

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Georgette! the Quest for the Self

Abstract approved: 

Born in France of Maghrebian parents, *beurs* are holders of two cultures: Islamic and French. The refusal of these two incompatible cultures to compromise forces *beurs* into the difficult position of desiring to please both. During this existentialist quest, they might deviate from the path established by institutions and family and take refuge in a third alternative. Farida Belghoul's *Georgette!* narrates the story of a seven-year-old *beur* female who escapes the institutionalized law of the school and the religious law of the family. She rejects both her French and Islamic identities and embraces a new identity: Native American. The girl also creates an imaginary world where she rejects her human appearance, identifies with animals, and dismembers her body. This thesis analyzes *Georgette!* through two theories. The first theory is philosophical and is illustrated by the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on deterritorialization. The second is psychoanalytical and is presented in the Lacanian theory of the fragmented body.

Keywords: Farida Belghoul, *Georgette!*, *beurs*, deterritorialization, fragmented body, immigration, Maghrebian.

Georgette! The Quest for the Self

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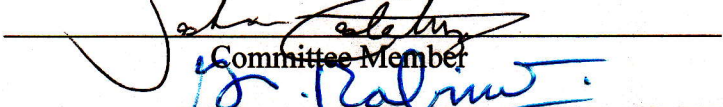
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Georgette! The Quest for the Self.

I. Introduction:

In the 1950s in the aftermath of World War II, France exploited cheap labor from its North African colonies to rebuild its infrastructure, to reconstruct its industry, and to reanimate its economy. This body of laborers was mainly composed of peasants and Bedouins escaping poverty from Algeria and Morocco. It was not until 1976 that these men were legally authorized to bring their families through an immigration decree that institutionalized family reunification (Hargreaves 18). This reunification changed the nature of immigration from temporary to permanent labor immigration. In this context a new community in France was created: the *beurs*, second generation immigrants coming from North Africa. Consequently, a new generation emerged on the French literary scene during the 1980s commonly known as “*beur* writers,” among others, Azouz Begag, Tassadith Imache and Farida Belghoul, the author of *Georgette!*. These writers, born in France from parents with foreign origins mainly from the Maghreb, former French colonies of North Africa, introduced to French society individuals who had lived in the shadow for decades. Farida Belghoul was born in Paris, on March 8th, 1957 from Algerian parents (Hargreaves 63). She is a writer, filmmaker, and activist. She was one of the figures of the *beur* movement fighting for equality during the 1980s in France that lost its battle to *SOS Racisme*² – a movement that had a more racist and separatist vision of French society. According to Michelle Laronde, a French essayist, Belghoul criticized *SOS Racisme* as a movement that viewed *beurs* as different individuals in comparison with the rest of French society, and always linked them to the color of their

skin and their origin instead of accepting them as an integral part of society. Belghoul's father moved to France in late 1940s (at that time, Algeria was still a French province). Years later, he brought his wife with whom he had five children from Kabylie in Algeria to France.³ He worked as a street sweeper in Paris and encouraged his children to get a good education (Bacholle). Relative little is known about her mother, but at the last commemoration of the 30th anniversary of *La marche des beurs* (March of *beurs*) in October 2013 in Marseille, Belghoul mentioned that she had decided to stay home to take care of her children.⁴ Currently, Belghoul is the head of a French political and social movement *Egalité et réconciliation* (Equality and Reconciliation), a movement with which Belghoul and Alain Soral collaborated – the latter a controversial French personality known for his anti-Semitic views about the Holocaust (Mestre, Zappi).

In 1986, Belghoul published *Georgette!*, a puzzling novel that deals with identity, integration and assimilation. The novel won the *Hermes Prize* and enjoyed an overwhelmingly positive reception (Bacholle).⁵ The narrator of the novel is a 7 year-old girl whose parents are Algerian immigrants. The name of the girl remains unmentioned throughout the novel as she narrates her life condensed in one day of school. The text elucidates two main aspects of *beur* culture: home and school. Home is the place where the parents are, who represent all that contrasts with French society in terms of language, culture, and religion. Usually of Arab or Berber origin from the countries of North Africa, these immigrants impart their culture and tradition to their children for the purpose to return home with a better education and a better financial situation in order to participate in the development of the motherland. This desire and concept are known as the myth of return.

Therefore, *beurs* are subject to an obligation imposed by their parents of going to a country with which they are not familiar in first place. These particular circumstances eliminate any chances of their integration into the host society. *Beurs* are also confronted with the very hard task to balance Arab traditional and religious values and French secularism. Secularism is experienced when *beurs* go to school. The French educational model based on the principals of Jules Ferry, the inventor of the mandatory laic education in 1882 (Crubellier).⁶ School is therefore a site of confrontation between the religious and traditional beliefs and secularism.

Without any doubt *Georgette!* is not only an autobiographical novel, but it is the autobiographical novel *par excellence* in its portrayal of the *beur* majority, which experiences the tension of having two worlds of reference. *Beurs* are confronted with a permanent choice in their daily lives in terms of their decision making that deals with their lifestyle, their morality, and their philosophical purposes, henceforth, it is not surprising that *Georgette!* is one of the most analyzed and written about novels, especially in North America. Considered as lands of immigration, the United States and Canada have always been the scene of integration and intercultural exchange. Thus, the interest in *Georgette!* as an immigration novel is understandable, because it treats the issue of the difficulties that individuals meet when integrating a new society. As of September 2013, 67 entries are found under the keywords *Georgette* and Farida Belghoul on *JSTOR*, 82 entries on *MLA International Bibliography*, 42 on *Dissertation and Thesis* and 2,410 on *Google Search*.

The novel explores the living conditions of the *beurs* who are usually split between two worlds, school and family, as they endeavor to belong to these two clashing

milieus. They are also both participants in their parents' history and identity as well as French identity. *Beurs* might be Arabs or Berbers; however, most of them are Muslims from former French colonies. Therefore, a binary opposition of dominant and dominated operates in a manner in which French society is seen as the oppressor and *beurs* find themselves in the position of the oppressed. On one hand, they are loyal to their parents' history, but on the other, in a schizophrenic way, they culturally and linguistically express their belonging to the host country. In other words, their identity remains an unidentified floating element between two worlds, or in a more vulgar way: *Le cul entre deux chaises* (the butt between two chairs).⁷

In this perspective, we find the protagonist of *Georgette!* caught between two worlds: the world of the school symbolized by the teacher who is the representative of modernity, secularism, and authority, and the world of the family symbolized by the father who is the guardian of tradition, religious faith, and legitimacy, a position granted by the Islamic law that stipulates that daughters are unconditionally obligated to their fathers' orders. Each party holds a completely different discourse that creates confusion for the narrator. Under these circumstances, the girl escapes reality to a third space by creating interior monologues, dismembering her body and transforming herself into an animal with the purpose of finding herself. By using symbols and metaphors, and by appropriating the identities of other characters in the novel, the narrator begins a process of self-identification. This process is not only the quest of the narrator but also, the quest of the *beur* generation which suffers from discrimination and fights in order to be recognized as an integral part of French society. To make this process clear, the novel will be analyzed through the Lacanian theory of the dismembered body and the studies of

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on deterritorialization in terms of space and time. But first, it is very important to define the meaning of the word *beur*. Even if the term has already been introduced, it is very pertinent to understand its etymology, and how it constitutes a whole social structure in French society.

II. *Beurs*, Definition, Etymology and Sociology

In the 1960s, the term *pieds-noirs* (black feet) was largely used in France to designate the European returnees from Algeria. During the same era, the term *harkis* was used to designate Arab veterans, mainly Algerians, who had served in the French army during the Algerian war (1954 -62).⁸ In the 1970s, the term Maghrebians was used to define the immigrants from North Africa that constituted cheap labor for French industry. In the 1980s, the term *beur* was coined to designate the second and third generations of immigrants in France, the descendants of North African workers who had immigrated during the last twenty-five years (Ageron).

The media contributed largely in the diffusion of the term *beur* through the creation of *Radio-Beur* in 1983 during the advent of the march against racism and for equality—a march initiated by a group of young Maghrebians known as *La marche des beurs* (The march of the *beurs*) (Laronde). For the new generation, radio was the mean that linked *beurs* together. Leila Sebbar, a French Algerian writer, who had portrayed *beur* culture, underlines the importance of radios in *Shérazade*: “[Sherazade] connaissait le nom, la fréquence, la place sur le cadran, de toutes les radios et la liste de celles qu’elle écoutait le plus souvent était chaque fois présente à sa bouche. Elle aurait pu la réciter dans l’ordre” (“[Sherazade] knew the name, the frequency, the place on the dial of all the radio and the list of those she listened to the most. She could have recited them by order”);

Sebbar 33). For the parents of *beur* children, radios have been the link with their children as well as with their own culture. It is without a doubt that this medium contributed the most during the 1980s to the spread of the word *beur*.

According to Azouz Begag, writer, politician, and economist, the term *beur* originated from French *verlan*, meaning reverse. The term *beur* is in fact the syllabic inversion of the word *Arabe* (Arab) from [a-ra-beu] to [beu-ra-a]. The elimination of the last part of the word [aa] through the phonological particularity of the apocope, which is the loss of one or multiple sounds at the end of the word, gives us the term *beur* (EI 89). In the beginning, the interpretations of the origins and the significance of the term *beur* were multiple. In *Parle mon fils parle à ta mère* (*Speak My Son Speak to Your Mother*), a short novel published in 1984 in which Leila Sebbar treats the *beur* existence in French society, she gives a complete account of the etymologies of the word *beur*. When the Maghrebian mother talks to her son, she shares Begag's theory on the linguistic origin of the term *beur* (Sebbar 27-28).

In *Georgette!*, Belghoul explores in a semi-autobiographical way the problematic nature of the *beur* condition. Even if their parents were colonized by the French and schooled by their educational system, they still remained Algerians. According to Patrick Weil, a French historian and political scientist, between 1865 and 1962, only 7000 Algerians became holders of French citizenship despite the fact that Algeria was a French department, unlike Tunisia and Morocco, which were French protectorates. People who refused to be naturalized as French explained that secularism did not recognize their religious status as Muslims. It is also important to mention that at that time naturalization was not automatic, because it was only granted at the age of twenty and after a personal

request. This refusal of naturalization meant that the parents' identity would remain both Algerian and Islamic, unlike the *beurs* who are Maghrebians, because they were born of Maghrebians parents, and French, because they were born on French soil.⁹ Their identity is not as clear as their parents', and this is the reason why *beurs* are usually victims of a double bind, thus subject to ambiguity and conflicting references.

That is why the quest for the self becomes problematic due to their belonging to two cultures, two languages, two traditions, and in general, two worlds of reference. This quest for the self may have a positive ending in *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow* by Faïza Guène, and *Le gone du chaâba* by Azouz Begag; however, in Farida Belghoul's *Georgette!*, we will see how the narrator's quest leads to a tragic ending. Of course, *beurs* are not all destined to failure. In the last twenty years, *beurs* have accessed high governmental positions: Azouz Begag, Fadila Amara, Rachida Dati were all ministers in Nicholas Sarkozy's government from 2007 to 2012; likewise, Najat Vallaud Belkacem has been a minister in François Hollande's government since 2012. However, all of these personalities stress the struggle of *beurs* to be recognized in French society.

