "house of correction" (Bih, 2008, p. 65), a term El Bouih employs to ridicule the real/brutal conditions detainees had to endure, activists and political prisoners actually live in a perpetual state of fear and terror "most prisoners spend their time waiting in fear and terror" (Bih, 2008, p. 72) marked abrupt restrictions, broken and fake promises "too many promises, few actions, indeed no

action at all" (Bīh, 2008, p. 47). Nevertheless, the body's experience of pain, torture and annihilation mutates into a persistent vestige, that is a corporeal memory which refuses to be silenced, omitted or forgotten. Indeed, within this narrative of destruction, there exists a proclamation of resilience-the narrator's soul, despite being engulfed in torture and pain, stands 'pure', indicating a strong spirit that refuses to be abundantly intimidated and submitted by the state violence. In other words, via such as acts of self-inflicted violence, hunger strikers "use the body's physical powerlessness to overwhelm their oppressor's political power; it forces power to either bend or be exposed for its callous disregard of the lives it could save" (Hauser, 2012, p. 127). Significantly enough, the lucidity and resilience identified in El Bouih's assertion "I was defiled but my soul remained pure" (Bīh, 2008, pp. 10–11), coupled with the same resolve her inmate El Jbabdi expresses when she asserts that,

The only sources to sustain you are your conviction, patience and beliefs. Whenever you have the choice, the cause for which you are in prison deserve to live more than you do. Above all, never leave the flame of hope die out. If you are frightened for an instant, other moment will rekindle you. We call that resistance. It makes you overcome oppression because the human being and the activist within you are not lost. The existence of one depends on the continuity of the other. (Bīh, 2008, pp. 84–85)

Contrasted with the penetrating physical desecration, highlights the duality of the experience of female political prisoners, who endure a gendered form of violence that aims not only to extract information and enforce confession but to humiliate and degrade the very existence of the detainees at large. Hence, El Bouih's narrative functions on multiple levels both as a personal account of incredible suffering and as a contribution to the collective memory of a repressive historical period. Additionally, it demonstrates the existence of a subtle critique spearheaded against the mechanisms of state power that continue to wight on the nation's political consciousness. By way of recording and recollecting the atrocities and turbulent moments they have lived through, El Bouih confirms that experiences and memories of political detainees are inscribed into the broader historical narrative, confronting both the state's efforts to liquidate their memories and the societal proclivity towards a sense of collective oblivion. In this respect, corporeal memory "is not only susceptible to changes, it is itself a powerful agent of change" (Assmann & Shortt, 2012, p. 4). In short, El Bouih's excerpt from *Talk of Darkness* stands for two significant facts. While it charts the enduring legacy of political violence, it also stands as a moving witness that opens the horizon for vigorous debate about truth-telling, decency and democracy.

Furthermore, there are also the incarcerated corporeal memories of the hunger strike, when the prisoner, in a cruel twist of fate, assumes the role of being 'her owner tormentor', as El Bouih affirms "we had to do violence to ourselves. We had to consider that death was easier that the situation forced on us" (Bīh, 2008, p. 23) metaphorically devouring herself in a significant act of protest because she and her inmates are denied the basics of a decent life even while inside prison. Drawing from Hauser's view on the manipulative use of corporeality in the carceral frame work, the physical body becomes the prisoner's essential source through which to emphasize, courage, will and dignity. De facto, El Bouih's body mutates tragically into both the agent and the victim of the attack spearheaded against Moroccan state repressive apparatuses. This double function of the incarcerated body serves to disclose the hidden aspect

of political violence directed against activists. This being the case, El Bouih's statement emphasizes that 'our' bodies are in a world where they must struggle for agency and voice.

Accordingly, in his *Prisoners of Conscience: Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency* (2013), Hauser offers the following explication to understand how self-inflicted violence can play a crucial role in exposing state political violence; he reminds that "the subjugated prisoner uses extreme forms of passivity to induce a state of bodily pain rather than comply with unacceptable prison conditions" (Hauser, 2012, p. 123). He goes further adding that "noncompliance that induces bodily pain is aggressive in that it denies the rationality of institutional logics and provokes a response to restore it" (Hauser, 2012, p. 123). In short, following Hauser's analysis of self-inflicted violence as a form of 'passivity' deliberately espoused by detainees to refute compliance, El Bouih's reference to self-inflicted violence discloses the extreme conditions of incarceration wherein her body becomes a site of struggle. As such, El Bouih's account of her hunger strike, which lingers in the narrator's memory and leaves a significant impact on the reader's mind, can be read as a strategy to endure pain and physical deprivation.

