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Counter-Fitting

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This essay on postcolonialism, genre, and Africa will jump scales (in its own version of geo-aesthetic impossibility). The general idea is not to think generic incommensurability as necessarily disabling, but rather that the ill-fitting tropes of genre identification are productively engaged in a politics of non-conformance, here elaborated as a logic of counter-fitting. Counter-fitting, what does not fit generic expectation, is not counterfeiting as false but is a politics of aesthetics in which generic authenticity is put into question by the very unevenness of cultural contact and expression. Like the counterfeit, however, the counter-fit reveals something of the logic of exchange in the circulation of genres while also calling into question the attachment to a pure representation. Drawing on this interpretation of the counterfeit, counter-fitting is less a "paradigm of difference," to borrow from V. Y. Mudimbe, but rather focuses attention on how such a material production of otherness is problematized at the level of genre. Some examples drawn from Algerian fiction will help to clarify this approach.

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Genres are always sites of antagonism—within themselves and certainly with other genres that seem intimate enough to perform a genre's identity, to assume it, to imitate it, to mess with the components of its assumed authenticity. The fact that genres are in struggle does not mean their wars of position and maneuver are simply allegories of antagonism in another discourse—class, race, gender—or socioeconomic scales of conflict—neoliberalism, globalization, environmentalism, decolonization—but one might be forgiven for thinking of them in this way, especially in literary studies where categories for and about worldliness are seen as an unencumbered "gift" for field justification, usefulness, and "real-world" practicality in the knowledge industries. Such correlations, and incommensurability, are not so fanciful if one takes the position that generic identity and difference are materially determined and determining and are active in dialectical processes of cultural production and circulation. The caveat, which takes the form of a determinate symptom, is that genre's modes of dissemblance and dissemination are historical and meaningful in specific ways yet are not outside all those other routes to understanding and change. This means, for instance, that genre has the material imprint of combined and uneven development (a concept derived principally

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from Trotsky's provocative formulation)[1] but not necessarily the implications of such relation at another scale, say, the world system. Navigating the combined and uneven development of genres among themselves with and against the combined and uneven development of the world system might seem a forlorn task, despite what I take to be an exemplary project of this kind in the work of the Warwick Research Collective (WReC).[2] If my version of what is clearly a cultural materialist problematic appears more circumspect, it is because I believe differences in discursive scale are as much a dialectical impasse as they are a royal road to a "geography of literary forms," as Franco Moretti puts it (that Moretti will qualify the notion with "possible" vastly understates the problem and rarely encumbers the elaboration that follows it).[3] Such an impossible itinerary, however, is vital to the continuing project of postcolonialism if by post-colonialism we mean the concrete ways in which decolonization can not only be intensified but made adequate to thinking the world system as such. While the following argument on postcolonialism, genre, and Africa will jump scales (in its own version of geo-aesthetic impossibility) to address this challenge, the general idea is not to think incommensurability as necessarily disabling but rather that the ill-fitting tropes of genre identification are productively engaged in a politics of non-conformance, to be elaborated as a logic of counter-fitting. Counter-fitting, what does not fit generic expectation, is not counterfeiting as false but is a politics of aesthetics in which generic authenticity is put into question by the very unevenness of cultural contact and expression. Like the counterfeit, however, the counter-fit reveals something of the logic of exchange in the circulation of genres while also calling into question the attachment to a pure representation. Drawing on this interpretation of the counterfeit, counter-fitting is less a "paradigm of difference," to borrow from V. Y. Mudimbe,[4] but rather focuses attention on how such a material production of otherness is problematized at the level of genre. This means I will be thinking of genre in the cuts between its presumed primary expressions (say, the novel) and in its subgenres (science fiction). In postcoloniality, what is proper to genre is necessarily not just about appropriateness but appropriation. The term *genre fiction* is particularly freighted for postcolonial critique because it places a supplementary value judgment on what is already a hierarchy between core and periphery, culture and its popular expressions. Counter-fitting is a way to measure generic unease rather than perceived popular inferiority and tends toward a dehierarchization more consonant with the claims of decolonization both in and between specific genres. What is literary about a genre is precisely the space of postcolonial contestation.

1 Trotsky, of course, is trying to understand the peculiarities of Russian history and, while the ideas in general stretch through Lenin to Engels, Trotsky's contribution remains a pertinent provocation in terms of the present. See Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman. Vol. 1. (Chicago: Haymarket, 2008), 5.

2 See, WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015). As a materialist understanding and theorization of world literature, this work is crucial. Whether world literature as a project occludes the politics of post-colonialism must await another occasion.

3 Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1996), 50. This book announces more than any other the possibility of genre as world system.

4 V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii.

Within the antinomies of modernity, already a contradictory matrix of competing discourses, the designation "African postcolonial genres" is both assured and necessarily problematic, akin to the "problem spaces" outlined by David Scott in his critique of modernity's reach in the Caribbean postcolonial context (*Conscripts of Modernity*).[5] One of Scott's ideas is that postcolonialism itself has been burdened by a kind of generic méconnaissance. If, for instance, anti-colonialism often enthusiastically embraced the revolutionary fervor of romanticism (say, the Shelley of "The Masque of Anarchy," or C.L.R. James's initial reading of Haitian Jacobinism) such redemptive discourse can function as an impediment within contemporary contingencies, where too many rendezvous of victory have devolved into dependency, violent conflagration, and authoritarianism. For Scott, the operative generic frame is tragedy (something Scott follows in James's reworking of his narrative of the Haitian revolution in the second edition of *The Black Jacobins*).[6] Of particular interest is the logic of temporality this entails rather than the individualist assumptions that might be made of revolutionary figures themselves. Revolutionary romanticism in general is held to embrace the Enlightenment's position on rupture and intense transformation, whereas postcolonial tragedy resists the teleological resolution of revolution and the kinds of predictive narrative that make the effulgence of defeat so disabling.[7] Borrowing from Hayden White (via Northrop Frye) on "emplotment," Scott finds the contingency clauses of tragedy more open and prone to reversal, elements that find time itself "out of joint" and conditional.[8] Scott's point is not to reject the revolutionary ardor that opposed and defeated imperial powers but is rather to think through the extent to which this constitutes a bar on future possibility by not addressing the dilemmas of modernity and the uncertainties it proffers. There are several problems here for the current critique, chief among them the scale of narrative and the function of flaws.