The problematic nature of the *beur* condition is mainly expressed in the desire to survive and succeed in a society that does not recognize them. Their belonging is not accepted in a monocultural environment that accepts only one language, one culture, and one history. They are discouraged from living out the duality that defines their identity: being/appearance, interior/exterior, and subject/object. In *L'être et le néant* (1943), Jean-Paul Sartre explains existence as a journey of reconciliation between the conscience and the self, observing that these two aspects represent a duality in all human beings. He explains: "Le dualisme de l'être et du paraître ne saurait plus trouver droit de cité en

philosophie. L'apparence renvoie à la série totale des apparences et non à un réel caché” (“the dualism of the being and the appearance cannot find its legitimate place in philosophy. The appearance expresses the sum of appearances and not a hidden reality.”; Sartre 48). In other words, the appearance of *beurs* as being of a different ethnicity is not an indication of who they really are, but their visible difference accentuates their dualism in the eye of a mono-cultural society.

Beur identity remains incomplete because of the lack of reconciliation between their two worlds of reference: French society and the home, and also, because of the absence of any form of compromise by these two parties. These circumstances engender *beurs*' rejection of the offered possibilities in terms of self-identification, and make them escape both identities to find refuge in external references. We will see how the protagonist in *Georgette!* develops schizophrenia in the process of searching for herself. The narrative commences with a form of hallucination and then the imagined reincarnation of different characters and animals. From a first reading, we can tell how much the protagonist of *Georgette!* is confused. This confusion can be extrapolated to the entire *beur* community in regards of the perception of their ethno-cultural situation. Even if *beurs* are characterized by homogeneity in terms of their culture, history, and origin, sociologists agree that a form of heteronomy is witnessed at the level of *beurs*' expression and performance in French society. In *Les années banlieues* (1992), French sociologist Adil Jazouli classifies Maghrebians of France into four groups:

Jazouli's first group is the assimilationists. They are characterized by social conformism and conservatism translated by the adherence to socially dominant norms. They wish to assimilate and be assimilated to the host society through the process of

erasing their ethnic belonging, their origins, and sometimes their families. Usually they are young people who have flourished academically and who have succeeded in occupying highly ranked positions. Jazouli writes:

Ce désir fort d'assimilation peut s'expliquer par la pression exercée par un système social et culturel normatif et relativement homogène. Il permet aussi de réduire une anxiété identificatoire en suivant le chemin de la majorité qui offre une cohésion interne sécurisante. (Jazouli 27).

This strong desire to assimilate can be explained by the pressure exercised by a social and cultural normative homogeneous system. It also allows reducing an identification anxiety by following the path of the majority. This situation offers an internal and reassuring cohesion.

According to Jazouli, this group represents the risk of shifting into radicalization under the weight of racism. He argues that individuals of this group who deny their origin and completely identify themselves with French culture, represent a potential transformation of their belonging if they are discriminated against. Xenophobia and racism may engender a brutal rejection of social norms as assimilated *beurs* sometimes find refuge in the most radical forms of Islam.

At the opposite of the above mentioned group, there is a component of the new generation which strongly asserts its belonging to the socio-cultural universe of their parents. This group claims their Arab and Berber origins as a continuation of the parents' tradition in terms of history and Islamic foundation. Jazouli argues that showing its difference and singularity could be perceived as "an act of protest" (Jazouli 39). At the

same time this group ignores the social gains they acquired from French society, and the myth of return soon evaporates at the time of their first trip to the country of their parents.

The largest part of the Maghrebian population in France is characterized by a large heteronomy. This group neither expresses its belonging to France nor to North Africa. In addition to that, it has no identification reference and adopts an attitude of *laissez-faire*. This segment of the population also has an undefined personality symbolized by claiming social and historical figures external to its ethno-cultural universe. These figures are usually known to have been abused throughout history. According to Jazouli, the rejection of both identities, French and North African, results in a constant tearing represented in the failure in schools (80%), followed by a high rate of unemployment or by underpaid jobs. This category represents the highest rate of suicide, delinquency, and juvenile imprisonment (43%), male and female prostitution and drug addicts. The narrator of *Georgette!* expresses the tendency of this group to align itself with culturally external figures since she identifies herself as a Native American movie character who is completely external to her French or Algerian references.

The fourth group of young Maghrebians aims to construct a new identity by integrating both identities, French and Maghrebian. These individuals claim their right to ambiguity as they consider it is the first step on the quest for their identity. They affirm their ambivalent social and cultural origins, and they take from both cultures what appears convenient for them. This community rejects the myth of return and defends the idea that it is in France that every individual should seek his/her identity as well as a cultural and social space wherein the new identity could be expressed. This group is represented in Azouz Begag's autobiographical novel *Le gone du chaâba*, where the

young protagonist Azouz cultivates a very special friendship with his teacher who is a *pied-noir*. An intercultural exchange occurs between the boy and his teacher through the Arabic and French languages as well as through the history of the *pieds noirs* in Algeria and the life of Algerians in France. The novel is a real representation of Jazouli's fourth group; it is a chronicle written with the pen of a ten year old boy who swings back and forth from his native language to his language of adoption as he integrates Arabic words.

In *Ecartis d'identité*, Begag evokes the works of French historian Gérard Noiriel: "Il n'est pas aisé d'étudier sur un plan scientifique la question des enfants d'immigrés maghrébins dans l'espace français" ("it is not easy to scientifically study the question of the children of Maghrebian immigrants on French soil"; EI 81). The ambiguity that surrounds the *beurs* regarding identity, origin, religion, and social conditions makes the task of scientificity almost impossible because statistic studies based on ethnicity in France were prohibited by law in 1978 (Héran). At the same time, French sociologist François Héran points out that there are derogations to the law that might be granted if the study takes into consideration the consent of questioned individuals and the anonymity of the collected data. He adds that workplaces and recreational facilities are usually suitable places to perform such surveys. However, he emphasizes one particular site that represents the best target for ethnic and identity studies: the school. We observe in *Georgette!* that the school plays a big role in defining and shaping the protagonist's identity. It also represents the real setting of the novel, since all the events happen in one school day. The school also symbolizes the paradox of existence for the protagonist in particular, and for *beurs* in general. On one hand, it is the first step of integration into French society, but on the other, it represents a conflicting element that clashes with their

families' traditions and social upbringing. Thus it is very important to define the French school in terms of its history and the principals it was founded on.

III. The School, a Territory of Conflicting Ideas

The plot of *Georgette!* is set during one day of school. The storyline is divided into three parts. It starts with the narrator, a seven year old unnamed girl, waiting with her classmates in line where the teacher is distributing a penholder and inkwell to her students for a writing assignment. The student clumsily drops the inkwell and spills ink all over her hands. The young girl is embarrassed to be seen by her teacher since her hands are completely covered in ink, therefore, she does not get her notebook from her schoolbag. When the teacher notices that, she grabs the notebook and discovers that the young girl has not done her assignment. In the second part, while the students are out of class for a break, the teacher searches the girl's schoolbag where she finds chewing gum, an old sock and a little bag containing the words of the Prophet.¹⁰ After the break, the teacher convokes the girl and interviews her in a separate room. Before the girl's silence, the teacher throws all the findings in the trash. In the third part, the young girl flees the school fearing that her father will not find the little bag that contains the Prophet's words and finds refuge in a city park where she meets an old lady. She flees again to go back home, but while crossing the street, she is struck by a car.

Thus, the plot is set in two places, the school and the city park. Throughout the novel, the protagonist, who is the only narrator, uses space and time to move through events without respect for chronology, thereby transporting the reader to another place which is her house where her living conditions are exposed to the reader. Since she is seven years old, the information given cannot be highly trusted, but we learn that she

lives in an apartment in a modest neighborhood with her parents. She has a working father whom she recognizes from a very long distance when she sits by the window. Because unlike all the other fathers of the neighborhood who drive cars, he is the only person who has a bike: “Dès que je le vois dans la rue, je le reconnais immédiatement [...] c’est le seul vélo du quartier.” (“I immediately recognize him once I see him on the street [...] it is the only bike in the neighborhood.”; G 31). Her mother stays at home where she takes care of her family. She is usually in the kitchen or coming out of the kitchen. According to the girl, the mother is a woman of limited knowledge who cannot read nor write: “Elle est bête ma mère ou quoi? [...] Je lui explique l’erreur. Je recommence encore, plusieurs fois. Elle pige pas” (“Is she dumb or what? [...] I explain to her the error. I repeat again, many times. She doesn’t understand”; G 16). Along with her parents, the young girl also lives with her brother with whom she shares a bedroom: “Je suis dans mon lit ce soir-là, je dors pas. Mon grand frère ronfle et au-dessus de sa tête des voisins se disputent.” (“This night I am in my bed and I can’t sleep. My older brother is snoring and above my head, the neighbors are fighting”; G 11).

The third space is symbolized by the girl's imagination. It is a form of a virtual deportation in which the young girl immerses herself. Hence, she exposes the reader to events and aspects of her life like her summer vacations, her friendship with her classmate Mireille, and her relationship with her family, mainly with her father. This virtual deportation is considered as an emotional escape from the pressure of the school exercised by her teacher. The narrator's figurative intent to escape from the educational setting contradicts the basic foundations of French school, because this institution was elevated above all institutions, and in the process of secularizing French society, schools

replaced churches and became sacred places. The French school system was created at the dawn of the French Revolution and has as a slogan: *Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité* (Liberty, equality, fraternity). The irony resides in the fact that narrator wants to escape from a place that guarantees the principles of the French revolution.

In the 1880s, French statesmen of the Third Republic reunited their efforts in order to secularize the school and push religion to the private sphere (Robiquet).¹¹ The republican school was created to offer all French citizens the opportunity of a free education. Citizens from all social scales of both genders were reunited in one single room to learn science, mathematics, physics but also morality and philosophy independently from any religious dogma (Rimbaud). During a conference held by the Ministry of National Education at the Sorbonne in 1892,¹² Jules Ferry gave a speech addressed to the teachers:

Professors, you are not only teachers of languages, arithmetic or technology, you are and you must be educators, you must inculcate to your students that in silly dreams, utopia and crazy desires...those humanist ideals, that there are realities that surpass human wills, necessities that come from the very nature of things: that humanity is directed not by caprice, but by science. (Robiquet 32)

The French republicans of the 19th century had in mind that secular learning would gather all citizens, regardless of religion, race and social status, around one same ideal which is the love of the country and the will to learn. In the meantime, Jules Ferry had a racial vision concerning spreading knowledge to the world. He encouraged colonization and supported the theory of races of De Gobineau (Ennis).¹³ In his speech to the chamber of deputies in July 1885, Jules Ferry said:

Gentlemen, I have to mention another thing [...] the humanitarian and the civilizing aspect of our mission [...] we have to admit that superior races have a duty over inferior races [...] superior races have to carry the duty of civilizing inferior races [...] now, I can affirm that European nations must pay with greatness, nobles, and honesty the price of being superior and civilize the inferior.