Indeed, El Bouih's descriptions of systemic carceral violence on the one hand, and the persistent resistance and the political determination the incarcerated activists adopted to defeat state violence on the other hand, constitute a counter-narrative to ideals of womanhood and manhood pervasive in Moroccan memory, culture and politics. With these ideas in mind, memory cannot simply be expunged through will power. The bad memories that one holds in one's mind and body do not fade away, especially when one enters through a violent act. In this vein, on the pages dedicated to the hunger strike, hunger is embodied as an inevitable and unwanted 'visitor' that comes to clench to the prisoners, amplify their scars and wounds which eventually confuse their vision and steal their sleep. Nevertheless, hunger is also a kind of 'augury' that makes things clear for the prisoners, increasing tenacity and commitment to their cause. Hence, the hunger strike is a tactic to establish a sense of self that is capable enough to live through traumatic experiences, but it is more significantly a kind of "weaponization of life" (Bargu, 2016, p. 14) in the course of exposing state violence. In this regard, El Bouih writes,

we began an open-ended hunger strike to protest our situation. We demand better food, extended time in the courtyard, the possibility of contact with other prisoners, an end to our isolation, the siege surrounding us be lifted, the opportunity to pursue academic degrees, access to books and magazines, the ability to follow events through visual, aural and print media, access to doors, and the right to obtain medicine or transfer to hospital. We had a long list of grievances because we were deprived of our most basic rights. We handed out the letter in which we announced our strike to the prison administration and made clear our most urgent demand: a trial of freedom. The administration took the usual measures: thorough searches of our cells and removal of all nourishment. After that, they left us to our fate and our choices. (Bih, 2008, p. 24)

El Bouih's excerpt eloquently highlights the deep and substantial struggle of incarcerated individuals against the dehumanizing conditions she and her inmates lived through. That is to say, it pointedly underlines the entanglement of corporeal memory and political violence in the sense that, as Banu Bargu argues, "with biopolitics, the body (whether individual or social) is reconfigured as the intermediary through which life can be accessed and

regulate" (Bargu, 2016, p. 85). Hence, the hunger strike deciphered in the excerpt is not merely a protest against the physical conditions of imprisonment but a symbolic and literal embodiment of resistance given the pivotal role the body plays in regulating life. On account of the hunger strike, the prisoners mutate their bodies into sites of political contestation, as clarified by Hauser in the following passage "the hunger striker's body, even if muted, is part of a political discourse about grievance and right" (Hauser, 2012, p. 127), where the act of deprivation becomes a way of reclaiming agency in an environment constructed to deprive them of their self-sufficiency and individuality. This self-imposed 'anguish' signifies a conscious defiance and a deliberate counteraction to the violence perpetrated upon detainees and political activists by the state, where their bodies, exposed to isolation and mistreatment, malnutrition, and lack of medical care, are transformed into the medium on which the memory of oppression is inscribed.

Additionally, the hunger strike tailed with a list of demands: better food, social interaction, and medical care, all put on the recorder can be interpreted as a tacit creative tactic adopted by the detainees to assert that there should not be an iota of doubt about the extreme inhuman conditions that political activists endure. In other words, the list of demands serves as de jure evidence to highlight the systematic denial of basic human rights as a form of political violence. In short, this violence is not only physical but psychological, as the isolation and deprivation are mainly intended to deteriorate and break the prisoners' spirits and erase their sense of self. Of course, the administration's response, marked by offensive searching/examination of detained bodies and denial of all nourishment, would gear up the prisoners' status as objects to be controlled rather than individuals with inherent rights and dignity. To put it somehow more differently, El Bouih's passage weaves the personal and the carceral, given that the latter is derivative of the political, in a way that allows her to negotiate the conflicting elements of her cultural, social and political background. In this respect, corporeal memory plays a crucial role in the view that the body's experience of hunger, torture, and isolation becomes a repository of the political violence perpetrated upon it. As such, the body is not a mere empty 'shape', but an active and agentive participant in the process of creating political memory at large.

Accordingly, then, the incarcerated political activists, corporeal suffering is a form of testimony, a living archive that resists the erasure of their identity and humanity. Hence, El Bouih's previous excerpt captures the idea that the body, in its most vulnerable state, becomes a powerful vehicle for political expression, where the memory of violence is preserved and transmitted not just through words but through the lived experience of the body itself. Rightly so, the "trial of freedom" (Bih, 2008, p. 24) they seek to accomplish is not just a legal or political outcome but a reflective assertion of their right to exist as fully human and citizens of a free nation, where naysayers can express their political ideas and ideals against a system that seeks to reduce them to mere bodies to be moulded and controlled.

Moreover, under the auspice of the hunger strike, the detainees' bodies retain and transmit the memory of resistance and resilience against the violence of all forms displaying the body to be both a political instrument and political actor in a manner Muzna Rahman clarifies in her *Hunger and postcolonial Writing* (2022) as the following "the body is interpellated and (self)-policed into being. The material body is always already filtered through the determinations of culture. Through repetitive performance and self-discipline, the body is

an emergent locus of the self – but discursively predetermined" (Rahman, 2022, p. 9). Within this framework, the hunger strike is a response to a fractured subject position that characterizes the experience of incarceration. Actually, this fragmented selfhood emanates from past repressive power dynamics; and it serves as a defiance against both the brutal carceral system and its repressive ideology. Hence, the hunger strike is an act of disobedience through which El Bouih seeks to (re)write and (re)remember her life and the lives of her inmates, whose being in the world are refined both in society and while in prison as well. In her succinct description of the hunger strike as an inevitable act of protest against systemic oppression, El Bouih declares,