When it comes to decolonization, carefully plotted narratives caught between romance and tragedy are as reductive as reading modernity as a European script. The argument is not against some form of classification but that the failures of anti-colonialism are not the inevitable outcome of generic destiny, or even the idea that Hegelianism (of the James variety) can only follow the more idealistic arc of a Hegel's Aufhebung. True, White's identification of four modes of emplotment in Western literary history as romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire constitutes a provocative heuristic, but they are at best tendencies rather than historiographic truths, aesthetic genres as history rather than history caught in the imperatives of social being. Even Scott's reliance on White's "metahistory" is mildly ironic, given that White uses emplotment to ward off versions of

5 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

6 See, C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

7 The literature linking romanticism and revolution in this way is extensive although not always as circumspect. See, for instance, Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). It is certainly true the roles of Marxism and socialism in revolutions of the global south have been contentious; whether romanticism is fully consonant with anti-capitalism is also worth debating.

8 Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). The importance of White's tropological historiography cannot be overemphasized, although he does not merely seek to reproduce Frye's categories as a historiographic method. For the difference, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957). One similarity, of course, is the general disdain for determinism of any kind.

"epistemological privilege" but here comes tragedy in that very role. On the one hand, the idealism Scott challenges is a necessary and provocative corrective to brusque assessments of revolutionary struggle; on the other hand, it is not clear that generic revision sufficiently captures the narrative logics in play. In short, the generic insistence is warranted but the logic of genre itself has been obfuscated. How? Tragedy is a powerful means to understand the limits of a post-revolutionary world, but what is its scale? One of the reasons Marx wrestled with Shakespearean texts was to test the appropriateness of genres to social change (this is, by the way, a key source of Marx's extensive literary allusions and metaphors throughout his work). Most of the time, however, the references were for rhetorical effect rather than as theoretical necessities (seen, for instance, in the difference between tragedy and farce in Marx's reading of Napoleon III).[9] One could conjecture, however, that generic invocation works mostly between the state and individual characterization rather than, say, at the level of world. Marx's adaptation of Goethe on world literature for the *Communist Manifesto* does not elicit a corresponding generic tableau, as if the space of world revolution is a scene of genre rather than being a genre itself (and this is a political and not just an aesthetic problem). For Scott, James's revolutionary ardor appears symptomatic of the "tragedy of Enlightenment," but again, one wonders if the genre is being invoked for its associative effects, its polemical and aesthetic aura, rather than as the very instance of modernity's classificatory zeal. At times tragedy as genre is crowded out by other terms in Scott's text (paradox, pathos, enigma, etc.) so it seems closer to Marx's sense but is deployed for a different meaning. It is not that in one tragedy is real and in the other it is approximate: in both, tragedy is seen to perform generic distinction but instead reveals a constitutive insufficiency so that it not only fails to fit its historical coordinates (revolution, Enlightenment, colonialism, etc.) but the very idea of genre that is supposed to anchor it. Rather than read postcolonialism as weighed down by this epistemic gap, I find it active within it so that, although generic inconsistency is co-extensive with modernity, postcolonialism troubles such simultaneity not just by multiplying genres or combining them (the hybridity hypothesis) but by questioning the scales through which genres may be normalized, even when they are at their most distinct, concrete.

Such an approach is not simply to make a virtue of flaws, as if the idea of postcolonial genres recommends itself because of what such genres fail to achieve, but it places more emphasis on the contrast between non-equivalence and false equivalence in what genres do to shape knowledge and perform difference. True, to the extent this applies to genres in general, postcolonialism might be read as its logical extension, yet another sign of its conscription to modernity. Yet it can also be thought to deconstruct the authenticity of a particular genre as predicate to the inexorability of difference, so that genre becomes the instance of differentiation itself rather than another baleful confirmation that genres live on in the capacious shadow of, for instance, cultural imperialism, or the originary myths of an already phantasmatic Western, European, or Euramerican axis. So it is not just that generic flaws are indeed generative in themselves, but that in postcolonialism they help to map a cultural terrain in which the commodification and circulation of genres is itself a false

9 See Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/.

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narrative of development that elides, either willfully or logically, the combined and uneven impress of modernity's claims at a different scale.

The genuflections of modernity always strike one as at once preternatural and perverse. However one characterizes the modern ("colonization and civilization?" as Césaire once put it),[10] human striving can make an obscenity of any discourse of putative perfectability. Yet this is not simply a remark on a predisposition to contradiction and failure, but it is a material challenge about the conditions in which modernity is made. When Zizek uses Beckett to push the point we must learn to "fail better," the idea is not some cynical condemnation of human fallibility but a reflection on human agency in the worlds we make.[11] Conversely, Jameson's polemic about a singular modernity hardly smooths the antinomies of its realization but precisely marks the historically complex processes of its substance. Cultures inevitably "represent" such elements and are also elemental to any claims about how modernity comes to be. From this perspective, decolonization, for instance, is not just "about" modernity or a reaction to its more deleterious characteristics (occupation, exploitation, deracination, etc.); instead, it is active in its historical meaning, determining the ways in which it may be understood and changing all manner of otherwise restrictive or teleological possibilities. Cultures tell the story of the malevolence of modernity and dissemble within it. Whether cultures devolve into axioms or typologies of modernity's reach is less important than the ways they constitute and are constituted.

Postcolonial genres, then, are both an aporia *for* modernity and the constitutive knot that *is* modernity. They are not the borrowed reality of Western aesthetics and protocols but what happens to modernity when it believes it cannot know itself as itself, as some origin or prescriptive certitude.[12] Genres provide categorical distinction and a kind of structural homology; they are the fitfulness of expressibility and cognition. Even if they disarticulate or present as inarticulate, their very difference articulates the logic of difference itself. Paradoxically, the life of genres pivots both on the comforts of consistency and a difference that troubles such identity. The truth of genre is in what it finds ill fitting. It is not that the latter means it is a different genre, but rather that it should be understood as genre's internal dynamic of differentiation (in other words, one that can but does not necessarily produce new genres). It can be argued that certain genres foreground such differentiation more than others and that in this function they can be read as parables of inconstancy in genres and even in modernity as such. Could this be what makes a genre postcolonial?