(Robiquet 41)

Such a statement gives us a clearer understanding of the educational environment in which *beurs* are immersed. The founder of the republican school referred to colonized populations as beings of inferior race; this reference, by extension, includes *beurs'* parents as well since they come from Algeria, a former French colony. Metaphorically, *beurs* carry the "gene of inferiority" that was assigned to their parents by the founders of the French school. If this "gene" is not expressive, it might be recessive and could be triggered at any moment of stress. Since the teacher is a representative of French school, she is seen by the narrator as a former civilizer, colonizer and a dominator. This relationship might nurture the girl in particular, and *beurs* in general, sentiment of rejection of the educational system. By depicting their parents as being savages and of an inferior race, the education system loses its legitimacy in teaching *beurs*.

The school constitutes one of the most important themes in *beur* literature. For instance Azouz Begag's *Le gone du chaâba* (1986), Tasaadith Imache's *Une fille sans histoire* (1989), and Faïza Guène's *Kiffe kiffe demain* (2004). Despite its unifying aspect, the school always seems a site for the exaltation of difference. In *Le gone du chaâba*, Azouz Begag remembers how his teacher always mispronounces Arab students'

names (56), and how in a class full of North Africans, Italians, and Portuguese, he states that their ancestors are all Gauls:

Nous sommes tous descendants de Vercingétorix!

Oui, Maître !

Notre pays, la France, a une superficie de...

Oui, maître!

Le maître a toujours raison. S'il dit que nous sommes tous des descendants des Gaulois, c'est qu'il a raison, et tant pis si chez moi nous n'avons pas les mêmes moustaches. (Begag 60)

We are all descendants of Vercingetorix

Yes, sir!

Our country, France, has a surface of...

Yes, sir!

The teacher is always right. If he says that we are all descendants of the Gauls, he must be right, and I don't care if at my house we don't have the same moustache as the Gauls.

In a multi-cultural classroom, *beurs* get the impression that they are alienated from the rest of society. The French classroom, constructed on the pillars of French republican values that guarantee equality for citizens, completely ignores a whole part of society. Coming from Arab or Berber origins with an Islamic tradition, *beurs* feel that they are not represented in the curriculum of the school that is supposed to integrate them and lead them to the first steps of their assimilation into French society. In *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in Contemporary France*, Alec Hargreaves, an American scholar

specializing in *beur* literature, underlines the gaps and the deficiencies of the French educational system in dealing with *beurs*, and writes: “Within the formal educational system, the cultural codes of migrants are overwhelmingly marginalized in favor of those prevalent among the majority of the populations” (Hargreaves 89).

In *Georgette!*, the school seems to be a territory of conflicting ideas and principles. Despite that school is an institution to guarantee equality and fraternity among all students, the narrator is faced with the reality of her otherness right from the beginning of the novel. As the girl waits in line before entering the classroom, her classmate mentions that judging by her way of walking she must be an “Arab” (G 12). After the break, when the young girl waits in line again before entering the class, she calls herself a “brute” (G 116). In the classroom, the protagonist notices that she is the only girl who does not have blue eyes (G 25, 53). When she is around her classmates, they remind her that she does neither eat pork nor celebrate Christmas (G 92).

However, these incidents are not at the level of the psychological violence exercised by her teacher that the young girl will experience when she comes back to class after her break. She is then taken by her teacher to an empty room that contains a chair and a table (G 117). The student, always silent, is asked repeatedly by her teacher to have a seat (G 119). She notices that her bag has been emptied and that all its contents are spread on the table. She notices: her teeth prints on a piece of chewed gum, her meal plan card, a picture of her father, her lucky charm bag that contains the words of the Prophet and an old sock. The teacher engages in an interrogation with her student, touching all the displayed pieces one by one (G 118). Confronted with the display of all her belongings, the seven year old girl is terrorized by her teacher's behavior who treats her as if she were

a criminal. Then she urinates on herself. The republican school that claims to maintain equality for all citizens regardless of their origin is transformed into an interrogation room. In this stressful environment, the student is more determined than ever to maintain silence. Ultimately, the teacher adopts an intimidating approach in order to make her speak. With a smile on her face, the teacher initiates her interrogation:

Si tu veux bien, nous dialoguons toi et moi.

Je dis rien. La pisse me brule les fesses, les cuisses et les joues. Elle sourit.

Dialoguer ça veut dire parler.

Je réponds pas. Son sourire grandit.

Tu ne parles jamais? (G 119)

If you like, we can have a dialogue.

I don't say anything. The pee is burning my behind, my thighs and my cheeks.

She smiles.

Having a dialogue means speaking to each other.

I don't answer. Her smile is getting larger.

You never speak?

In the teacher's intent of initiating a dialogue lies her hypocrisy. She expresses her will of reaching out to her student, but at the same she ignores her wellbeing. She shows complete indifference to the fact that her student has urinated on herself and continues her interrogation by becoming more verbally aggressive:

C'est la photo de ton père, non?

Je me révolte pas.

C'est très impoli de ne pas répondre, tu sais ? Et c'est plus impoli encore de m'obliger à me répéter...Hum...C'est sûrement sa photo: tu lui ressembles.

Je la déteste.

Ton père, j'imagine, ne dit jamais rien non plus. J'ai raison? (G 120)

Is this a picture of your father?

I do not rebel.

It is very impolite not to respond, you know? And it's more impolite to make me repeat myself...hum...I am sure it's his picture: you look like him...

I hate her.

Your father, I imagine, he doesn't say much like you, am I right?

Here, the teacher is directly implying that the girl's father is impolite since the teacher has assumed he does not speak either. She also insinuates that the girl's father might be on an inferior race as she adds:

J'ai aussi convoqué ta mère. Pas ton père. Je ne lui demande rien. Tu ne dois pas être inquiète.

Elle baisse la voix.

Je sais que les hommes de là-bas frappent leurs femmes et leurs enfants comme des animaux. (G 121)

I also called your mom. Not your father. I don't ask anything from him. You don't have to worry.

She lowers her voice.

I know that men of your country beat their wives and children like animals.

During the interrogation, the teacher uses all available means to prove that the young girl does not belong to the history and the culture of France. She argues that the student is silent because women of her country are reduced to silence. The teacher subjugates her student to an extreme psychological violence. The student is dragged to an empty room and being harshly interrogated. She undergoes the interrogation while she is covered with urine. She is being called impolite and has been denied her citizenship since the teacher refers to her as being from another country. Her father is being disrespected and denied his humanity once he is compared to an animal. At this level, we have a much better understanding of the girl's desire to escape when she is in school because this sentiment is engendered through the exclusion performed by the teacher. Since the teacher nurtures a sentiment of rejection, this rejection has a higher significance because it comes from an educational authority that is supposed to integrate the students into society and not exclude them from it. The irony of the girl escaping school, a place of liberty, equality, and fraternity becomes logical. And the public school that is supposed to be an integrating force becomes a tool of ostracism. Eventually, the relationship between the teacher and her student becomes a relationship of dominant versus dominated by metaphorically activating the inherited recessive "gene" from the formerly colonized parents.

The teacher finishes her interrogation by throwing all belongings of the narrator in the trash including the little bag that contains the Prophet's words, thereby committing a sacrilege not only against the girl's religion, but also against French republican principles and values that guarantee people's freedom as the French constitution of 1958, established by the Fifth Republic, clearly stipulates the freedom of religious practice.¹⁴

Stanley Hoffman argues that the secularism guaranteed by French constitution does not mean the absence of religion, because French constitution clearly provides religious freedom for individual:

France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. *France. Constitution. Art. 1.*

As a result, the school represented by the teacher becomes antinomian with its foundation. The environment of exclusion created by the teacher prevents the narrator to integrate into French society and to aspire to higher positions since education frees individuals from physical labor. To this effect, *beurs* find themselves destined to occupy underpaid and precarious jobs. Hargreaves argues that aside from financial reasons, the failure of *beurs* at school is in great part the result of their feeling of not belonging to French educational institutions. Thus, *beurs* find themselves in a situation where they are trapped in a physical place that denies them access because of their parents' history. It seems that *beurs* are destined to inherit their parents' jobs: Since the parents occupy underpaid jobs, their children must do the same.

Being denied successful education, *beurs* start to question themselves about who they are, and what the components of their identity are. They automatically enter into a process of identity quest that operates through two main principles: time and space. The principle of time refers to the history of their parents which is filled with stories about colonialism, injustice and their departure from their homeland to which *beurs* relate but with which they do not identify, because they are French nationals by birth. Conversely, they do not identify with French history either, because they are well aware of the fact

that they are not the descendants of the Gauls. The principle of space corresponds to territorial limits around which *beurs* evolve. Within these limits, *beurs* are confronted with two different and opposing concepts of life: secular and religious. Secularism is imposed by a society that refuses any form of negotiation with religion, especially Islam. The law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools (2004) is a proof of French political intransigence concerning religion. This law forbids the wearing of signs that ostensibly express the belonging to a given religion. The semantics of this law does not target a specific religion; however, the law is commonly referred to in French media as the law against the Islamic veil. With the same intransigence, religious traditions are imposed in the household. *Beurs* are born Muslim and, according to their parents, they should remain such. In *Georgette!*, the father imposes religious learning on his daughter as well as Arabic writing using the same notebook his daughter uses for French classes. In other words, the father reminds his daughter that even if she goes to French school, she has to remember her Islamic and Arab origins.

In the midst of these conflicting concepts, *beurs* struggle to define their identity. They are initiated into a process where the discovery of themselves becomes the hardest task of their lives. *Beur* identity quest coincides with the emblematic phrase of Jean-Paul Sartre: *L'existence précède l'essence* (existence precedes essence), extracted from his book *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946). Classical philosophers placed essence above existence, however, Sartre writes: "L'homme existe d'abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le monde et il se définit après." ("Man first exists, encounters himself, appears in the world and then defines his identity"; Sartre 34). The milieus in which *beurs* evolve – in the case of our novel, the school and the home – are very important moderators and

conditioners for the forging of their identity, as is clearly demonstrated in *Georgette!*. These two distinct aspects represent two different spaces or territories in which *beurs* along with the narrator of *Georgette!* evolve. These two territories, school and the family home, have to be inhabited, shared, and transformed in accordance with the will and desire of the subject who inhabits them. That is why compromises between these two entities must occur in order to enlarge perspectives and possibilities for *beurs* to develop their identity. Since they are holders of two identities, *beurs* must enjoy both of them without limitations, because the narrowing of the territory due to lack of compromise creates a desire of escape and rupture resulting the deterritorialization of the subject (EI 67). In *Georgette!*, the narrator sees herself limited by the options provided in the two territories offered by her teacher and her father. Subsequently, she rejects territorial limitation and refuses control over her identity exercised by the teacher and the father.