The hunger strike we had waged had taken the flower of our youth, and we were ready to make still more sacrifices. What was happening to our comrades? How were they facing these problems? Were they experiencing the same tension we were? If only a bird could fly and bring their news, help us coordinate our moves with theirs. Doubtless our positions would be the same: we will not surround, and we won't cave in. (Bīh, 2008, p. 45)

El Bouih's reflections in this excerpt highlight deftly the intricate interplay between body, memory, politics and narrating, notably within the disturbing context of a hunger strike. It accentuates the fact that the protesting body has the power to obstruct the dominant order of the political sphere through the use of self-directed violence. Accordingly, the body can be transmitted and communicated as a memorial text of suffering. Being inserted into the text, the incarcerated bodies, namely El Bouih's body as well as those of her inmates, bring their creative agency right into play, placing the official narrative of carceral experience in perilous jeopardy. In a sense, the hunger strike in *Talk of Darkness* is a form of silent protest that allows the body to do the speaking. As such, it aims to disclose an indefensible mistreatment and harsh violence in the sense that it speaks the unspeakable and unspoken fears and fragments of corporeal memory. In this perspective, the body is the locus of remembrance given that, as Elaine Scarry has demonstrated in her *The body in Pain: the making and unmaking of the world* (1985), "what is remembered in the body is well remembered" (Scarry, 1987, p. 110). More significantly, El Bouih's evocative reflection and action such as "the hunger strike we had waged had taken the flower of our youth, and we were ready to make still more sacrifices" (Bīh, 2008, p. 45) suggests that the burden of being politically active and dissent might be the life of a whole generation. For El Bouih being politically active has taken a precious chapter of her personal life, her youth; but she is prudently cognizant of the fact that the hunger strike is an extreme choice that is left to the incarcerated subject to mark her existence as an activist and dissident who is fully engaged in a just cause. To enlighten this concern, Amanda Machin provides the following conception about the paradox that underlines the self-inflicted violence hunger striker commits,

the extreme suffering and pain undertaken by a hunger-striker demonstrate their dedication to the cause as well as their obdurate will and agency. Their body becomes both a weapon and its target. The hunger strike can be a highly significant form of political protest and resistance for those who lack vote, voice and status. ('Embodied Protest: The Politics of the Hunger-Strike', 2022, p.109)

This being the case, the hunger striker's objective is to have her experience be remembered as a testament to the extreme violence that characterizes the carceral institutions of the post-independent Morocco de facto marked by an escalating use of political violence. By enduring such adversity, the hunger striker tries to expose and challenge the brutality etched in the political memory of post-independent Morocco. With these ideas in mind, I can argue further that getting enmeshed in the ordeal of a hunger strike links closely the mental potentialities of self-expression with the ability to bear torture and violence. This is because pain and torture, albeit its bodily effects have the power to refine one's memory, mind and soul as evidenced by El Bouih's assertion "we had our own moral rules for how to deal with others. Even when we protested, we never lost our tempers. To communicate our protest, we retained an approach or respectful civility even when our dignity was at issue" (Bih, 2008, p. 50).

3.2. Breaking Silence: (Re)presenting Defeat and Loss

To the disgruntlement of the Moroccan political system, the survival of certain political activists and detainees has brought their traumatizing experiences to light. The very presence of these survivors, juxtaposed with their resolve to chronicle their traumatizing experiences and courageously transmit them into narratives, straightly challenges and contests the *Makhzen's* tenacious denial of ominous carceral centers such as Derb Moulay Cherif and Tazmamart, where activists and political dissidents, holding diverse political ideas and ideals, were incarcerated and tortured. In addition, such narratives shed light on the sufferings of the victims and their families as well as the impact of the 'Years of Lead' on the community at large. As such, El Bouih's *Talk of Darkness* is a form of transgressive narrative in the sense that its very existence disrupts boundaries and power relations the Moroccan authoritarian regime sought to establish through political violence that entails, arbitrary arrest⁹, ill-treatment, the disappearance and torture of political dissidents.

Talk of Darkness underlines the *Makhzen's* -ruling elite- failure to reform or eradicate dissenting voices. It is, additionally, transgressive because it entails aesthetic and subject matter that subvert gender and class frontiers calling for an all-encompassing transformation of society. In this line of thought, while the experience represented in this autobiographical narrative seems simply personal, it is anything but merely personal. Mediated through memory and language, a 'traumatizing experience' like the one of El Bouih, is already an interpretation of the past and our place in a culturally and historically specific present. *Talk of Darkness* hinges on memory as an effective medium via which the reader has access to the incarcerating experience of El Bouih and her detained co-inmates as well. The narrative entangles the past and the present and consistently moves between the two in order to provide a perspectival view on the torture, the dehumanization, and the erosion of identity enacted by the Moroccan carceral system. Within this frame, this subsection aims to investigate El Bouih's perspective on defeat and loss not only as essential elements of one's memory but because they are also central to the process of (re)constructing political memory.