If, as I have suggested elsewhere, the effulgence of genres as genres is the political unconscious of modernity,[13] the historicization of genres in the specifics of their inconstancy and inconsistency marks something of modernity's story in which generic

10 Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 32.

11 As with all things Zizekian, the idea is repeated in several places but I draw this from Slavoj Zizek, "How to Begin from the Beginning," *New Left Review* 57 (May/June 2009): 43–55.

12 This is a different way, perhaps, to think of modernity "at large." The matrix of modernity and colonialism has a critical genre all of its own, and genre's relationship to it is but a subgenre. My suggestion here is that genre theory could play a greater role in understanding the dialectical dead-ends of modernity over and above its tendencies toward narrative description and typologies.

13 See, Peter Hitchcock, "The Genre of Postcoloniality," *New Literary History* 34.2 (Spring 2003): 299–330.

determination in itself lives and dies. What does not fit a genre can extend the life of genre by creating one anew, but the pointed polemic of posing postcoloniality as a genre was to consider the terms by which category crisis forms the undecidable in history—the generic distinction that yet ends it in the precise coordinates of its conceptualization, in the materialization and materiality of genre. This does not mean, however, that genres discernible in the material practices of decolonization are by definition new or potentially fatal for modernity's project. Individual instances of generic iteration can be read as the echo chamber of modernity, and particularly within cultural globalization, which has seemed to make a virtue of the instantly reproducible everywhere under the signs of commodification and market penetration. Yet in the path called modernity that postcolonialism makes and makes differently, generic inconstancy sets something of a task: the flawed genre is a ground both to "fail better" and to fathom an alternative to the received wisdoms of existential plight.

The real of generic inconstancy is modernity, which is refracted through the cultural, the political, the social, the economic. Postcolonialism is hardly outside this mesh, and the critique of genres must attend to the shape of its distinctions, the combined and uneven development of the world system in which these elements cross, intertwine, and press cultural possibility. This is in part what I mean by counter-fitting, which takes up the thorny question of whether postcolonialism follows modernity falsely and whether postcolonial genres intend to fit modernity's others except by counterfeiting, a "principle of contamination," as Derrida puts it, that both addresses and muddles the laws of production and circulation (of people, money, commodities, cultures, including the novel) that modernity is deemed to constitute and bequeath.[14] The importance of genre in decolonization pivots on the ways in which it is both created and conditioned, adapted and adulterated, reproduced and purloined, refused and refracted, simultaneously invoked and displaced. These are not the boundaries or necessarily the binaries of genre. The inconstancy of genre is not predetermined as postcolonial, but there remains a greater political and cultural possibility in continuing processes of decolonization already primed to misappropriate appropriation in the name of modernity, which is the sublation of colonization itself.

The idea of genre is dangerous within postcolonial prerogatives because an association with modernity's reach might suggest that culture does not predate its classifications or that its genealogical foundations lead principally from ancient Romans or Greeks. Genre is not simply a description of cultural practices but is a specific historical process of materialization and classification (again, uneven and combined). Generic profusion appears to make of genre a receding horizon, yet the moment of a genre seems by contrast quite distinct (even in its repetition). There is a metonymic ambivalence between the particular genre and its concept, one in which causes and effects are maddeningly entwined. Postcolonialism in itself does not adjudicate these substitutions (and indeed harbors its own forms of critical meta-lepsis); within the material history of decolonization, however, an attention to genre asks pertinent questions about how culture is lived differently because of and despite modernity's colonial project. From this perspective, genre helps demystify the notion

14 See, Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, trans. Avital Ronell (Chicago, 1981), 51–77.

modernity is elsewhere in the global south and speaks crucially to the ways in which interrelation is conceptualized and materialized in a complex world system. Do some genres do this better than others? Is this the point in postcolonial literary analysis where, for all the talk of generic multiplicity, the critic deftly pulls the novel out of the hat as that magic (if not magically realist) super genre primed to tell, in English or translation, the true story of decolonization in fiction?

Obviously, the novel warrants attention as genre because its story is so closely tied to forces of colonization in both their extension and attenuation.[15] The worry is always that the novel does too much of this work, as if it is the marquee metonym for how decolonization takes place. If the novel is the hegemonic genre of modernity (debatable, especially if historicized), surely the answer would be to clear more space in postcolonial studies by not continually returning to the novel's somewhat contestable centrality? Novelization, as Bakhtin called it, has a certain inexorability about it, as if it is the genre's narrative drive to consume other genres and transform them into extended fiction.[16] Franco Moretti, in his comments in "Lukács's Theory of the Novel," suggests Lukács is not really giving us the novel but a theory about "the transformation of social existence."[17] No individual novel or group of novels does this, of course (nor even the more capacious category of fiction as form), but the point is about the genre's intimacy with that process (and its tendency to counter-fit it). One could add that novelization means not just the accumulation of these claims by claiming other genres but also novelizing to the extent it becomes fiction as form rather than its generic modification (What is fiction if novel is form?). At least three levels of counter-fitting are implied from these comments. First, processes of transformation are complex and contradictory, and whatever the plasticity of the novel as genre (its capacity to novelize), a fiction is not simply commensurate with or adequate to the scale of social change. Second, the novel is fitful about itself, restless about the terms of genre so that is always trying to outrun itself much more than social existence per se. But third, what is fitting or not may be linked to what is appropriate to a specific social space, and here the novel carries another question of genre, a generic question about the context of cultural expression, what Edward Said once called its "worldliness."[18] Other genres do this, of course, and primary speech genres generally have greater social embeddedness than secondary written ones (a contention, even in Bakhtin's schema from which this is drawn), but the novel is an interrogative space where generic challenges are deeply imbricated with the grounds of social possibility, which includes the opening that, because all genres are historical, the novel itself can be overreached (in the same way that modernity is singular because it is historical).

15 The literature on this synergy is extensive, including within this journal. An early foray in this regard is Firdous Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Of course, whether decolonization displaces the genre within its own history is more problematic, although novelization clearly speaks to this process.