VI. Two Worlds, No Choice!

The act of leaving one's home constitutes a will of rupture and at the same time a quest for discovering one's self. It is also an opportunity to get out of the space of the mirror of the "same" which offers the option of otherness (EI 35). In other words, the change of space offers an alternative in terms of seeing other perspectives, changing mentalities, and understanding new cultures and perhaps to know more about one's culture. The experience of otherness is offered as an alternative or as a possibility to achieve personal satisfaction in a given time and at a given place. The idea of otherness is developed around the analysis of the ways minorities and majorities function, and how they are constructed in a society. According to Mark Gould, newcomers are always referred to as the others. The experience of living in a new society is referred to by the

experience of otherness. In addition to social interaction and cultural exchange, the experience of otherness creates a movement and a mobility of the body that leads to a horizon of new ideas, new perceptions and new psychological conditions:

Le déplacement du corps modifie l'angle du regard [...] Le voyage a un pouvoir déstabilisant. Il déforme et réforme. Il conduit à une réorganisation psychologique de la personnalité de celui qui part. Réorganisation qui peut être enrichissante quand elle contribue au développement de l'autonomie de l'individu mais qui peut aussi devenir aliénante quand la synthèse des différents apports s'avère impossible, quand le choc est trop brutal. (EI 41-42)

The displacement of the body modifies the point of view [...] Travel has a destabilizing power. It deforms and reforms. It leads to a reorganization of the personality of the one who is leaving. A reorganization that can be enriching when it contributes to the development of the individual; however, it can also be alienating when the synthesis of the different contributions proves to be impossible, when the shock is too brutal.

When the act of leaving is followed by multiple acts of the same nature, it creates migration movements. Migrants usually gather in groups to protect themselves from a possible shock or alienation. However, gathering in general engenders the creation of minorities that are often alienated because of the presence of a majority. These minorities are always in search for space in order to establish an existence. During the time of this quest, the minority is deterritorialized and lives in a geographical place that does neither correspond to its history, culture nor tradition and remains such until it is properly integrated or completely rejected.

In 1972, French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari created the concept of deterritorialization in *L'Anti-Œdipe*, which was further developed in *Les milles plateaux* (Köveker, Dietmar). Etymologically, the word means the deprivation of territory at a concrete and abstract level. According to Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization is a political and philosophical concept that allows the questioning of all structures of power and domination. It describes the movement of declassification of objects, animals, movements, and signs which frees these structures from their conventional usage, in other words, the loss of a previously acquired territory. As for our novel, the narrator is subject to two forms of power: the institutionalized power of the law represented by the teacher, and the power of the tradition and religion represented by the father. Each one of them tries to reterritorialize the young girl with the purpose of gaining domination over her identity, her personality, and the ways of expressing them. The reterritorialization in the novel is directed towards two distinct spaces: the family home and school.

Religious Reterritorialization

The father is very concerned about his daughter not taking the right way (G 29). He insists on teaching her how to write Arabic; however, she resists his orders and tries to avoid the assignment. Her father reminds her that the teacher might be right but if she follows her father's orders she will succeed: “Si tu écoutes ton père, c’est la route tout droit” (“If you listen to you father, you will be on the right path”; G 29). Martine Fernandes explains that Islamic religion defines the life of the faithful as a path to Allah, the spiritual guide. She adds that the father is the guide of the family and is considered God. This metaphor is not proper to only Islamic religion, but it is also found in the

Judeo-Christian tradition. The father uses this metaphor of the spiritual leader in order to transmit Islamic culture to his daughter. This Islamic heritage is transmitted through copying and writing: “J’ai recopié le texte [...] Il me fait un modèle [...] Tu fais l’copie sur moi...j’espère que tu vas apprendre vite! [...] Où tu vas? Restes ici! Prends l’crayon et fais la copie ” (“I have copied the text [...] he writes a sample [...] you make a copy out of my sample... I hope you will learn fast! [...] where are you going? Stay here! Take the pencil and make the copy!”; G 43-47). The writing of a sample constitutes the establishment of a form that leads to reterritorialization to the father's space. In *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, it reads: “Tant qu’il y a une forme, il y a encore reterritorialisation” (“As long as there is form, reterritorialization occurs”; DG 12). Therefore, the goal behind the father’s initiative is to reterritorialize his daughter and to confine her to his space, thus, limiting the teacher's chances to reterritorialize the girl.

Through the metaphor of the spiritual guide, the father creates a concept of integration that he wants his family to join. Since the protagonist is born in France and going to a French school, the father is afraid that she might deviate from the divine path and follow the secular model. His teachings are not only directed toward his daughter, but also toward the whole family. The mother is harshly criticized for her desire to emulate French women—a desire which calls for the father's scorn and disdain (G 46). The father figure is the holder of Islamic tradition, but he is also the protector of the transmission of its teaching even if he knows that it is in contradiction with French republican and secular values. He is very concerned that his family will leave him. As a deterritorialized person and victim of geographical displacement himself, he fears the loss of his family since it is the only thing that reminds him that he exists. The loss of the family would lead to the

loss of his identity: “Les enfants comme vous autres, vous s’rez perdus [...] Vous aurez été élevés chez les Mau-Mau” (“Children like you! You’ll be lost [...] you will have been raised by the Frenchies”; G 153). Opposed to this situation, the father makes serious threats to kill his family if they abandon his forefathers’ religion:

J’ vous tuerai tous! Un par un. J’ai pas peur d’ la justice des hommes. La justice d’ici, des chiens, moi je l’emmerde...J’écris tranquillement les paroles de Dieu sur l’ cahier d’ ma fille et regarde le résultat : ta mère, elle m’envoie la bombe atomique sur ma gueule. (G 46)

I will kill you all! One by one. I am not afraid of the justice of men. I screw the justice of dogs... I am peacefully writing the words of God on my daughter’s notebook and this is how I get paid: your mother throws the atomic bomb at my face.

The narrator is terrified by the combination of threats, physical and spiritual, though she still manages to express a certain form of resistance: “Je ne suis pas prête pour écrire” (“I am not ready to write”; (G 29); “Je bouche mes oreilles pour que je l’entende pas crier” (“I close my ears not to hear him yelling”; G 47); “Mon père l’a su immédiatement, je déchire ses mots” (“My father knows it immediately, I tear his words”; G 109). Despite this relative resistance, the narrator cannot free herself entirely from the father attempts to reterritorialize her. She enters then into a process of escaping reality which coincides with her father's fear of losing his daughter. Reality escape is triggered by the girl's interpretation of her father's threats because only in reality the father can transform his words into actions. Being afraid of the harshness nature of

sanctions that could be inflicted on her, the girl escapes into a world where she feels safer: her imagination.

Through his threats, the father exercises pressure over the whole family. He transmits his fear of deterritorialization to the other family members who conceptualize this fear from an abstract level to a concrete one. Deterritorialization is symbolized by the loss of the path on the way home, and metaphorically, the loss of the path to Allah. The father, as a spiritual leader, assigns tasks that each member of the family is supposed to have according to his traditions. For example, the mother has the task to clean, cook, and raise her children. When she is in a different setting than the kitchen, her destined place according to traditions, she becomes disoriented and is immediately sanctioned:

Ma mère est dans le métro ou dans la rue. Elle tourne au rond et cogne sa tête contre les murs. Le sang coule du front, elle saigne sur son visage. Perdue! Elle est perdue comme une orpheline! Elle demande à quelqu'un le bon chemin. (G 95).

My mother is in the subway or in the street. She desperately turns around and bangs her head against the walls. The blood flows from her forehead, she bleeds from her face. Lost! She is lost, like an orphan! She is asking somebody for the right path.

When the brother loses the way home from school, the girl narrates: “Le frangin s’enfuit, galope, il fait fausse route et se désoriente” (“My brother escapes, he stumbles, he takes the wrong way and becomes disoriented”; G 135).

In the novel, the disorientation that occurs on the way back home is used as a metaphor to indicate separation between the family home and school. They both

represent two complete different references with which *beurs* have to identify. The quest for the self is jeopardized by the impossibility of combining these two references to construct one distinct identity due to the incompatibility of the two worlds. When the mother expresses her fear of not finding her son and calls it a tragedy, the father replies: “Quoi l’ malheur! Y’ en a pas si tu rentres tout droit chez toi après l’ école” (“What tragedy! There won't be any if you go back home straight from the school”; G 135). All members of the family witness an incident of losing their way except the father. He symbolizes the right path at the spiritual level, and the reterritorializing force at the philosophical level. In the novel, the loss of the path is uni-directional and it is always from society to home. We know that the father came from Algeria to France to better his financial situation. At the same time, the father's will to teach Islam and Arabic language to his children is indicative of the attachment that the father has for his culture and his old country.

Somehow we can understand the pain that the father endured by leaving his country. In *Ecarts d’ identité (Identity Differences)*, Begag describes the act of leaving one’s home as a wrenching experience, arguing that “En s’ arrachant, le migrant introduit une distance entre lui et l’ univers symbolique (la matrice première) qui définit son être” (“By wrenching himself from his land, the migrant introduces a distance between him and the symbolic universe (the primary matrix) which defines the *Self*”; EI 26). Consequently, the father is afraid that the abandonment of his home country might trigger the abandonment of the tradition by his family. He wants to eradicate the deterritorialization from which he has suffered through reterritorializing his family spiritually and traditionally. The symbolic universe of home country, values, and Islamic

tradition is threatened in secular France. Thus, maintaining these traditions in the family home constitutes a bulwark against those society threats.

As we have mentioned in “The School, a Territory of Conflicting Ideas,” the father encourages his children to study in order to become prominent members of society. However, since he is inhabited by the myth of return which consists of going back home one day with the money earned by the hard labor in France, the society he is aiming for is his home country where his well-educated children would be preserved from the threats of losing their religion to secularism. The allegory of the path is used throughout the novel not to define the physical address of the home, but the spiritual way to Allah’s commandments. In their quest for the self, *beurs* are hostages to the desire both for recognition by the host society and for a sense of belonging to their parents’ traditions. In the novel, the father threatens to reject his son if he fails to find the right way home: “Il est pas capable à s’démerder à trouver son chemin! Alors, c’est pas mon fils! Et toi (the mother), j’ te jette dehors avec lui!” (“He is not capable to find his way! Then he is not my son! And you (the mother), I’ll kick you out with him!”; G 135). Again, the father resorts to extreme measures against his son because he lost his way home, resulting in the father's denial of his son's parenthood. The compliance with the father's rules has to be indisputable because any objection might instigate a family member's rejection from the family entity, thus exclusion from the Islamic faith.

