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Maria Flood, *France, Algeria and the Moving Image: Screening Histories of Violence 1963-2010*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2017. 151 pp. Notes, bibliography, and filmography. \$99.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-781886-92-2; \$12.50 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-781883-87-7.

Review by Michael F. O'Riley, Colorado College.

Maria Flood's book, *France, Algeria and the Moving Image: Screening Histories of Violence 1963-2010* is a study in the relationship between cinematic aesthetics and historical omission with regard to the complex relationship between France and Algeria, particularly during the period of active decolonization. The work's scope, however, is in many ways much larger than the historical period referenced in the title, in that long-standing colonial attitudes and structures of thought characterizing the relationship between the two countries permeates the work and the contexts surrounding the corpus of films studied. The work sets out to examine the interconnectedness of France and Algeria and, in particular, "how moving image art interacts with specific political, historical, and cultural moments to produce reflections of the past, as well as engaging with ongoing ideological effects of historical violence" (p. 2). Each of the films studied in the book reflects an interaction with a specific historical event that was subject to forgetting, obfuscation, or suppression by the state, such as the 17 October 1961 massacre in Paris of Algerians; female torture and the unrecognized role of Algerian women during the Algerian War; and the lurking persistence of colonial nostalgia in contemporary representations of Franco-Algerian histories.

The work is divided into three sections, in what the author refers to as a "tripartite analysis" (p. 135). The first section queries metaphors of absence and antagonism in the French films of Michael Haneke and Alain Resnais. The second section of the book moves to a consideration of the roles of Algerian women in conflicts such as the Algerian War in Assia Djebar's work, and the 1990s Civil War in work by Nadir Moknèche. The final section of the book considers Xavier Beauvois's film *Des hommes et des dieux* as a heritage film that reproduces a fantasy realm of colonial nostalgia and stereotype. By dividing the work in this fashion, Flood is able to engage in a deeper way with the potentiality and vicissitudes of memory-work and representation with regard to the histories of violence shared by France and Algeria. While the first section of the book exposes the representational dynamics of haunting memories and the persistent hold of neo-colonial exclusion related to the Algerian War in France, the second section explores how suppressed memories of Algerian women in Algeria might forge a new conception of what future spaces and conditions might be in Algeria. Thus, absent or repressed memories related to the state are played off one another, in a way, in both France and Algeria in the first two sections. The last section exposes how memory-work in relationship to these complex histories of shared

violence can easily fall back into the domain of colonial fantasy, a realm steeped in the values of French nationalism and republicanism.

Flood's pairing of Michael Haneke's 2005 film *Caché* with Alain Resnais's 1963 film *Muriel, ou le temps d'un retour* in chapters one and two of the first section of the book is most appropriate given her argument. Both films render visible suppressed and hidden histories of violence such as, respectively, the 17 October 1961 massacre of Algerians during peaceful protest, and the practice of torture by the French army during the Algerian War. Flood demonstrates how both of these films function aesthetically to expose historical blindness to these events and to highlight further the concealed prejudices and political exclusions that continue to linger today. For Flood, Haneke's film exposes the haunting remainders of colonial violence, prejudice, and exclusion related to the 17 October massacre. It does this by playing on the tropes of blindness and visibility. What is seen and not seen are in constant tension in the film, never allowing the buried history of violence and the underlying structures that have kept it hidden to escape sight. In much the same way, argues Flood, Resnais builds the unseen and buried history of violence related to torture during the Algerian War into an inescapable confrontation with the viewer. Although *Muriel* treats the intersection of memories of World War II and the Algerian War, it denies complete visual access to the violence done to the film's central figure Muriel, a misnamed Algerian woman. Both films function as excavations of histories of violence for Flood, but they do so by calling attention to the very silence and invisibility imposed on victims. This, too, is a history of violence that is exposed, and the choice of a film from 1963 and a more contemporary film to elucidate such dynamics functions to further underscore the protracted nature of this legacy of violence in France.