⁹ Fatna El Bouih was arrested briefly for the first time as a leader of the January 24, 1974 high school student strike to protest conditions in Morocco's secondary education. Her second arrest came in 1977 for membership in 'March 23,' a Marxist group named to commemorate the Casablanca uprising of March 23, 1965. She was forcibly disappeared with other women activists from May to November 1977 into Derb Moulay Cherif, Casablanca's notorious secret torture.

Indeed, *Talk of Darkness* serves as a form of 'memorialization' for it seeks to preserve the memory of political struggles El Bouih and here detained co-inmates have had to wage against the oppressive system that aims to erase their identities, eventually deprive them of participating in the political sphere. Equally important, El Bouih is very much convinced that writing is "a way to investigate memory in its multiple manifestations – official memory, collective memory, personal memory, and woman's memory" (Diaconoff, 2009, p. 114). In a similar vein, El Bouih asserts that the main purpose of the regime is "to shatter our grand dream, to prove that it was an illusion, a mirage, and show that our theories, which grappled with the past in all its manifestations were nothing but daydreams" (Bīh, 2008, p. 27). By shattering their dreams and having their hopes dispersed, the repressive political system as embodied here by its carceral institution, aims to defeat any attempts at establishing any sense of dissenting self and dissenting community in the body politics. Evidently, this quote highlights the deep sense of defeat and loss experienced by the protagonist El Bouih and her co-inmates. It clearly clarifies the brutal reality of political repression through which the authoritarian regime of Hassan II sought to stifle voices calling for a real change that would open new horizons for citizens to politically participate in creating a better future. In a sense, it unravels how the limits of recognition and speakability can be contested, (re)configured and ultimately denied when they do not reflect and fit into the ideology of Makhzen- the ruling elite.

The use of the word 'shatter', to highlight the loss El Bouih and her inmates have been through, does not simply refer to an exclusive and minute defeat she personally experiences, but it more significantly underscores the violent, thorough destruction of their collective ideals, aspirations and 'grand dream' as dissidents and activists. She further eloquently states that "the siege was tightened, leaving us to the torture of silence and loneliness" (Bīh, 2008, p. 26). Relatedly, we can understand that the autobiographical 'I' we encounter in *Talk of Darkness* establishes, citing from Hachad's *Revisionary Narratives: Moroccan women's auto/biographical and testimonial acts* (2019), "a different form of civic and political engagement, even when it takes a plural form of self-representation." (Hachad, 2019, p. 228). In this perspective, the loss one can encounter in *Talk of Darkness* indicates both personal and collective loss. It underlines a deep sense of loss not just of tangible things such as the right to have enough food, medical care, regular family visits ad infinitum of demands that the incarcerated would want to fulfil; but it also sheds light on the loss of the very ideals that gave meaning and purpose to their political struggle.

Moreover, the feelings of defeat and loss the incarcerated activists and political dissent suffer from are definitely reinforced by the paradox the political system perfectly exemplifies both within the walls of prison institutions, where the detainees endure all forms of abuse and violence and in society at large where citizens are denied the right to openly express their political views against oppression. As spatial signifiers, prison walls indicate the lack of liberty "nothing is more cruel to a prisoner than the deprivation of freedom" (Bīh, 2008, p. 65) to move except when orders are given to the prisoner "everything took place under their orders" (Bīh, 2008, p. 5). This spatial implication explains how a sense of defeat and loss pervades El Bouih's life and the lives of her co-inmates as well. Her recounting of the loss of dignity, freedom and control over her body highlights the dehumanizing effects of political oppression. It is worthy of note that one of the tactics the incarcerators employ to 'shatter' any sense of self-awareness in tandem with exerting total control over El Bouih's body, and the bodies of her co-inmates,

is to have her eyes blindfolded so that she would not be able to recognize them. El Bouih declares "each time I was suspended, they blindfolded me to prevent me from recognizing them. How I wished I could spare them the trouble" (Bîh, 2008, p. 6). This kind of tactic is used to assert that the jailors are the ones who are exclusively entitled to initiate communication. By having her eyes blindfolded as an act of violence, El Bouih must feel defeated because she would not be able to move or to initiate any sort of communication that is necessary to navigate the world of politics.

There is another interpretation. If we examine closely this sort of systemic carceral subjugation of the political activists; it tells us that the purpose the repressive political regime seeks to achieve is to instill fear and terror that will eventually result in making the dissidents feel somehow defeated. On the other hand, the sense of loss and defeat are collectively practiced within the social spectrums. The collective dimension of defeat El Bouih alludes to is to be found in the way society treats dissenting self at times of political adversity, especially women. In a sense, the experience of defeat and loss play a crucial role in prevailing what Lolita Guimarães Guerra succinctly stresses as follows,

beyond good and bad suffering experiences lies a myriad of senses that prolong the ethical dimension of the subject in situations of pain, remorse, agony, anxiety, melancholy, depression, disease and torture Being in the darkest core of human monstrosity does not always mean loss and groundless horror. (Guimarães Guerra, 2019, p. 83)