16 My reading of this includes: "Novelization and Serialization," *Bakhtiniana, São Paulo* 11.1 (January/April 2016): 165–82. Bakhtin's elaboration on the concept is to be found chiefly in M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

17 Franco Moretti, "Lukács's Theory of the Novel," *New Left Review* 91 (January/February 2014): 39–42.

18 This idea can be read across much of Said's work but see, for instance, Edward Said, *The World, The Text, and The Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

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Let us think of this in terms of novelization in North Africa, and especially in the colonial/decolonizing nexus that is Algeria. Genealogies of the novel in the region are by now well established, but because of colonial history France and French are the predominant referents rather than a reading of this process within a combined and uneven development across the space of modernity (what comes with capitalism, for instance, is not outside lineaments of what is distinctly Arab, or Berber, or Muslim, etc.). Because I have already invoked allegory, the counterfeit correlative may well be postcolonial theory itself, which always seems to be overwritten by postmodern and poststructuralist prerogatives (although this is not the subject of the present essay, it seems to me the schisms might be more productive when mapped onto the politics and poetics of modernity as a whole). Assia Djebar's writing is always interrogative about what makes up novels, their adequacy for the deep structures of history that formed the first circle of her inquiry. This is both a feminist and postcolonial concern with an almost literal power of inscription, here read as a generic challenge.[19] On one level, Djebar rendered novelization as a fraught negotiation between the silences of the French colonial archive and an orality in Berber narrative, one that simultaneously addressed a feminist longue durée critiquing North African patriarchal formations (traditional, religious, capitalist); on another level, novelization permits a kind of materialization of what makes decolonization necessary. Such a historical necessity mediates the work of other writers, of course, and much more than comparatism is at stake in the tenor of this consonance between, for instance, Djebar and Leïla Sebbar on Scheherazade/Sherazade. Djebar's novels are not only as episodic as her short stories but are as compositional as her films, so that any generic insistence comes with a doubt whether it permits an Algerian identity to coalesce. Djebar often wanted less to invent a memory than to test whether the novel could inscribe the real of memory from colonial conditions of interdiction. For some, the short story collection *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (*Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*) is just fragmented enough to be a novel (a confusion that is not the monopoly of Wikipedia); for others, its messy irreconcilability is a sign of Djebar's failure to compose, that a "severed sound" as she puts it, is only really a rationalization of an inability to articulate. Djebar's generic uneasiness is described as a search, perhaps for an authentic self otherwise denied by the reach of colonial representation. Yet the very title of the collection messes with genre and form as it deigns to write over Delacroix's painting of the same name, calling into question its point of view and *perspectivo* while expressing a simultaneous incredulity about whether writing can break women free from their compartmentalization, seclusion, and interiority among the norms of Algerian culture when genres themselves seem to mimic these very limits.

19 Relevant texts with an overview in this regard include Jane Hiddleston, *Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria* (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Mildred P. Mortimer, *Assia Djebar* (Philadelphia: CELFAN Editions, 1988); Priscilla Ringrose *Assia Djebar: In Dialogue with Feminisms* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006). The special issue of *L'esprit createur* 48 (Winter 2008) edited by Anne Donadey on Djebar's *L'amour: la fantasia* is especially useful in this regard. My contributions include chapters on Djebar in Peter Hitchcock, *Imaginary States: Studies in Cultural Transnationalism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003)and *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). See also Peter Hitchcock, "The Scriptible Voice and the Space of Silence: Assia Djebar's Algeria," *Bucknell Review*, special issue: "Bakhtin and the Nation," 43.2 (2000): 134–49.

Djebar's (and Assia Trabelsi's) translation at that time of Nawal el Saadawi's *Dar el Addab* as *Ferdaous: une voix en enfer* (translated into English by Sherif Hetata as *Woman at Point Zero*) is also part of this material distillation, a specific feminist undoing, a generic demystification.[20] As Djebar writes out or elaborates such pressing dilemmas, her novels increasingly become suffused with an air of insufficiency, of generic failure; a self-doubt, perhaps, but also a circumscription about scriptability, about the terms of history as memory and memorialization. Indeed, one of her most significant texts of the civil war, *Le blanc de l'Algérie*, is described as a *récit*, an artful hybridization of memorialization as narrative and music (a dirge of sorts) that is simultaneously deeply historical and personal.[21] Emily Apter has explored this narrative mode as an "untranslatable Algeria," which is a conceit about the agon of translation rather than actual translations.[22] This is also a broader question of neoliberalism's reproduction of Africa as once more an inscrutable space when the norms of transparency do not seem to fit. In this way, *Le blanc de l'Algérie* is intentionally difficult as Djebar unpicks the inscrutable with the opaque and tempts transparency with offers of Algeria as a phantasm of the blank page (because the book is occasioned by the murder of close friends during the Algerian civil war, the blankness here is a shroud, the whiteness funereal). Anamnesis is a postcolonial aporia for genre: How does the past persist, especially if it is written over by the certitudes of colonial history or, unwritten, is assumed not to exist at all? Is the idea to fit memory to history or to make writing counter-fit its role as some form of postcolonial rapprochement with the violence of colonial epistemes? This is more than a question of technique or political élan, of course, but touches on writing's social roles, especially for a postcolonialism under the sign of globalization. If, for instance, the worldliness of the postcolonial novel is a generic insistence on the power of situatedness, this is both about actual locations *and* processes of locatability: it is a kind of cosmopolitan consciousness that can know a place in its expression but can actively place as an elision of its generic materiality. Was Djebar able to measure this unevenness in her practice of writing and in its profession?