The fate of the girl is more tragic than for the rest of the family. Like her brother and mother, she loses her way home from school after the teacher's sacrilegious act of throwing the words of the Prophet in the trash (G 123). She runs away and wanders in the

streets of Paris. Then, she takes refuge in a park and imagines a dialogue with her doll that speaks in her father's voice:

Non, je suis perdue. Si je rentre pas, il me trouve là et il me tue [...] En vérité, il me cherche même pas [...] il a pas besoin de moi [...] C'est sûr. Une gosse perdue c'est une orpheline de la honte [...] J'ai tout vu. La misère affreux, la faim, l' travail esclave, l'insulte et l' coup d' pied [...] Mais j'ai toujours rentré chez moi ! Toi, tu t' sauves ! [...] J' préfère qu' tu mort qu' ce chemin-là. J' t'ai tout donné pour qu' tu trouves ta route. Et toi, tu t' sauves ! tu m' déshonores devant tout le monde. Tu traînes dans la rue comme une saleté [...] Ma fille elle est perdue. C'est fini : t'es plus ma fille. J' l' voulais pas... Dieu il est témoin : c'est pas d' ma faute. J'ai pas jeté ma langue dans les ordures. J' t'ai tout appris.
(G 150-151)

No, I am lost. If I don't go back home, he will find me here and kill me [...] he is not even looking for me. [...] he doesn't need me [...] Of course. A lost child is an orphan, a shame [...] I have seen it all, the misery, the hunger, slave work, the insult and the foot kick [...] But, I always went home! You run away [...] I'd rather you die than seeing you taking this path. I have given you everything so you can find the way. But you, you run away! You dishonor me in front of everybody. You wander in the street like dirt [...] My daughter is lost. It's over; you're not my daughter anymore. I didn't want it... God is my witness: it's not my mistake. I didn't throw my language in the trash. I have taught you everything.

Remembering the father's reaction toward the mother and the son's losing their way comes in the form of flashbacks. However, the reaction of the father toward his daughter's losing the way is a result of her hallucination. Despite the brutality of the father's discourse, the girl seems to relativize his statement, which is indicative of her naivety: "J'applaudis son imitation (the doll's) des deux mains" ("I applaud her performance (the doll's) with two hands"; G 151). The expression of such level of naivety constitutes the most emotional part of the novel, which reminds the reader that the narrator is only seven years old and her ability to process such harsh statements on a conscious level is almost nonexistent. Through the doll, her father denies her paternity, but at the same time, she seems more focused on the doll's performance rather than the father's statement. Unconsciously, she has internalized her father's threats and projected them in a speaking doll. From her past experience, she knows that she will be denied, like her brother, her father's parenthood, along with which comes her exclusion from Islam. This long passage of the father's monologue is the fruit of the narrator's total imagination. The father is not in the park, and furthermore, he is not speaking to her.

The brutality of the father's statements is triggered by the girl's fear of her father's reaction. In this passage, we witness that the imagined father's anger towards his daughter is greater than the expressed anger towards his son. The manifestation of the two reactions can be compared since the narrator experiences Islamic tradition on a daily basis in terms of gender treatment. The son's losing his way home is taken with passivity from the father, whereas the daughter's act of losing her way was taken like a betrayal of the religious traditions. As the family's spiritual leader, the father expels his daughter from Islamic tradition by denying her his paternity: "T'es plus ma fille" ("You're not my

daughter anymore”); G 151). On a broader level, this scene indicates that *beurs'* difficulties to be equal individuals with other members of French society does not only lie in racism and discrimination, but also lies in their allegiance to their family structure, which in itself, encompasses an unconditional allegiance to Islamic culture and tradition. In light of the confusion instigated by the family entity, it becomes nearly impossible for *beurs* to build and embrace their identity.

It is also important to mention that *beur* females experience more difficulties to integrate into French society mainly because of family interdictions. Liliane Vassberg, a French sociologist, argues that female *beurs* have to face social and urban exclusions as well as their fathers' or their brothers', since males enjoy a higher status in Islamic tradition. They are thereby subject to both familial constraints and cultural practices that prevent their personal emancipation such as physical violence, forced marriages, polygamy, and sequestration to name but a few. These practices generate a hostile environment that can force young women into escaping the family home and sometimes into committing suicide. At the end of the novel, we witness a similar ending. The protagonist probably "dies," or she projects her own death as an internalization of her father's story about an Algerian man named Bendaoud who deviates from his path, abandons his tradition, and embraces French culture by become a colonel in the French Army. He commits suicide after he loses a trial against a French soldier named fittingly Lefrançois. The narrator remembers her father's story while crossing the street. She is then hit by a car on the street before reaching the family home:

Je grille un feu et je traverse. Le Bonheur est dans...

La roue de la voiture est sur mon ventre.

J'ai déchiré mes vêtements. Je suis nue comme une saleté. Je saigne sur la rue.

J'ai joué ma chance: manque de pot. J'étouffe au fond d'un encrier. (G 163)

I cross the street on a red light. The Happiness is in...

The car wheel is on my stomach.

I tore my clothes. I am naked like dirt. I am bleeding on the street.

I played my cards: but no luck. I am choking at the bottom of an inkwell.

In the midst of the discontinuity and non-linearity of the narrative in *Georgette!* characterized by the narrator's confusion of what is real and what is imaginary, we tend to think that her death might be a projection and a continuation of her imagination symbolized by her constant escape from reality. Her death remains a question whether it is a symbolic suicide, therefore, an ultimate escape from reality, or an actual death. And it is more intriguing especially when knowing that she is the only narrator of the novel. The commenting on the narrator's death is highly symbolic. Having been run over by a car, she is lying on the street and she describes herself being naked like dirt. The only time the narrator becomes naked is when she embodies a Native American character, symbolic of her freedom and rebellion from her father's constraints. She also describes herself as being "like dirt" which is a symbol of impurity. Public nudity in Islam is forbidden, and Islamic tradition obliges women to cover themselves. The Islamic traditions that were inculcated into the narrator are expressed through her death. She also mentions that she is "choking at the bottom of an inkwell," a writing tool. The narrator seems to be defeated by the clash operating between her two identities and which are expressed through writing in Arabic and French. The narrator's death whether it is actual or symbolic

remains a representation of the father's and the teacher's failure to claim the girl for their world.

The Institutionalized Reterritorialization

The pressure exercised by the father, the objective of which is the reterritorialization of his daughter, engenders confusion and she develops schizophrenia as a means to escape to another reality. The father is not the only instigator of this pressure because the protagonist faces another aspect of reterritorialization coming from the teacher. School represents secular French society and the duty of unifying all children of the republic in one classroom. However, the incoherence found between the noble duty of French school system and the demeaning discourse of the teacher while interrogating her student creates an ambivalent spectrum that greatly confuses the girl. Her presence in the school is subject to criticism not to only from her teacher, but also from her classmates. She is perceived as different from the beginning as one of her classmates points out: “Ça se voit que t’es l’Arabe comme tu marches” (“It is clear from the way you walk you’re an Arab”; G 12).

At school, the narrator tries to connect her two social references in order to create her own identity. As she is getting ready to enter the classroom, she notices that her socks are not of the same color: “Pas de problème. Si! Mes chaussettes sont pas de la même couleur. J’en ai une verte et l’autre est rouge!” (“No problem. No, there is a problem! My socks are not of the same color. One is green and the other one is red”; G 13). According to Michelle Bacholle, each one of these socks symbolizes a different identity. The red color is the symbol of the French nation. It symbolizes the martyr Saint Denis, the first bishop of Paris who was considered as the “father of the nation.” In 1124, an abbey was

erected in his name and decorated with red flags that were used later by the French army when going to war. The green sock symbolizes Islam. At the time of Prophet Mohammad, Muslim warriors used green flags. The choice of this color is simple. Arabs were people of the desert, and paradise for them was described as green gardens where water runs in abundance. According to the Qur'an, in paradise, Muslims will be dressed in green silk. These two sock colors indicate that the young girl represents two identities, in other words, her body contains French and Arabic identities. On the metaphysical level, the girl represents loss and confusion due to the incompatibility of the two identities. The two colors are also a symbol of war and the fight for identity.

Along with the father's attempt to reterritorialize the daughter, comes another form of reterritorialization exercised by the school. The aspects of the reterritorialization by the school resides in the teachings of writing the French language as a counterattack to the teaching of Arabic. When the teacher grabs the notebook of the girl to check her written exercise, she opens it from the left:

La maîtresse fait des erreurs une fois ou deux. C'est normal. Tout le monde se trompe un jour ou l'autre. Là, par exemple, je le vois bien : elle le tient sous mes yeux à l'envers. Je vais pas dire le contraire tout haut. Dans la vie, le principal c'est de corriger sa faute. (G 30)

The teacher makes mistakes once or twice. That's normal. Everybody makes mistakes one day or another. Here, for instance, I can see it: She is holding it before my eyes upside down. I won't tell her that. In life, the most important thing is to correct one's own mistakes.

Latin languages are written from left to write, while Arabic is written from right to left. Her father uses his daughter's school notebook to teach her Arabic, which is why, all the writings are at the back of the notebook: "Mon cahier est dans ses mains, elle recherche mon écriture. Et ne trouve que des feuilles blanches. Elle est très ennuyée [...] Mon écriture est de l'autre côté!" ("My notebook is in her hands, she is looking for my written exercise. She finds nothing but white pages. She is very upset [...] my writing is on the other side"; G 42). Instead of the assignment that should have been written in French, the teacher finds Arabic writing at the back of the note book. She then finds herself in competition with the father and decides to strike the Arabic text with a red pen: "Elle est à son bureau et corrige au stylo rouge mon cahier" ("She is on her desk correcting my notebook with a red pen"; G 101). The teacher's choice of the pen's color is not trivial. As we have previously mentioned, the red color in the novel refers to France, henceforth, the girl is trapped once again in a process of reterritorialization initiated by her teacher with the objective of claiming girl to French society by eliminating her father's writings.

The writer Anissa Talahite argues that the cultural ambivalence in *Georgette!* is often presented as a strategy of war, enabling the protagonist to infiltrate and subvert the structures of the dominant discourse of the authority surrounding her. Yet, I think that there is a possibility of reconciliation and hybridity between the two cultures, especially in the scene where the girl walks into a puddle and sees the reflection of her socks in the water: "Maintenant, j'en ai une verte barrée de rouge et l'autre est rouge barrée de vert. Elles se mélangent dans l'eau. Elles sont devenues, les deux, d'une seule couleur!" ("Now, I have a green one with red stripes and the other is red with green stripes. They are mixed in the water. They have become of the same color!"; G103). The mixture

would be possible if any of the parties, the teacher or the father, made compromises, but since the father and the teacher's will to claim the child's identity, the mixture simply fails and the girl recognizes it: "En vérité, c'est impossible: le mélange se combine pas si je croise pas les jambes. Mais si je le fais, je tombe et je traîne par terre" ("In fact, it is impossible: the mixture don't combine if I don't cross my legs. But if I do, I fall and I remain on the ground"; G 103).

The attempt to reconcile the two cultures, which is symbolized by the reflection of the two sock colors in the water, represents a possibility for the narrator in particular, and for *beurs* in general, to assume her identity structure in terms of hybridity. However, *beurs'* combination of the two identities is harshly denied by their parents as well as French society. Consequently the quest for the self remains unachievable since the concerned parties, the family and the society, do not accept any form of hybridity. S

Similarly, in *Shérazade*, Leila Sebbar introduces a young female *beur* of 17 who runs away from home but cannot fit into society. Just like the narrator of *Georgette!*, she is stuck in a third space where she meets drug dealers, porn producers, strippers and illegal immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds, in other words, she finds herself with people at the margin of French society. The geographical placement in *Sherazade* is characterized by low-rent suburbs which contrast with museums and fancy neighborhoods of Paris which are completely unfamiliar to the protagonist. The choice of Leila Sebbar to extract her character Sherazade from her loving, yet confining home environment is pertinent. It makes readers witness her quest to define her identity in the light of the harsh rejection of French society. To this effect, we find *beurs* as residues of society since they are at the same level as political rebels, drug addicts, thieves and

freelance musicians representing an incoherent group that does not obey social norms. In other words, *beurs* are depicted as a dysfunctional phenomenon of French society.