In this regard, to show that the experience of defeat and loss often entails reflections on moral and ethical dimensions of being incarcerated as political dissident El Bouih writes that "the presence of a man with me was the pretext to sully my reputation and dishonour me. Morality dictate that I busy myself solely with my studies and mind my business, they kept repeating over and over again during the interrogation." (Bîh, 2008, p. 4)

This passage underlines the intersection of personal defeat and societal loss within the narrative. Accordingly, the presence of men in activities that are taking place within the carceral institution, such as taking the exam, and organizing teamwork between the detainees, discloses how the state's mechanisms of repression extend beyond physical violence to include moral and psychological realms. Hence, the interrogation is not merely focused on extracting information; but it also becomes an operative manner to impose a patriarchal moral order, where a woman's reputation and honour are 'weaponized', to use the term of Banu Bargu, against her. The pervasive insistence that El Bouih should focus on her studies and just 'mind her businesses reflects a societal expectation that women remain passive and disfranchised from political life. It is the 'law' of the clan or as El Bouih puts it "the clan does not forgive" (Bîh, 2008, p. 60). This compulsory moral framework highlights an unbearable loss of agency and autonomy, as the state seeks to define and limit what is permissible for women. The attempt to taint and 'sully' her reputation accentuates a deep clumsy and gendered aspect of defeat, where the personal and political are inextricably imbricated.

Furthermore, El Bouih's above-mentioned quote shows how the repression of political dissent, particularly women, is strengthened by the reinforcement of patriarchal norms, leading to a dual sense of defeat. At one level, El Bouih experienced defeat as a political activist whose voice should be nullified. At another level, she experienced defeat as a woman in a society that

seeks to dominate her behaviour and sets limits on her role on a basis that disrespects her integrity in society as a woman, citizen and mother. This loss is depicted not just as a defeat for individuals but as an obstruction for the nation as a whole, where the potential for progress and reform is violently curbed. With this in mind, *Talk of Darkness* is a form of self-representation that is predicated on weaving the personal and the political in order to draw our attention to the ways in which defeat and loss are politically loaded as they seek to activate the 'we' of the nation. The following excerpt from *Talk of Darkness* implicitly indicates two things. On the one hand, it resonates with the national voice because it is subtly identified with the national anthem. On the other hand, it stands for what Naima Hachad refers to as the "collective self" (Hachad, 2019, p. 103) in the act of self-representation. In her wordings, El Bouih states "We burst into tears and anthems. Our means were our tears and our tongues" (Bih, 2008, p. 18). This point is adroitly explored by Suellen Diacinoff in *The Myth of the Silent Woman Moroccan Writers* (2009) wherein she writes that "El Bouih's text, which is both artful and artless, poetic and political, suffused with an 'I' that remains unwilling to speak exclusively in terms of personal experience and that seeks to activate the 'we' of the nation." (Diacinoff, 2009, p. 115)

Moreover, of the various descriptions of defeat and loss in El Bouih's narrative, what stands out are the extended descriptions of her incarcerated co-inmates' severe hunger which I discussed in the previous subsection. The death of Saida Menebhi has a deep impact on El Bouih's representation of her 'self' both as a political activist and more importantly as woman. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, El Bouih's representation of these issues serves to implicitly reflect the regime's cruelty. Significantly, endowed with high self-esteem as a well-educated political activist, El Bouih bewails, above all, the loss of identity and dignity she and her fellow incarcerated political inmates had to endure while in prison, as evinced in the following assertion "From now on, your name is Rachid. You cannot move or speak unless you hear your name, which is Rachid." That was the beginning of the destruction of my identity" (Bih, 2008, p. 5). It follows that El Bouih deciphers how incarcerated political activists are regularly degraded into mere numbers, despoiled of their names, and bereaved of their friends, as an embodiment of the loss of personal and social identity. Loss and defeat, in this scheme of things, in Fatna EL Bouih's *Talk of Darkness* are predicated on the erasure of individuality as they are premeditated to eliminate the prisoners' sense of self and political agency in order to subjugate their will to change. In aggregate, what is so worth thinking about is that the Moroccan political past is disturbing, particularly Years of Lead.

In a similar vein, one of the shocking experiences that cannot escape her mind, and gloomily makes her feel defeated and lost, is when one of her inmates gave birth to a child. The mother blessed with a child was in a dire need of help and assessment, but El Bouih was confronted with the fact she actually could do nothing, nor was she able to intervene as a woman to ease the suffering and pain this lady endured while in such a perilous situation in her life, and in one of the darkest places in the world. Like many abused and traumatized political activists and victims, El Bouih is cognizant of the fact that resuscitating the past back to life is a process that requires some courage and some ordering. In this vein, the following excerpt from *Talk of Darkness* describes grievously a state of frailty and susceptibility that shockingly dismantles El Bouih's existence and etches deeply into her emotional memory to manifest itself in disparagement and grief about any positive change. The scene El Bouih deciphers in the

passage I attached below is very shocking. It highlights a deeply traumatic experience she and her inmates endured. It suggests that defeat should be treated neither as an exclusive personal experience nor as a collective one because it intricately engages both. Now, relating to the experience of loss and defeat, El Bouih writes,