It is important to unthink decolonization as making a virtue of a generic dilemma by focusing not on the ease of novelization but its limits, its incapacities, and yet in Djebar's writing she attempts to figure the conveniences of the novel, its normative claims in an increasingly transnational public sphere, as a problem for struggle, particularly if the writer herself is interpellated to perform all that is a complex cultural constellation, "the Algerian woman writer," when Djebar's own relationship to each element of the designation was profoundly exotopic as well as introspective. Like many other novelists in the great wake of anti-colonialism and postcolonial delinking (and in the North African context, this generational outlook would include Khatibi, Yacine, Dib, and Chraïbi), Djebar found herself valorized within a cultural symbolic, commodified according to the whims of a global market predisposed to apparent

20 Nawal el Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*, trans. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Press, 2015); Nawal el Saadawi, *Ferdaous, une voix en enfer*, trans. Assia Djebar and Assia Trebelsi (Paris: Des Femmes, 1981).
21 See Assia Djebar, *Le blanc de l'Algérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995). Translated as *Algerian White*, trans. David Kelley and Marjolijn De Jager (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).
22 See, Emily Apter, "Untranslatable Algeria," *Parallax* 4.2 (April–June 1998): 47–59. This is part of a special issue on "Translating 'Algeria'" focused on the civil war in Algeria.

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exotic tales from afar and the object of an institutional logic with a predilection to accumulate "others" and difference in the name of global academic branding rather than a more radical inclusiveness. However much Djebar might have counter-fit the novel, she was deemed a good fit for the role of postcolonial writer "elsewhere." Obviously, I do not question her motives on this issue but raise it as always already a sign of combined and uneven relations in modernity as global. We cannot only think of the writing if the world system is at stake. Altlhough there are other Algerian writers who more recently have been identified in this way (incuding Ahlam Mosteghanemi, whose Algeria Trilogy contrasts the readerly popular to Djebar's incomplete Algerian Quartet as writerly marginal), Djebar thought of the role as an aesthetic challenge rather than as a professional alibi. What genre is narrative as a "thickening silence" ("le silence s'épaississant")?[23] At what point does a critical modernity render the instability of genre as more than a hermeneutical privilege or practical exception but part of the texture of decolonization itself, where generic extension explodes all orderly transfers of power, including within postcolonial regimes themselves (Ngũgĩ's *Wizard of the Crow* is a stunning example of the latter in which genre becomes an allegory of its own dysfunction and the state a parody of itself)?

Genre for Djebar was like Césaire's provocative "Discours," a way of thinking about a decolonizing world that was as much absent as present and describable. Obviously, genre and postcolonialism are all over the world and place does not guarantee a braided significance. Both Algeria and Africa have established geographical and sociopolitical spaces but the force of their imaginaries is much more than coordinates themselves within actually existing globalization or modernity. Similarly, one can ascribe meaning to generic choices, but the materialization of genre is not simply a function of intent and is coterminous with an inkling of impasse in modernity's self-narration. Few would quibble with the notion that the early days of independence often found a very specific narratological purpose in, for instance, writing out the sublation of imperialism and colonialism. New freedoms were one thing, yet these included a coming to terms with all that had not been said, inscribed, imaged, and played about the experiences of colonial life. The search for the right or adequate expression was always overdetermined by legacies not altogether consonant with new archives or a generic insistence on truth procedures, a long space not best expressed by decades or individual events. Nevertheless, French colonialism in Algeria had a logic unique enough not only to produce war but to foster all kinds of creative dissemblance, genres as an inspiration in how modernity is made, and made otherwise. The historical conjuncture, to which I am only alluding to here, clearly has theoretical correlatives in writing that shuffles between poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism.

Derrida, for instance, can easily be imagined within a genealogy of continental philosophy, but when one asks "Which one?" (which continent as well as which philosophy) a different set of coordinates come into play. It is more convenient to limit this to his more ardent postcolonial expression, particularly *Monolingualism of*

23 Djebar was concerned not just with the silence of writing but the overderminations and intensities of silence within it. These articulate a contradictory archive, but the shaping of and from silence is a postcolonial prerogative.

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the Other and *L'autre cap*, but tropological unevenness and generic inconstancy are often paradoxically decisive across his writing.[24] They are also, of course, contradictory and maddeningly obtuse. For materialists briefly heartened by Derrida's spirited reflections on Marx and Marxism, his spectral reading often alighted on key components of liberal consensus rather than a more thoroughgoing deconstruction of its institutional logic.[25] To the extent Derrida's place in postcolonial studies refracts this tension (he is a *pharmakon* for theory, including deconstruction), his invocation maintains consternation in the field rather than settles it. Here, if we say not all genres that are ill-fitting of their genres necessarily counter-fit, then perhaps Derrida's thoughts on the counterfeit can explicate this aspect of the problem. I have noted elsewhere that Derrida's investigation of genre has a particular valence for postcolonial critique (for example, "Derrida's ironic declaration 'I will not mix genres' is the speaking subject of postcoloniality, the hybrid, the interstitial, the transcultural")[26] and his reading of Baudelaire's *Counterfeit Money* is similarly provocative yet necessarily in a different key.[27] At the center of the argument, of course, is the philosophy of the gift, one that pivots not only on a reading of Heidegger and Mauss but also on a core belief in the process of giving in being, the gift as gift in dissemination, an impossible exchange: "For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other gives me back or owes me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of a long-term deferral or différance."[28] Without, necessarily, "looking for noon at two o'clock," I want to suggest that the dilemma of the gift is a way to understand the dissemblance of genre for postcolonial expression. If, in Derrida's reading, the gift does not decide on truth or falsity but expresses difference between object and relation, or commodity and circulation, we might ponder the question of appropriate genres for postcolonialism as not decided by whether a genre is appropriated or indigenous. True, for Derrida the secret of the gift lies in its troubled objecthood not in its exchange as such, which becomes something of a principle for adjudicating its time, its temporal event. It is how the gift is constituted in its time that makes time one of giving. It is important to step back from this abstraction to see how the gift might pass for other truths, and no more so than when its principle mediates the real of Algerian decolonization and the gifts of colonial modernity.

In *Given Time*, Derrida begins his analysis of the gift by referencing one Madame de Maintenon, the "secret" wife of Louis XIV, whose paradoxical declaration "The King takes all my time; I give the rest to Saint-Cyr, to whom I would like

24 Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1996). Translated as Patrick Mensah, Monolingualism of the Other *or* The Prosthesis of Origin (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Jacques Derrida, *L'autre cap* (Paris: Minuit, 1991).