Section two of Flood's book moves to histories of violence in Algeria. Chapters three and four in this section of the work underscore the role of Algerian women in relation to the violence of the Algerian War and the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s. Although both chapters treat different eras, they both reflect on the relationship between women, politics, and the situation of contemporary Algeria. Chapter three treats Assia Djebar's film *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1979). Flood points out that the interviews Djebar conducts in the film with the rural women of Chenoua—whose roles in the Algerian War were frequently effaced or unacknowledged—constitute rare historical documents; they bear witness to a range of varied viewpoints on the War of Independence and contemporary Algeria. Djebar's work, Flood argues, functions to examine the past in order to pose questions about the present and to avoid nostalgia, historical amnesia, and national glorification. Similarly, Flood views Nadir Moknèche's film *Viva Laldjérie* (2004) as an attempt to envision a different future for contemporary Algeria after the terrorism and violence that marked the period of the Civil War. For Flood, Moknèche pushes historical violence to the margins of narrative in her film and, instead, creates a heterotopic space—part real, part fantasy—beyond the conventional representations of violence, terrorism, female oppression, and tragedy in Algeria. In this way, Moknèche is able to forge new spaces for alternative futures in Algeria. Much like Djebar, Moknèche works from an in-between space, neither France nor Algeria, neither distant nor immersed, as a way of documenting the plurality of histories and possibilities within Algeria.

The final section of Flood's book treats Xavier Beauvois's *Des hommes et des dieux* (2010), set in the peak years of the Algerian Civil War. Like Moknèche's film, Beauvois's work is also set in Algeria. However, for Flood, *Des hommes et des dieux* adopts a neo-colonial vision against the terroristic violence of the Civil War. Flood argues that the film evokes a nostalgic vision for

French presence in Algeria, one rooted in religious values and the republican ideology of universalism. This chapter's engagement with historical violence is centered on the film's depiction of an actual kidnapping that took place in 1996 of seven French Trappist monks by a terrorist faction. However, Flood points to the ways that, in contrast to other French films such as *Caché* and *Muriel* examined in the first section, Beauvois does not attempt to create awareness of the historical exclusions of Algerians, nor does he attempt to truly engage the history of Algeria, of terrorism, or of France's relationship to it. Instead, as she points out, the film engages in a cinematographic evocation of nostalgia "for a lost time of personal and spiritual harmony" (p. 113). The cinematography and *mise-en-scène* of the film construct a nostalgic haven that establishes a temporal and spatial disjunction where an unquestioned and proprietary space of the ex-colony is figured. Indeed, as Flood points out, certain historical inaccuracies, omissions, and elisions further contribute to this creation. Moreover, the monks' fates are intertwined and coded symbolically with Christian and Catholic tones, further establishing a spectatorial identification with a lost, colonial past rooted in French republicanism. Flood demonstrates in this section that, unlike the previous films, this film functions to elide any true engagement with the histories of violence that France and Algeria share. While *Viva Laldjérie* also depicts a fantasy world of sorts in its depiction of future spaces and possibilities for Algeria, it does so against the oppression and violence of the past. In contrast, Flood argues that Beauvois's film also projects an imaginary realm, but one that elides the violence of the past that underpins its representation of Algeria.

Flood's work engages closely with the interaction between the colonial past and its shared legacies of violence that link France and Algeria. The work's focus on the interaction between different types of historical omission and cinematic aesthetics offers an invitation to a wider consideration of the relationship between the political power and potential of film and violence in general. The book clearly invites the reader to draw further connections and implications between the problematics of historical omission and inclusion; it is a welcome addition to the corpus of works, existing and emerging, on the relationship between aesthetics, history, memory, and the colonial past. Given its focus on French and Francophone film, aesthetics and violence, the role of women, and the Algerian War, the work should be a welcome addition for scholars and students working in many different fields. Although the book at times leaves the reader wishing for a deeper consideration of the implications of historical omission and representation of the colonial past studied in relationship to contemporary France and Algeria, its focus on close readings of important films treating this period is most welcome. This book is important, particularly as France and Algeria continue to grapple with issues related to their shared pasts. Its focus on a cinematic corpus treating these histories of violence represents an important and relevant intervention that informs our understanding of the legacies that unite and divide France and Algeria today.

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