There was no time for the ambulance, so the vehicle used to transport prisoners was deployed. The more time passed, the slower the process, the less hope there was of saving the mother and newborn. There was nothing I could do from my peephole except watch and reflect. This powerless mother didn't utter a word- prison had tied her tongue- even when she was in labor and there were no powerful drugs to ease her acute pain. She neither screamed nor asked for help, but sneaked into the washroom and drank the pain alone until her baby's cry betrayed her and took away her freedom to hide. (Bīh, 2008, p. 59)

In other words, it can be said that El Bouih's experience of defeat and loss is twofold. First, as an incarcerated activist whose political struggles with the repressive regime are centered around political ideas and ideals that can help resolve the challenges facing Morocco. El Bouih and her co-inmates are well aware of the fact that real change is possible when women's voices and votes are taken seriously. Second, as a woman born into a society where her fellow women are still treated as subjects whose fundamental job is customarily limited to looking after children and taking care of their husbands. It is indeed "double violence" (Bīh, 2008, p. 21). Simply, this loss leaves her more vulnerable in a society where women are often marginalized in reverence to culture and religion. In short, it follows that the abovementioned passage stresses powerfully the fact that El Bouih and her co-inmates are pushed into a situation designed to instigate anguish and hesitation. She is compelled to choose either to resist and provide her help to the mother in a moment of acute pain and vulnerability, hence facing the consequences, or humble herself by keeping silent and submitting to the orders of incarceration. This situation left El Bouih lost, defeated and paralyzed " There was nothing I could do from my peephole except watch and reflect" (Bīh, 2008, p. 59). She knew the consequences of taking the initiative to help the mother may range from verbal harassment by the guards to crucial physical treatment. She must accept the reality of incarceration. In this view, El Bouih goes further to suggest that the newborn's cry, which inadvertently prevails over the mother's hidden suffering and pain, underscores the inevitability of defeat in the mother endeavours to hide her pain and uphold control over her circumstances. Accordingly, the repressive regime is to blame for this tragic event, because it took place in one of its institutions that is ironically established as "a house of correction" (Bīh, 2008, p. 69) wherein 'criminals' irrespective of who they might be would learn discipline, respect and be prepared to enjoy life anew. Moreover, For El Bouih, the mother's silence and inability to cry out for help signify a profound defeat and loss at both psychological and physical levels. It highlights the lack of agency due to systematic subjugation that is being imposed on the incarcerated. The lack of timely medical care and the slow bureaucratic procedures are all systemic and deliberate actions intended not only to quash the hope and aspiration the incarcerated have long cultivated but also to strip away their dignity, autonomy and control over their bodies. As such, they, El Bouih and her inmates are subject to "personal defacement with the loss of their names, the loss of their civilian clothing, the loss of spatial autonomy, and the loss of multiple roles by which the free person structures daily life and constructs personal identity" (Hauser, 2012, pp. 68–69). The term 'personal

defacement' is helpful to understand how the regime through its carceral institutions sought to erase the detainees' identities, control their bodies, and subjugate them to the will of power as El Bouih succinctly puts it "there was nothing left to confiscate since they were stripped of the most important thing- their dignity" (Bīh, 2008, p. 48). Above all this process involves state efforts to manipulate people's conception of the brutal and traumatized events and experiences that took place in the past. In so doing, the state will be able (re)write part of national history in a manner that serves its ideology and interests. It, effectively, works to dictate the findings of self-awareness activists, writers and intellectuals seek to sustain.

To have political activists stripped of their dignity and identity, because they courageously voice out their anger and discontent against all forms of oppression and marginalization is an emblematic act of setting in motion submission at both personal and collective levels. Additionally, displacement and fragmentation to which El Bouih and her co-inmates were subjected seem to render assigning meaning to life after incarceration quite difficult. They suffered from traumatic disruptions that engendered an ambivalent, precarious and uncertain approach to life as evinced in the following statement "I didn't feel the passing of time, but I did feel lost and afraid" (Bīh, 2008, p. 48). In this regard, El Bouih and her inmates appeared characteristically terrified and isolated, as symptom of what Peter Marris termed in his book *Loss and Change* (2015) as "collective losses" (Marris, 1986, p. 154), only to bear the wight of their trauma all alone in a world that pays no merry to their sufferings. They were enmeshed in a perpetual state of grief and despair, endlessly bewailing the loss of a community that had once been their refuge. This deep sense of loss was exacerbated by an overwhelming feeling of defeat, as they, El Bouih and her inmates, recognized that the bonds and shared experiences that shaped their personalities and gave meaning to who they become had been irretrievably fragmented and shattered due to an oppressive state apparatus. In the following passage, we can find a clear embodiment of defeat and loss that relentlessly seemed to push El Bouih to draw a dolorous picture of what has become of her life and the lives of her co-inmates at large. In her words, she proclaims,