25 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994). His intervention did, nevertheless, resound within a ghostly Marxism after the collapse of actually existing socialism. See, for instance, Peter Hitchcock, *Oscillate Wildly: Space, Body, and Millennial Materialism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

26 Hitchcock, "The Genre of Postcoloniality," 305.

27 Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

28 Derrida, *Given Time*, 12.

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to give all"[29] becomes the ground for all manner of inconsistencies in how a gift is substantiated. De Maintenon, it is noted, was once in exile in Martinique where her father was arrested for counterfeiting, and I suppose in a game of six degrees of deconstructive imbrication a commentary on the colonial subject and its sublation might be deemed the palimpsest of Derrida's theorization. More significantly, Derrida raises the problem of the gift as that which necessitates forgetting, but a forgetting not premised on an original acknowledgment that is then repressed, but as something absolute in which the gift would be the very condition of forgetting. This remains a philosophical exercise, however (although it could provide a further undoing of Ernest Renan on forgetting and nation formation, albeit as a contaminated political unconscious), and does not mesh necessarily with Derrida's close reading of Mauss, whose book, *The Gift*, is the other occasion for the analysis.[30] Indeed, at this level the subject of the gift is a familiar deconstruction of anthropological method, one whose certitudes were/are very much at stake in decentering the subject and decolonizing the mind. Thus, what begins as an anodyne consideration of Mauss's use of a Maori proverb in which giving and taking are equivalent becomes a full-blown critique of the structuralist principles that gird Levi-Strauss's *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*.[31] In part, there is a familiar resistance to science but also an idea that what is of the gift is not to be calculated, that whatever is figured as the gift is beyond figures and certainly beyond price (the cost of exchange, debt, obligation, return). Of course, Levi-Strauss, as Derrida accentuates, praises Mauss in his introduction for attempting in *The Gift* to transcend empirical facts for an articulation of an ethnographic system and a reliance on systematicity itself. In trying to characterize Maori thoughts on Hau as exchange, however, Levi-Strauss believes Mauss hesitates between drawing "a picture of indigenous theory," or constructing "a theory of indigenous reality." In the end Mauss begins from indigenous theory, a move of which Levi-Strauss approves, but nevertheless, indigenous or Western, theory is only ever a theory, and objective critique must be sought in linguistic features, according to Levi-Strauss. Derrida's criticism of Levi-Strauss is not one more artful digression in *Given Time*, but would link in my schema to the category confusion, the interrogative in genre, that problematizes the relationship of Algeria to France and decolonizing knowledge to inscription. It is important to stress that this relationality does not in itself constitute a genre (it is more indicative of a differend or, more precisely, an antinomy),[32] just as it never arises as a subject in Derrida's analysis of *The Gift*. It is, however, the subtext of the deconstructive moment where a specific incredulity about knowledge procedures was not outside a fracturing of the colonial episteme. This is less evident in

29 Ibid., 1.

30 See Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don, forme archaique de l'echange," *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950); translated as *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990). The original essay is from 1925 and is central to the idea of the gift in anthropological discourse and beyond.

31 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1987). The original French version was published in 1950.

32 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, MN: University Of Minnesota Press, 1988). The argument begins, of course, by disorienting the genre in which the argument proceeds. I acknowledge the dispute but see it as more dialectically enmeshed.

Levi-Strauss's introduction to Mauss's text than it is in the subsequent debates about the status of the sciences of man in France as the colonized subject increasingly spoke on her own behalf. For his part, Derrida associates Levi-Strauss's procedures as vital to the formation of French structuralism, but it is also inscribed in French intellectual debate about the meaning of Algeria for what thought must become (which includes not only the critique of colonialism but a dismantling of the kind of phallocentric certitude that girds Levi-Strauss's text). Such disputation goes beyond Derrida's critique, just as the complexities of Levi-Strauss's approach go beyond the instance of his "introduction," but the point here is about reconstructing the lineaments of *Given Time* as active in the more pronounced of Derrida's writings on postcolonialism and genre. The polemical differences are enmeshed in the general problem of appropriate genres. What Derrida resists in Levi-Strauss is the idea that taxonomic difference is a key to an objective reality that does not begin with the object itself. This is a similar line of argument to that made sometime later in *Monolingualism of the Other*, where Derrida's "postcolonial identity" is decentered by whether its language is possessed (a point already noted in Djebar). Generic expression and interrelation are inexorable within cultural desire yet are also historically specific. However one characterizes Algerian paths to independence and postcolonial statehood (about which Levi-Strauss was outspoken, particularly with regard to the position of Sartre and Fanon), these are deeply insinuated in modernity's claims whose gifts are neither freely given nor received. Within colonialism, the gift of civilization is neither: it is counterfeit. The question for Derrida in this, as it is in his reading of Baudelaire's *Counterfeit Money*, is what is left to ethics and responsibility (later to be explored as debt in his book on Marx) when the very idea of time is overdetermined by exchange. To narrate modernity differently, within and despite its prescriptions, is a postcolonial problematic not because modernity is false to the realm of difference colonized in the name of progress, or civilization, or trade, but because its calculations of "event" are necessarily inadequate to the world system modernity seeks to represent. At this scale, an instance of genre is postcolonial to the extent that it counter-fits such claims, that it can be true to a genre in the way it reveals what remains unresolved in its narrative logic, the prospect of a system in which counterfeiting itself is superfluous.

Derrida, of course, never takes this position, neither in his visions of a "new international" (which in its formulation tends at once to negate his reading of Marx), nor in his relationship to Algeria, although I tend to agree with Hiddleston that regarding the latter Derrida's hesitancy might nevertheless constitute postcoloniality as itself a genre of autobiography.[33] Counter-fitting, from this perspective, might be deemed "excentricity" as singularity in Hiddelston's parlance, but I want to push this beyond a sense of personal unease or discomfort in the same way that Djebar finds a performing "I" a question for historical specificity, a place in Algeria's decolonization that seems to defy generic attribution. Autobiography certainly contaminates the "frontiers of the philosophical genre" as Hiddleston puts it, but is this also figured,

33 See Jane Hiddleston, "Derrida, Autobiography, Postcoloniality," *French Cultural Studies* 16.3 (2005): 291–304, but see also Jane Hiddleston, *Poststructuralism and Postcolonialism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010),especially the section on poststructuralism in Algeria and the chapter on Derrida. His "circonfession" shares much of the tension in graphing a self as Djebar's writing "silence on silk."