Georgette! raises similar issues relating to *beur* identity in terms of acceptance and rejection by French society. In the novel, the teacher suggests on the one hand that her student can still learn Arabic under the condition of writing it in a different notebook (G 124). Here, the teacher shows acceptance of her student's ambivalence. On the other she throws the words of the student's religion's prophet in the trash without respect for the student's religion (G 124). She also endeavors to teach the girl to read and to write, but at the same time, she reminds her that she comes from an inferior culture when she claims that men of her community beat their wives and children like animals (G 121).

The Alternative of the Third Reference.

The novel is an image of the *beurs* living in France. As *beurs* both reject the traditional teaching of their parents, they refuse to assimilate to French society. They find themselves in a position where there is a horizon of ideas and symbols such as Islam, secularism, France. In these symbols *beurs* neither recognize nor find themselves. These symbols stay at the level of allegorical ideas because *beurs* fail to transform them from abstract into concrete forms like the metaphor of the socks' colors. Furthermore, these symbols are not characterized by a specific reference to time or space. *Beur* history is narrated through a limited scope of their parents' history that does not correspond to their ambivalence. It is confined within the limits of colonization and migration. In *Georgette!*, the father only speaks about his migration journey, his experience at work, and the discrimination he faces. Most of *beur* authors describe in their literature that *beurs* parents see *beurs* as only as Arab and Muslim. At the same time, school ignores this part

of their identity and depicts them as descendants of Gauls. Their space is not determined by a geographical placement since their parents inculcate in them the myth of return, thereby preventing them to integrate French society. And that same society refuses them access unless they deny their families' culture and tradition. Begag argues that *beurs'* relation to a geographical space is the result of their "double identity magnetization": family and social institutions (EI 47). By the use of the term magnetization Begag wants to emphasize the level of the pressure *beurs* experience in the quest for their identity. They are trapped in a magnetic field with two major opposing forces which are family and public. He adds that the combination of the two gives birth to a reminiscence of origins, some stereotypes and some linguistic neologisms. Begag stresses the point that *beur* identity and hybridity, the mixture of two or more cultures or ethnicities, are two inseparable entities which means knowing that *beurs* are immersed into a form of double reference at a very young age. Nevertheless, this particularity might create an ambiguity of *beur* identity as he defines it according to the process of modulation and demodulation:

Ce processus de modulation-démodulation culturelle ne signifie pas pour autant que les références aux origines parentales s'accomplissent par un travail psychologique sur l'identification des enfants. Ils héritent, à notre sens, non d'une culture ou d'un style culturel, mais d'un mythe culturel [...] le message que cette société leur adresse est souvent paradoxal : attraction et relégation dans les périphéries [...] c'est ainsi que, et de façon quasi institutionnelle, on forge des identités marginales. (EI 49)

The process of cultural modulation-demodulation does not mean that references to parental origins accomplish their work in the psychological identification of the

children. They do not inherit, according to us, a culture, a culture or a cultural style, but they inherit a cultural myth [...] the message that this society (France) conveys is often paradoxical: attraction and relegation to the periphery [...] through a quasi-institutionalized manner, marginal identities are created.

Accordingly, marginalization creates an insularization of *beurs* which makes them refuse the principles of the society in which they live as well as the tradition of they come from. They are in constant search for a third reference as an alternative to the two rigid, fixed, and non-compromising references they are offered by their parents and French society. Usually, the third reference *beurs* seek does not necessarily correspond to their culture whether it is French or Maghrebian. In *Georgette!*, the third reference is symbolized by the protagonist's embodiment of a Native American because of a western movie she watched with her father. In other cases, the third reference could be an expression of religious radicalization. Gilles Kepel, French political scientist, witnessed the radicalization of the French *banlieues*, in his investigation book *Banlieue de la république* (2011). He argues that identity confusion can lead *beurs* to the most radical form of Islam (52). This desire to belong to a form of religion with which their parents are not familiar is a form of identity expression (Wihtol de Wenden). This radical form of Islam represents a louder voice that corresponds to their anger about being rejected by society. Kepel reports cases of *beurs* who order their mothers to wear the veil and enter into altercations with their fathers because of their wine drinking habits. This literalist interpretation of Islam is the reason why certain Muslims claim the defense of the religion. Kepel also reports several cases of *beurs* that joined terrorist forces for *jihad* in Syria and Afghanistan. Islamic radicalization is also present in Yasmina Khadra's best

sellers. In *The Attack* (2006) and *The Sirens of Baghdad* (2007), Khadra portrays the life of young Arab individuals who resort to terrorism because of religious indoctrination.

When *Georgette!* was published in the 1980's Islamic radicalization did not impact the world like it did in the 1990s and later. In the 1980s, *beur* literature portrayed the third reference as an external element to the *beur* generation. For example in Sebbar's *Parle mon fils, parle à ta mère* (1984), the third reference is represented by gangs and organized crime. In Tassadith Imache's *Une fille sans histoire* (1989), the third reference is symbolized by communism. In *Georgette!*, the protagonist portrays the search for herself at a more symbolic level through paralleling her identity with Native Americans that she saw in a western movie as an attempt to subvert the ethnic stereotypes performed by her teacher: “J’ai réfléchi! Finalement, je suis la fille d’un Grand Chef Peau-Rouge, mon frère est son fils et ma mère est reine. A côté de moi, Mireille est une clocharde !” (“I thought about it! I am the daughter of a Red-Skin Chief, my brother is his son and my mother is a queen. Next to me, Mireille is a bum!”; G 86-87). The narrator escapes from her ethno-social background and takes the character of a Native American. The choice of the Native American character by the narrator is not trivial. The fact there is no resemblance between the two characters in terms of culture, history or ethnicity is not logical. The answer lies in the girl's will to escape identity magnetization by rejecting her both references, French and Arab, and claiming a new identity. The narrator chooses a character that is totally external to her background in order to eradicate references that otherwise define her identity.

According to Jazouli, most *beurs* do not express their belonging to neither France nor their parents’ culture, this is why they find refuge in identifying themselves with

external figures to their culture who usually represent a resistance to some sort of oppression. Many *beurs* adhere to Marxist ideas, they become supporters of the Palestinian cause or Hip-Hop artists. These choices of identification do not correspond to French or Maghrebian cultures.

In light of Jazouli's observations, the girl creates a third space away from school and home in order to be able to express her feelings. She is either silent or reduced to silence. The inner monologue is the only space wherein the girl finds it comfortable to speak. This third space gives the protagonist a possibility of identification. Escaping the two worlds is a form of a chosen deterritorialization. This act protects the protagonist from being judged by her father or by her teacher, therefore she escapes institutionalized law symbolized by the school and represented by the teacher, and the divine law symbolized by Islamic religion and represented by the father. According to Deleuze and Guattari: “la loi ne peut donc s’annoncer que dans une sentence, et la sentence ne peut s’apprendre que dans un châtement” (“The law cannot be enounced unless there is a sentence, and the sentence will never be known unless there is a punishment”; DG 79). Thus, the protagonist’s identity remains abstract because she can enjoy it only when she is in her imaginary third space.

The idea of being Native American brings a certain *jouissance* to the protagonist: “Je me traîne comme un peau rouge. Je marche comme une indienne” (“I walk around like a red skin. I walk like an Indian!”; G 71). According to Jane Gallop, a psychoanalyst, Freud's concept of pleasure regulates the conception of personality, but it also generates an effect of repetition. Traumatic events, especially those experienced during childhood, are repeated without triggering pleasure. Lacan's *jouissance* is not the opposite of

pleasure, but it is the break from the repetition that pleasure engenders to ultimately enjoy one's self without constraints. The identification with a Native American is a continuation of the girl's quest for *jouissance*. It allows her a complete mental displacement away from the pressure lived at school and at home. Being naked constitutes a break of the repetitive discourse she receives from school and family. Nudity symbolizes the transgression of institutionalized and divine laws. To the protagonist, it is the ultimate *jouissance*. Tired of being caught between two worlds of reference, French society and the family home, the girl rejects both of her identities symbolized by the metaphor of the green and red socks: “Je connais ni les baskets ni encore moins les chaussettes, vertes ou rouges; je suis pieds nus. A poil comme les sauvages” (“I know neither shoes even less socks, green or red; I am bare foot. I am naked as the savages!”; G71-72). After having tried to reconcile between the two cultures represented by the red and green socks, the girl rejects both of these cultures by adopting a new one that is external to her references just because this new adopted culture does not come with the pressure of commitment, allegiance, and legitimacy.

Rejection of Human Appearance

The protagonist's creation of a third space is a synonym of her identity confusion. Moreover, the third space is transformed into a safe haven in which she finds refuge every time she faces a stressful situation to distance herself from instigators of stress, namely the teacher and the father. The girl escapes to her imagined third space only when she is in their presence. This very strange reaction is indicative of a behavioral problem that deserves to be analyzed at the pathological level. According to Michelle Bacholle, the main character of *Georgette!* suffers from severe schizophrenia. She has the feeling

that she leads a double life but with a unique character. In his *Dictionary of Behavioral Science*, Benjamin Wolman defines childhood schizophrenia as:

Withdrawal from people and reality, escape into a fantasy world, disturbance in the ability to make affective contact with the world, autistic thought process, muteness, excessive inhibition or inhibition of impulse expression, identification with animals and objects, stereotyped gesture, impassivity or extreme outburst of rage and anxiety, bizarre posturing, and vasovegetative functioning. (Wolman 305)

Out of the eleven symptoms that Wolman indicates in his description of childhood schizophrenia, the protagonist of *Georgette!* is identified by eight of them. In school, she spends her breaks walking around by herself. She refuses to interact with her classmates or play with them. She listens neither to her father's advice nor to her teacher's. She escapes affection by refusing to touch the gift that her teacher gives her (petals of roses) (G 52). The girl is characterized by her muteness: "Je dis rien" ("I don't say anything"; G56); "Je suis toujours muette" ("I am always silent"; G 64). The girl's silence coincides with the escape to the third space. In the meantime her body is completely passive to the point that she does not feel her limbs: "Il m'arrive quelque chose de très grave: je suis une statue qui commande plus ses bras ni le reste" ("Something very bad is happening to me: I am like a statue and can't move my arms or any other limbs"; G27); "Je suis handicapée" ("I am handicapped"; G 28). But when the protagonist moves, she adopts a bizarre posture which she describes thus:

Je tourne et je marche en rond en ce temps-là (the break). J'ai peur de quelque chose, je le sens autour. Alors je marche.