She wants to return to the village with gifts for all the children: joy in learning, clothing, lunch, and play. She wants to see them dressed in bright colors, and smiling. How grand is her dream, how cruel is reality? She looks at her mother and tries to hide her weaknesses with a false equanimity and does not escape her mother. She quickly brings their visit to an end and goes to the courtyard searching for space to stroll. In vain. She buries her head in the pillow, seeking asleep. The female guard comes back and turns off the light. (Bīh, 2008, pp. 33–34)

The idea that loss and defeat are violently inscribed into the body and soul of El Bouih and her co-inmates through traumatizing experiences they had been through stresses the fact that change be it social, cultural, or political can be accomplished on condition that the past is (re)read and (re)presented in a manner that respects and acknowledges the suffering and torture of the victims for we know that, as Sullen Diaconoff has confirmed, "by telling their stories before the nation, the victims of abuse were seeking not revenge so much as recognition of the injustices both they and the nation had suffered under a brutal regime" (Diaconoff, 2009, p. 110). In short, El Bouih suggests that the Moroccan regime must reconcile with the past by recognizing the political violence that was visited upon activists and victims if it is to avoid betraying the values and promises of the modern democratic Morocco it claims to protect. In

this case, El Bouih's narrative is not just a recounting of personal suffering and traumatizing experience, but a complex investigation of how individuals and communities navigate the brutal realities of political repression. In sum, El Bouih's narrative serves as a 'work of memory' that seeks to denounce oppression and speak out as a 'representative' of its victims. As such, it aims to establish a distinct narrative that contributes to the integration and insertion of the victims of past political violence into the collective memory of the country. Suffice it to say that conscience and political memory are essential to the process of building a modern nation where loss and defeat, be them individual or collective, are to be interpreted and 'performed' in manners that serve the national interest, but at the same time does not deny the rights of the individuals to (re)write their experiences. This process involves the experiences and memories of former political activists play a vital role in reminding Moroccans that transcending political violence entails departing from a critical navigation of the past and recognition of the violence perpetrated against citizens regardless of their political and ideological leanings. As the nation seeks to (re)write its political culture, experiences and memories, such as the ones El Bouih articulated in *Talk of Darkness*, serve both as a critical reflection on the past and evidence of recent democratic progress.

4. FICTIONS OF MEMORY: LITERARY MEDIATIONS OF TIME, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL REMEMBERING

Furthermore, in this article, I tried to delve into the relationship between memory and literature concerning Paul Ricoeur and Astrid Erll's rigorous theories. Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* has vividly shed light on the fact that stories and narratives, through which we articulate our being in the world, are constructed in the course of time and as an endeavor to represent time as well. Seen in the light of Ricoeur's investigation of *Time and Narrative*, the interplay between literature and memory is premised on the fact that they both intricately recourse to the past in order to establish patterns of knowledge that meet the individual and collective ideas and ideals on which Identity operates. In the context of narrative construction of memory, this article explores Ricoeur's 'circle of mimeses' to understand the mnemonic presence of the past in the present. The representational mimesis of the past is a kind of narrative that looks at the temporal construction of experiences and memories displayed in a literary text by focusing on mimetic modes, namely: mimesis-1 that designates prefiguration of human understating; mimesis-2 which alludes to refiguration; and last but not least mimesis-3 which refers to configuration. The latter results from the conjunction of the world of the reader and the world of the text.

The investigative explication Ricoeur offers is constructive and, indeed, of much help to highlight the underpinnings that mark the processes of remembering. Through Ricoeur's analyses of mimetic representation of the world of action, we are able to see the nuances that serve to underline what Neumann has introduced as "fictions of memory" (Erll et al. 334). As the title indicates, fictions of memory suggest that our memories are not accountable reflections on past events and experiences. This is because it is a kind of (re)presentation influenced and shaped by the socio-cultural and political constraints germane to the contexts where time and space are symbolically loaded with significations, meanings and 'ideologies'. Closely related, in Neumann's essay on "*The Literary Representation of Memory*", we read the following:

In a broader sense, the term 'fictions of memory' refers to the stories that individuals or cultures tell about their past to answer the question "who am I?", or, collectively,

“wo are we?” These stories can be called “fictions of memory” because, more often than not, they turn out to be an imaginative (re)construction of the past in response to the current needs. (Neumann, 2008, p. 234)