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symptomatically, in the unevenness postcolonialism represents for modernity? At what point is the generic challenge a structural antinomy in what Algeria can become? Does generic experimentation itself decide, or is it possible to think the instance or event of genre as materially overdetermined? If uneasiness marks a certain generic discomfort about genre, counter-fitting might signal the points in generic attribution where the place of genre in modernity's narrative is called into question. It does not seek a place to suture genre's "mis-givings," but intimates the generic conditions of contradictions in the world system as such, what is left to genre after all its attributes have been described.

If this is hyperbolic, excentric in the normative sense, it is only to press the geopolitical imperatives of postcolonial culture as an ongoing project rather than as a disciplinary or methodological decree (decolonization was then, world literature is now, etc.). Djebar's search for a voice commensurate with the paroxysms of the postcolony constituting the "white of Algeria" is simultaneously an inscription about history and itself an historical inscription problematized as voice and image. All that "makes" Algeria in its delinking from French largesse does not resolve itself into a new genre, or "international," but continues to offer a challenge to aesthetic understanding. If one takes a single genre, the novel, and its process, novelization, an Algeria appears, but the challenge places impossible demands of genre and scale. The novel cannot do all of the work of fiction, just as forms of fiction cannot super-adequate all the ways Algeria is expressed. One could think of this in terms of song or visuality as Djebar often did (In what language, at what place, from whose perspective?) but also at the limits of postcolonial registers, as in the insufficiencies of the state, questions of North African and Arab solidarity, the space of Islam, the lure of dependency, the impress of neocolonial desire, the persistence of tradition as a creative legacy yet also as a resource of regression, "a nightmare on the brain of the living," as Marx suggests in a different context.[34] Put in these terms genre can only have a modest mediatory function, but its active negotiations of the impossibilities of scale are generative in their own key, which is part of the historical texture of the counter-fit.

The kinds of generic change discernible in Djebar's work constitute a singular and lasting counter-fit to genre as itself a condition of the colonial episteme, that taxonomic *arché* of aesthetic distinction. Because, as Derrida points out, the law of genre prescribes its own subvention and Djebar's writing is not all or only postcolonial, the counter-fit exists principally as an intercession of sociocultural process rather than as its transformation. If globalization is both an extension and intensification of the capitalist world system, its unevenness has generic correlatives but not simply metonyms at the cultural scale. It is true an exploded globality has produced an almost inexorable plethora of genre across its surfaces as cultural "exchange" is commodified and circulated under the sign of capital. Yet postcolonial spaces are not simply reactive to what is extant in the world system and produce and multiply genre in their own way. This is particularly evident in the tensions between genres and subgenres that help to shape and are shaped by the changed priorities of postcoloniality. For instance, there is already substantial research on the kinds and range of novel writing in South Africa post-apartheid, detailed investigations about what can happen to writing when

34 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, second paragraph.

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political and economic exigencies change, and where popular genres, like detective or crime fiction, have a deep resonance in a culture seeking justice not limited to truth and reconciliation.[35] This is not the end of protest but can mediate protest by other means. Does all such writing decolonize? Just as globalization has a tendency to produce a worldliness that is alarmingly "flat" (a neoliberal conceit about all kinds of market efficacy), so generic profusion can signal as much conformity as contravention. This comes with a double bind for critique much like that traced by Derrida in his elaboration of the counterfeit. On the one hand, one can say genre guarantees its counter-fit as a function of the law of genre; on the other hand, if what discerns the counter-fit is finessed by critical practice, then has not the critic assumed the mantle of the law? Not all postcolonial writing, for instance, counter-fits its genre, but if this primarily signifies the presence of critical decision or distinction, then the term returns to its homonym in a paradoxical exchange of power. I do not mean to suggest that postcolonial approaches of this kind are a form of false currency, even if we might identify modes of criticism that have busily accrued cultural capital as "currency" per se. The prospect of world system unevenness and combination cancels through the critical act so that this too may be read in its extension and contradiction, in its location and institutional logic, in its historical and ideological fix. One need look no further than the development of postcolonial studies itself to detect elements of this dialectical drama.

I want to close with further positive signs of generic difference and differentiation within the rubric of postcolonial African genres and perhaps a warning about counter-fitting modernity. Science fiction, as a subgenre with many subgenres, does not begin in decolonization but is always already coterminous with its possibility (colonial tropes and racial capitalism being heavily sedimented in many of its variants, from the endless discovery of lost races to the articulation of Africa as a preternaturally utopian space beyond Europe). Research on the links between postcolonialism and science fiction are long-standing, but what more can be said about its decolonizing substance for postcolonial Africa?[36] Obviously, orders of time and technology in science fiction have been rightly questioned so its massive presence on the continent is not read as innocent happenstance. Conversely, the futurity of sci-fi challenges the assumption that postcolonial thinking must bend toward or emphasize a past that must be overcome; indeed, genre here is symptomatic of imaginative unease, not just with a colonial pivot, but with the kinds of present that decolonization has brought. Again, the most prominent contributing socio-historical factors, like globalization, debt dependence, authoritarianism, resource extraction, war, and migration are not

35 See, for example, J. L. Powers, "The Politics of Crime: South Africa's New Socially Conscious Genre," *World Literature Today* (March/April 2015): 30–33.

36 See, for instance, the overview in Jessica Langer, *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (London: Palgrave, 2011). The burgeoning output of Afro science fiction alone constitutes a new space of critical contention in which questions of neocolonialism and utopian rupture complicate what counts for futurity. The special issue of *Paradoxa* edited by Mark Bould and titled *Africa SF* is highly evocative in this regard. See, Mark Bould, ed., *Paradoxa* 25 (2013), http://paradoxa.com/volumes/25. Readers of this journal will be familiar with some of these debates. See, for instance,Matthew Omelsky, "'After the End Times': Postcrisis African Science Fiction," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1.1 (March 2014): 33–49; and Magalí Armillas-Tiseyra, "Afronauts: On Science Fiction and the Crisis of Possibility," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 3.3 (September 2016): 273–90.

uniform, however, and do not simply mesh with cultural expression and circulation. If, as I am suggesting, counter-fitting is not non-correspondence as much as it is constitutive disarticulation, to what extent does science fiction enact or create conditions in which this might be glimpsed or cognized? It is precisely because the history of science fiction itself is deeply insinuated in colonial fantasies and paradigms of imperial expansion that its emergence in postcolonial Africa announces at once a contested space of appropriation.