Je me promène d'une certaine façon. Un pied devant l'autre, évidemment. Mais j'ai le dos courbé, mes yeux regardent par terre [...] Je marche comme un vieux de soixante-dix ans [...] En vérité, j'ai sept ans. (G 9)

I turn around and I walk around all the time of the break. I am afraid of something, I feel it around me. So I walk.

I walk a certain way. One foot after another, of course. But I have a bent back, my eyes look to the ground [...] I walk like an old man of seventy [...] in fact, I am seven.

In *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, Deleuze and Guattari, developed the theory of the bent head that is linked with two statuses of desires. The following scheme illustrates the idea behind this theory:

Tête penchée = désir bloqué, soumis ou soumetteur, neutralise, à connexion minima, territorialité ou reterritorialité.

Tête relevée = désir qui se redresse, ou se défile, et s'ouvre à de nouvelles connexions, bloc d'enfance ou bloc animal, déterritorialisation. (DG 11).

Bent head = blocked desire, submitted or submitter, neutralized, minimal connection, territoriality or reterritoriality.

Raised head = unbent desire, open for new connections, childhood block or animal block, deterritorialization.

The narrator raises her head only when she imagines herself as a Native American. In other words, she feels free and untied to any form of obedience. But it is important to indicate that she raises her head only in her imagination, that is to say that this form of disobedience or freedom only occurs when she escapes reality. Only in her imagination,

the narrator is capable to oppose her submission to either the teacher or the father. This form of escape is defined by Deleuze and Guattari by the term "non- formed substance of expression" (DG 13). It means that the essence of the girl's expression is not manifested outwardly, but only in her imagination.

As for the identification with animals and objects, the protagonist always imagines animals surrounding her. When she dumps her hands in the inkwell, she imagines that the blue ink on her hands has transformed into a "spider" (G 22). In another scene, she keeps her hands in her pocket along with the spider that transforms on its turn to ants: "J'ai des fourmis partout qui me démangent" ("I have ants everywhere that are itching me"; G26). On her way to school she transforms into a cat: "Je suis un chat sauvage qui se voit pas" ("I am a wild cat that cannot be seen"; G 76). She also imagines herself as a statue (G 27), and then as a doll (G 150). She also imagines that she has toad legs when she runs away from the park: "Ces petites jambes de crapaud ne rattraperont pas ma vitesse" ("These small toad legs will not allow me to run fast"; G 162).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the problematic nature of identification with animals has an oedipal origin. It has as aim to get rid of the father's dictates. The transformation into an animal opens an opportunity for escape. Instead of having her head down and being mute, the girl decides to get rid of her human form. In *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* it reads: "L'animal comme devenir n'a rien à voir avec un substitut du père, ni avec un archétype" ("The animal as a transformation does not have anything to do with a substitute for the father or with any other archetype"; DG 23). Becoming an animal is the development of otherness; it frees the narrator from identity mazes in which

she feels lost. Ultimately, the rejection of her human aspect allows her to escape from social and familial institutions that are at the root of her confusion.

It is clear that the father plays a very important role in the narrator's identity formation. He represents a crucial fragment of her identity. His role does not stop at the limits of transmitting values and principles to his daughter, but it goes beyond parental duties since he interferes with his daughter's academic education through the teaching of Arabic language. As an Algerian who left his village, the father is engaged in the act of deterritorialization. That is why he tries to reterritorialize himself through his family by creating a symbolic environment of his home country in the household ignoring his children's difference. Thus, the father is the instigator of the opposition to society. The protagonist's reaction towards this opposition between school and home pushes her into denying her humanity as she transports herself into a symbolic animal world. Whenever she does not transform her whole body into an animal, she fragments and dismembers it. She also rejects her limbs as we continue the analysis of this novel through Lacanian theory of the *dismembered body*.

V. The Fragmented Body and a Fragmented Identity

In *Georgette!*, the narrator's identity is divided into distinct fragments. The first fragment of her identity is shaped by the family home and the father. This fragment comes along with conditions and rules by which the girl must comply. She has to prove her belonging to her father's culture through learning Arabic and Islamic tradition. The second fragment is represented by French culture and is shaped by society and represented by the teacher. As the father, the teacher imposes rules on her student in terms of the obligation to learn French writing. The seven year old girl finds herself in a

position that prevents her from unifying the two fragments of her identity in one single body. She then enters in a process of fragmenting her body and appropriated the father's and the teacher's limbs.

When she is around the teacher, the narrator does not seem capable of expressing her identity unless she would appropriate the teacher's hands. First, she eliminates her limbs: "Je suis une statue qui commande plus ses bras ni le reste." ("I am a statue that does not command its arms nor the rest of its body."; G 27). Then, she appropriates the teacher's hands: "Je suis handicapée et elle m'aide! Les mains de la maîtresse sont les miennes." ("I am handicapped and she helps me! The hands of the teacher are mine."; G 28). The narrator's body contains two identities, but when she is in the presence of her teacher she is only allowed to express her French identity. In her choice, the narrator relies on the metaphor of colors. The teacher's hands are characterized by nail polish: "Elle a de belles mains [...] ses ongles sont vernis en rouge." ("She has beautiful hands [...] her nails are painted in red." G 31). Since the red color refers to French identity, the narrator appropriates her teacher's hands to express French identity. The appropriation of the teacher's hands is the narrator's attempt to mediate between the symbolic representation of her identity and her teacher's commands. The fragmentation of the girl's body is a form of submission to the representatives of her two identities: the father's and the teacher's. Not only does the narrator appropriate the limbs of her her teacher, who represents the other, but she also appropriates her father's, and finally those of Mireille, her classmate, who represents the "like".

The fragmentation of the body is a theory developed by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Erik Porge, a French psychoanalyst, defines the concept of the

fragmented body in *Les noms du père de Jacques Lacan* (1997) as: “Le corps tel qu’il est ressenti par l’enfant, avant d’être totalisé par l’image spéculaire.” (“The body as it is felt by the child, before being totalized by the speculative image”; Porge 36). Through this definition, it is arguable that the narrator is ignorant of her image. Since her identity is not defined she speculates on the nature of her appearance, hence, when she is around the teacher, she finds herself obliged to express her French identity. By using the teacher’s hands and dismembering hers, the girl is allowed a better expression of this identity. Porge also defines the fragmented body phase as a failure to reach the unification of one’s body that allows the definition of identity. He adds that for Lacan, the subject is stranded between the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. The subject is also divided between knowledge and truth. This definition echoes with the protagonist of *Georgette!*. She takes refuge in imagination to escape reality and thereby creates a third place wherein she identifies with symbols such as the Native American and the different colors of socks to express her identity.

The use of symbols portrays the definition of identity as well as an escape from society and the family home. The relationship with the father is marked by an unusual proximity. This proximity is expressed in the interference of the father’s in his daughter’s education. He imposes on his daughter learning Arabic using the notebook that she uses for her French classes. The proximity between the two characters is noticeable from the beginning of the novel when she sits on the balcony for hours awaiting his return from his job (G 31). She also waits until he finishes his prayer, observing every move he makes (G 18). When he finishes his prayer, he asks his daughter to sit next him (G25). He also asks her about the school and adds that she can learn and educate herself as long as she

follows the right path, her father's path (G 26). He then orders her to bring her notebook so he can teach her Arabic (G27). With her father, the narrator must block the expression of her French identity, especially when learning Arabic. The repression of the narrator's French identity immediately triggers the fragmentation of her body. First imagines that she cuts her ears: "Je me bouche les oreilles [...] Maintenant ils sont coupés! Je n'entends plus rien." ("I block my ears [...] Now they are cut! I don't hear anymore." G 31). Then she imagines eliminating her legs: "Je suis assise sur la chaise, et je ne sens pas mes jambes." ("I am sitting on the chair, and I don't feel my legs"; G 31). Here the protagonist shows resistance to her father by fragmenting her body.

In *Les écrits* (1966), Jacques Lacan stresses the brutality the subject might endure during the fragmentation of the body phase:

Ce corps morcelé, dont j'ai fait aussi recevoir le terme dans notre système de références théoriques, se montre régulièrement dans les rêves, quand la motion de l'analyse touche à un certain niveau de désintégration agressive de l'individu. Il apparaît alors sous la forme de membres disjointes et de ces organes figurés en exoscopie. (Lacan 35)

This fragmented body, which term I have also introduced in our system of theoretical references, regularly shows in dreams, when the motion analysis touches on a certain level of aggressive disintegration of the individual. It appears in the form of disjointed limbs and organs depicted in exoscopy.

By using the term "aggressive" Lacan describes the disintegration of the body to stress the violence to which the child is subject during identity formation. According to the father, the narrator's identity is defined as Arabic and Muslim. She is threatened with

excommunication from the Islamic faith in case she adopts French morals and principle (G 43). Accordingly, she transforms resisting the father into obeying him. The obedience lays into appropriating his traits: his voice and his memory.

For Lacan, the human being is distinguished by his ability to speak (*la parole*); however, the narrator is distinguished by her muteness or by the rejection of her voice. This is the reason why she identifies herself with her father's voice who is portrayed as a good singer: "Il cause beaucoup avec du feu dans gorge mais aussi il chante. Sa voix est magnifique!" ("He speaks with lot of fervor in his throat but he also sings. His voice is beautiful!"; G 34). Then she adds that she would buy her father's voice if it were for sale since she does not like her own: "Ma voix est sans arrêt brouillée comme un radio en panne" (My voice is always raspy like a broken radio"; G 35). The identification with the father's voice resides in his Arabic linguistic abilities. And along with the voice comes the Arabic language which is a part of the narrator's identity. Since this part of identity is ignored in school, the narrator expresses it only when she is in the family home and by using her father's voice.

In the end, the narrator imagines that she has her father's mind since he has a good memory with which she would be able to remember vocabulary and grammar: "J'aimerais bien avoir sa tête [...] j'ai une mémoire idiote: je ne dis rien d'important..." ("I would like to have his head [...] I have a stupid memory: I don't say anything important..."; G 43). The father is described as having a good memory only because he can remember Arabic language. Through the appropriation of the father's memory, the girl grants herself access to his linguistic knowledge. Although, her will to learn Arabic language quickly vanishes when her father denies her ambivalence by confining her to

the limitedness of her Arabic identity: "Tu n'es plus ma fille si tu suis les Mau-Mau." ("You are not my daughter if you follow the Frenchies"; G 63). Under such circumstances her quest for the self is blocked. The father's rejection of an important part of his daughter's identity prevents her from expressing her French identity, and ironically, her Arabic identity as well.

According to Anika Lemaire, a French psychoanalyst, the achieving of the child's identity recognition lies in the symbolic unification of the body and also the ability to speak (*la parole*). In *Jacques Lacan*, Lemaire reduces the speech to the diagram of communication, that is, the speech depends on the quality of communication between the transmitter and the receiver. In *Georgette!*, the receiver is characterized by a constant muteness, whereas the transmitters, the teacher and the father, are characterized by a dogmatic discourse. In other words they impose on the girl their ideas by any means. Anika Lemaire writes in *Jacques Lacan*:

Lacan also tells us that in discourse the subject experiences his lack of being, as he is no more than represented in discourse, just as his desire is no more than represented there. The truth about himself, which language fails to provide him with, will be sought in the images of others with whom he will identify.