It is an act of imaginative reconstruction of the past because it introduces new features into the remembered past through selection that involves omission, addition and alteration. According to Neumann, literature is characterized by "referentiality" (Neumann, 2008, p. 335) literary texts exhibits. It is a ‘referentiality’ that is predicated on a prenarrative understating that culture enacts in the course of collective remembrance. The process of remembering puts into operation a pivotal feature of a narrative that is "analepsis" (Neumann, 2008, p. 335). It is an operation that gives the human experience of time its incredibility and lucidity as it seeks to interact both retrospectively and productively with the past events and experiences that are eventually being remembered/narrated. Neumann explains deftly this process as the following "a reference frame in which each event is related to others in both a forward and backward direction: Each event is both marked by all preceding events and evokes expectations about events to come" (Neumann, 2008, p. 336). With regard to the concept of autobiographical memory, Neumann’s concept of ‘fictions of memory’ serves to explain the way in which the narrating ‘I’ reflects upon events and experiences that are staged in a narration by throwing critical light on the question of "unreliable narration" (Neumann, 2008, p. 338). The latter draws our attention to the ambiguity underlying the real world of the rememberer and the world s/he seeks to create through narrative techniques. However, the fiction of memory, as Neumann would have it, opens a welcoming room for the marginalized memories by means of "mutual perspectivization" (Neumann, 2008, p. 338) that challenges the sovereignty of one version of memory over another. Mutual perspectivization towards memory hinges on a parameter that does not privilege one reading of the past at the expense of pushing others to the margin. Instead, it facilitates the process of bringing into play predominant ideas of memory and the act of participating in the temporal order of daily experiences. In words, Neumann recapitulates the role literature plays in the process of constructing memory as the following "as a medium of cultural self-reflection, literature—through its aesthetic structure—paves the way for cultural changes" (Neumann, 2008, p. 241).

Further to the active participation of literature in the course of cultural change that Neumann has adroitly explicated, and along with Ricoeur’s rigorous insights into the intricate links between memory and literature in the optic of mimetic analyses; Erll’s intellectual engagement with the cultural formation of memory has a remarkable impact on the mnemonic aspects of literary memory construction. Erll’s contribution is founded on her conception of the mediatory function of literary text in the process of cultural memory construction. She accentuates the importance of narratives in understating how crucial historical events are mimetically remembered through processes of memory. Instead of reading a literary text as an act of imitation, Erll proposes that literature plays a crucial role not only in transmitting and preserving individual and collective memories but also in (re)shaping them. Seen in terms of its mediatory function, literature obtains the power to bridge the lacuna great historical events might cause from, using Erll’s vocabulary, the ‘interdiscursivity’. At the heart of this ‘polyphony’, multiple voices are given a fair space in a literary text to express a miscellaneous understanding of past events and experiences that end in distinct and contested versions of rememberings prevailed in the culture of remembrance. Taken in conjunction, Ricoeur, Erll and Neumann’s critical insights into the intricate complex nexuses between literature and

memory are constructive to further future investigation of the autobiographical construction of Memory and Self.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the intricate relationship between literature and memory unpacks as how these two symbolic systems converge to preserve and articulate human experiences. While literature has often been marginalized in contemporary discourse, it remains a crucial mechanism for constructing identity at both individual and collective levels. Through the prism of autobiographical writing, literature transcends mere storytelling in the sense that it becomes an active process of memory (re)construction, deeply intertwined with power structures, politics, and culture. The ability of literature to encode and convey memory, particularly in its role as a mnemonic medium, reflects its power to navigate and negotiate the past, constituting both national and individual narratives in significant manners. Taking key cues from the theoretical frameworks of scholars like Paul Ricoeur, Astrid Erll, and Dariush Shayegan, this article highlights the significance of narrative emplotment in the preservation and interpretation of memory. Memory, both individual and collective, is not static but is dynamically constructed through literary forms that bake experiences into coherent, meaningful narratives. The dual capacity of literature to act as both a space and a method for articulating historical events and personal recollections emphasizes its role as a bridge between past, present, and future. Ultimately, the interrelationship of literature and memory provides a profound understanding of how the past is not only remembered but also reimagined and reconstructed, ensuring that history remains a living, evolving dialogue between generations.

By and large, Ricoeur's theory of mimesis—entailing mimesis-1, mimesis-2, and mimesis-3—offers a profound framework for understanding the intricate relationship between narrative and memory. Each stage in this tripartite process highlights a different aspect of how human action, temporality, and culture intersect to engender expressive stories. In short, Mimesis-1 emphasizes the prefiguration of experience, grounded in the symbolic systems and cultural contexts that shape how we perceive and remember the world. Mimesis-2, or configuration, further enhances this by transmuted these preunderstandings into structured narratives that consent for imaginative refiguration. Last but not least, mimesis-3, refiguration, invites readers to engage with these narratives in dynamic, creative ways, allowing for a dialogue between the text and the lived experience of the reader, where cultural symbols and meanings are reinterpreted in light of personal and collective memory. Ricoeur's insights into the mediatory function of narrative illuminate the role of literature in shaping memory, not only as a reflective process of recalling past events but as a transformative act that reconfigures those events through narrative structures. By bridging memory and literature, Ricoeur accentuates the critical role of narrative in both shaping identity and making sense of the human experience across time. By the same token, Erll's examination of the cultural and social dimensions of memory further expands on this idea by highlighting the manners in which literature intercedes collective memory, using genres and narrative strategies to convey and preserve cultural identities. The interplay between Ricoeur's and Erll's perspectives offers a nuanced understanding of memory as a dynamic, socially modulated process, deeply entrenched in both individual and collective consciousness. Ultimately, the literature of memory not only reflects the past but also actively shapes how we engage with history, identity, and the ongoing process of remembrance.

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