It is altogether too neat to mark Djebar's fiction as a realist dilemma over the forms of history "scriptable" in the process of Algerian decolonization, whereas intimations of science fiction offer an altogether different plane of aesthetic and hermeneutical possibility. Djebar's creativity in the archive of silence as severed sound is no less experimental than writing we now associate with Waberi's *In the United States of Africa* or Towfik's *Utopia*.[37] And the author of *L'amour: la fantasia* has a more than partial understanding of the ways in which the fantastic itself can be defamiliarized. Some of the allure of sci-fi exists in the dialectics of imaginary promise: not simply in facing an impasse in the present but pondering a future conditional that does not confirm the capacities of imagination itself. Within the current polemic this might underline postcolonialism as a false promissory note, a counterfeit revolution before modernity's "gifts" of dependency and structural adjustment. Generic counter-fitting, however, troubles such a narrative to the extent that the uncertainties of genre are interlaced with the realities of postcolonial states and all that is secured in their name. Mindful of the pitfalls of allegory, perhaps what counterfits remains equally incredulous about the dangers of false equivalence and the commodification of genres in general.

Think of this in terms of Mohammed Dib's extraordinary novel *Qui se souvient de la mer* (*Who Remembers the Sea*), published in the year Algeria declared its independence from France.[38] As Mark Bould has recently argued, although Dib was not consciously exploring the possibilities of sci-fi as genre (Dib claims not to have read any sci-fi prior to its publication), *Who Remembers the Sea* evinces many elements of generic distinction in science fiction and the limits therein: *neosemes* (shifts in meaning rather than new words as such, although Dib also includes neologisms ["spyrovirs," "iriace," etc.]), "hypagogic, hallucinatory, improvisational texts/worlds," and a fantasmagoria of structural transformations and shape-shifting highly evocative of other-worldly cognitive dissonance.[39] Dib himself, in his oft-quoted "Postface," notes that the tone in this novel resembles science fiction. With streets of minotaurs, mummies, and moles surrounded by a labyrinth of folding, mobile walls, the city at the center of the narrative (Algiers?) lets go of all ethno-geographic certitude (and indeed, Dib's fiction of the 1950s—as well as Levi-Straussian scientificity).

37 Abdourahman A. Waberi, *In the United States of Africa*, trans. David Ball and Nicole Ball (Lincoln, NE: Bison, 2009); and Ahmed Khalid Towfik, *Utopia*, trans. Chip Rossetti (Doha: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation, 2011). The former is in the tradition of the empire writing back; the latter is an Egyptian dystopia more intimately tied to the present.

38 Mohammed Dib. *Qui se souvient de la mer* (Paris: Les Editions du Seuil, 1962). Translated as *Who Remembers the Sea*, trans. Louis Tremaine (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1985).

39 Mark Bould, "From Anti-Colonial Struggle to Neoliberal Immiseration," *Paradoxa* 25 (2013): 17–45. Although the textual effects Bould identifies are significant, I tend to problematize the temporal arc at stake.

Yet, in what is clearly an experiment (which is not unusual in Dib all the way to *L'arbre à dires* [1998]) Dib indicates other possibilities. He asks "Why did Picasso paint *Guernica* as he did and not as a historical reconstruction?" This goes to the heart of a postcolonial provenance in sci-fi on the continent but also to the concrete materialization of imaginative unease. Dib continues: "In truth, it is difficult to explain entirely a way of writing that is less the application of a preconceived theory than the result of an intuition and a need that had neither form nor fixed identity before the book was begun."[40] Indeed, what Dib intuits is something of the horror of necessity in the face of horror, to somehow gather the turmoil of a present whose very irruption as event cheats a formula for it. This knot of memory and forgetting, already invoked in terms of trauma, nation, and the gifts of modernity, seeks a genre rather than confirms one (the touchstone here is as much Fanon as it is Derrida). Dib does not record the war that will reject French colonialism for independence but imagines what genre must become to measure that disturbance. Picasso's *Guernica* already belonged to a "collective unconscious" before he painted it Dib argues, a dream otherwise nameless in the horror of its instance. For Dib, *Who Remembers the Sea* is "an essay in the same genre," which is to say the edge of genre in which its new constellation might pass for more than generic insistence itself. Genre is a missing question mark rather than the substance of the title. The city in Dib's novel is a crazy map of new construction, as restless as Nafissa (the main character beyond the narrator) whose spirit often animates the action and whose conscience stands in marked contrast to, say, the calculating friend in Baudelaire's story. Perhaps the true counterfeit in postcolonial genre is not based on deceit but on the principle of non-equivalence in which the uneasy surfaces of articulation refuse the originary value of distinction for an alternative logic of exchange. What is announced as "new" in that configuration for Dib counter-fits his own expectations even if the ardor of science fiction might seem to explain them.

Modernity, however, continues to stand before such intimations of cultural change in ways that obviously do not prevent generic multiplication within postcoloniality but nevertheless shape or overdetermine the tenor of its impress. The decision over whether Dib's *Who Remembers the Sea* is science fiction might seem a relatively anodyne reflection on generic markers, yet it is also a complex reminder or memory of what is at stake in the postcolonial injunction, both that decolonization attends to new forms of global integration, in the sense that whatever the scale of community beyond colonial occupation it can only problematically comport with a world system composed in colonialism's image, and that the fact of genre in its unevenness may not grasp what is given to genre in its situatedness. Modernity's conscriptions, as Scott has warned, may produce normative descriptions, but the way that revolution is narrated also reveals a symptomatic generic unravelling. Counter-fitting, at this level, is not about finding exceptions or confirmations of generic decree per se; instead it draws attention to why, in its specific instance, genre also interrogates the fraught relationship between modernity and postcoloniality as such. We have learned from Moretti how to interpret form as force, but within the exploded globality in which decolonization remains manifest another priority continues to press: genre as struggle.

40 Dib, *Qui se souvient de la mer*, 121.

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