(Lemaire 73)

Accordingly, identity definition goes through two steps: unification of the body and the speech. The unified body is expressed through one single coherent discourse (Lemaire 89), but the confusing discourses the narrator is receiving from the teacher and the father prevent her from understanding her identity. That is why the narrator goes through a phase of muteness; she does not feel herself represented in the discourse

provided by her father, who is limited to the Arabic and Islamic aspects of her identity, since that discourse does not correspond to her ambivalence. And the discourse of the teacher denies her the right to follow the religion of her choice when she throws the words of the Prophet in the trash. Under these circumstances, the narrator's identity is marginalized and alienated since it is not recognized by the characters with whom she wishes to identify. On this account, she imposes an imaginary form of herself and places it above her own identity. This process triggers regression in the narrator's quest for herself and instead of developing her own personality, she finds herself in a constant demand for acceptance. She has to be accepted by society, but most importantly by the father who is the spiritual guide.

The fragmentation of the narrator's body is symbolic for the narrator's failure to construct an autonomous personality, an attempt to combine the two cultures through combining the teacher's hands and her father's voice. Since the narrator describes herself as an armless girl with a bad voice, she succeeds in constructing a perfect body that allows her to express both fragments of her identity. She can write French with her teacher's hands and speak Arabic with her father's voice: "Je vais voler les mains de la maîtresse et la voix de mon père [...] Je voudrais bien une voix de seigneur et des belles mains de princesse." ("I will steal the teacher's hands of the teacher and the voice of my father [...] I really want a voice of a lord and hands of a princess"; G 91).

Metaphorically, the father's voice and the teacher's hands constitute an ideal body for the narrator, but in reality, the fragments that constitute this body are diverging. That is why the combination of the two remains impossible. This thought echoes what Lacan says: "Ce que le sujet cherche dans la parole, c'est la réponse de l'autre." ("What the subject

searches in the speech (*la parole*) is the answer of the other”; Lacan 126). Thus, the narrator’s muteness becomes understandable since the answer she receives is nothing but rejection and denial. Speech becomes subsequently irrelevant to express her identity.

In *Georgette!*, the narrator never interacts with other characters except with Mireille, her classmate. Her response to questions, commands and requests by her father and her teacher are always faced with a rigid reaction on her part translated in her refusal to speak or to move. However, the narrator traces for the reader a special relationship that she has with one of her classmates, Mireille. She is the only character in the novel with whom the narrator verbally interacts: “Mireille est ma copine.” (“Mireille is my friend.”; G 11) she says. Through Mireille, the narrator finds herself in a better position to discover her identity, because she expresses herself freely. The quest for the self becomes then a reflection of the protagonist through her “like.” For Lacan, the meeting of the child with his like is his first step into the formation of his own identity; in *Jacques Lacan*, Lemaire writes:

The first dual relationship between the child and his like – another child, his own image reflected in the mirror, the mother herself or her substitutes (father) – does not provide the child with ‘subjectivity’ in the sense of ‘singularity’ given above to that term. According to Lacan, the most this relationship can do is to constitute a registration of the totality of a body previously lived as fragmented. (Lemaire 78)

Mireille then constitutes a post-fragmented body phase for the protagonist that allows her to unify her body and claim it hers. The description of Mireille’s character is very interesting in terms of the combination of voice or speech (*la parole*) and also of body parts. In the beginning her hands are described as hideous with dirt under her finger

nails: “Elle [Mireille] s’excuse de ses doigts sales et la maîtresse en cherche d’autres” (She [Mireille] apologizes for her dirty fingers and the teacher is looking for others”; G 11); “Je lui dis pas, moi, qu’elle a les mains pourries” (“Me, I don’t tell her that she has hideous hands”; G 13). Other than her ugly hands, Mireille is characterized by a speech impediment: “Pauvre Mimi! C’est triste et ce n’est pas drôle la vie d’une zozote. Avec son asticot dans la bouche, elle pleure une fois sur deux.” (“Poor Mimi! It is sad and not funny living with a lisp. With a maggot on her tongue, she cries a lot”; G 37). The relationship between the narrator and her like, Mireille, allows the narrator to reconcile with her body and be more accepting of her own identity. Through the comparison with a similar subject the young girl succeeds, if only for a short time, to access a phase of unification of her body. Because of this, she becomes accepting of her hands: “Mes mains et mes ongles sont toujours propres” (“My hands and finger nails are always clean”, G 11). As for her voice, she becomes more receptive to it even if she still does not like it, but finds it better than Mireille’s: “...au moins, j’ai pas la voix de Mireille moi.” (...at least, I don’t have Mireille’s voice”; G 43), she even goes further in her verbal performance and proposes to coach Mireille and help her to get rid of her lisp: “C’est dommage pour toi: t’as un asticot dans la bouche! [...] Je connais le moyen pour le faire sortir de ta bouche.” (“It’s too bad for you: you have a maggot on your tongue! [...] I know the way to get it out of your mouth.”; G 37).

Unlike her relationship with her father and her teacher, the protagonist succeeds in reaching a certain form of accomplishment when she is with her like which is characterized by more freedom and less obedience and submission. With Mireille, she is not obliged to submit her identity to her father’s and her teacher’s, quite the contrary, she

expresses a form of superiority comparing herself to her like which puts her at the level of attaining *jouissance*, because Mireille represents the break from the repetitions found in the teacher's and the father's discourses.

It is very important to mention another characteristic of Mireille that distinguishes her from her classmates: the color of her eyes: "Mireille me regarde avec des yeux de chewing-gum en boule. Sauf qu'ils sont beaux, les siens! Verts et bleus." (Mireille looks at me with eyes of a chewing-gum bubble. Except they are beautiful! Green and blue"; G 37-38). In *Georgette!*, Farida Belghoul uses symbolism, among which the symbolism of colors. In Islam, heaven is symbolized by the green color, ultimately this color is translated in the Islamic tradition in terms of faith and the following of Allah's path, it also represents the colors of the Algerian flag along with red and white. Sports teams in Algeria are always referred to by *Les verts* (the Green). By contrast, the blue color is one of the colors of the French flag along with the red, and the white and French sports teams are also referred to by *Les bleus* (the Blue). As we see, these two colors correspond to the difference between the Algerian and French flags and sports. For the narrator, Mireille represents the accomplishment of identity ideal. She does neither have her teacher's princess hands nor the beautiful voice of her father. However, Mireille's eyes unify the colors the narrator's identity, the green for the Islamic and Algerian identity, and the blue for French identity, therefore, Mireille's friendship is crucial for the narrator's identity constitution and maturing process as well because only through the reference of the like that the subject succeeds in his quest for the self. Like the metaphor of the socks, Mireille represents a symbol of unity. Mireille proves that *beurs'* social interactions are not limited by governmental institutions and family homes, they are also experienced with

French individuals at a very young age. Usually these relationships allow some *beurs* to express themselves freely without being reproached of betraying religion or disrespecting the law.

VI. Conclusion:

Georgette! as a proper noun remains an unresponsive call because the narrator refuses to be called such. She appears as the image of her clean notebook that changes sides according to Arabic or French writing. Also, she is torn between two contradictory cultures and two discourses of her uprooted father who lives with the myth of return, and her hypocritical teacher who maintains a discourse of dominance. On her journey from school to her family home, she goes from French to Arabic, and from a sentiment of love and hate to a sentiment of admiration and shame. And she always remains unnamed because of her undeveloped identity. In a recent interview, Farida Belghoul explained the title of *Georgette!*, which in addition to a French proper noun, phonologically, *Georgette!* echoes with *je rejette* meaning I reject (Kontrekulture).

The narrator rejects the two worlds in which she finds herself caught up, she does not feel she belongs to French society nor to her family home. She escapes to a third world that she controls, and in which she can be a Native American with bare feet, and a “savage” who does neither know limitations nor boundaries until she is brought back to the harshness of reality. She feels trapped by binary oppositions that oblige her to choose and forbid her any form of hybridity. Subsequently, the narrator is stuck between modernity and tradition, the barbaric and civilized, her country of origin and French society. Her attempts of deterritorialization, transformation into animals, and fragmentation of her body in order to construct a distinct identity away from the dictates

of her father and her teacher all fail under the pressure exercised by two non-compromising cultures. These attempts in conclusion constitute a failure in the quest for the self since the girl probably dies on her way between school and the family home, they also constitute a form of rejection of the established order and norms that forge the social tissue under a binary structure refusing a third alternative. On the other hand, the narrator does not seem to lose hope. In a monocultural society, she tries to come up with a hybrid identity that represents her two worlds of reference. The metaphor of the socks is an example for her attempts to reconcile her two conflicting identities. Mireille, her classmate and friend, is also symbolic of the narrator efforts to combine Berber origin with her French morals. In Mireille's eyes the narrator does not only see the representation of her identity, but she also sees a hope that one day a she grows up in a color blind society where she will only be treated based on her human characteristics rather than her origin, religion or the color of her skin.

Notes:

1. All the quotes mentioned in this chapter are translated from French to English unless it is mentioned otherwise.
2. French NGO founded in 1984 in order to combat all forms of racism.
3. Berber speaking region in Algeria located at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea.
4. An anti-racist march that took place in France in October 15th, 1983.
5. A French literary prize given to authors writing their first novel. It is discerned by a committee of last year's literary prizes laureates.
6. Jules François Camille Ferry (1832 – 1893). Lawyer and politician, he invented the obligatory free public school.
7. Being stuck in between two choices, was mainly used to refer to *beurs* during the 1980s.

8. Algerian war of independence against France (1954 – 1962).
9. French nationality law is historically based on the principles of *ius soli* (Latin for "right of soil. Children born in France (including overseas territories) to at least one parent who is also born in France automatically acquire French citizenship at birth (*double ius soli*).A child born in France to foreign parents may acquire French citizenship.
10. Muhammad, in full Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim (born 570, Mecca, Arabia [now in Saudi Arabia]—died June 8, 632, Medina), founder of the religion of Islam, accepted by Muslims throughout the world as the last of the prophets of God.
11. 1870 – 1940 was the period of the third French Republic regime; it established the majority of the governmental institutions.
12. French public university founded in 1257 and located in the fifth district of Paris.
13. Joseph-Arthur Comte de Gobineau, (born July 14, 1816, Ville-d'Avray, France—died October 13, 1882, Turin, Italy), French diplomat, writer, ethnologist, and social thinker whose theory of racial determinism had an enormous influence upon the subsequent development of racist theories and practices in western Europe.
14. Fifth Republic, system of government in France from 1958. Under the constitution crafted by Charles de Gaulle with the help of Michel Debré, executive power was increased at the expense of the National Assembly.

VII. Abbreviations:

Ecarts d'identité : EI.

Georgette!: G.

Kafka, pour une littérature mineure: DG.

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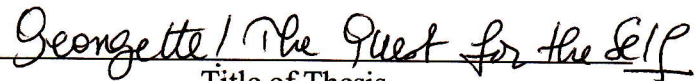
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