7. Augustine of Hippo in Colonial and Postcolonial Texts
Entangled Memory

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7.1 Introduction

In Maghrebi cultural discourse, we find a series of ancient historical and mythical figures that became important references for the production of memory and cultural identity. Due to many profound transformations in history, these figures, considered as mnemonic signifiers to which varying interpretations have been ascribed over time, were not integrated into the recorded continuum of tradition but have been (re)discovered at specific moments of cultural and political rupture or conflict for the sake of stabilizing collective forms of identity. We find emblematic characters as reference points, such as Jugurtha, the heroic Berber (Amazigh) king, the female Berber warrior-queen Dihya, *Kāhina* in Arabic,[1] being re-evaluated to establish a new collective identity independent of dominant traditions.[2] Consequently, if we are now witnessing the gradual revival of Saint Augustine as a long-hidden figure of North African memory, we might also consider the various references to that figure as involving a production of cultural, social, and political identity, of myth and counter-myth. This article will offer preliminary answers to such questions, describing decisive moments in the structure of Augustine's Maghrebi transmission.[3] My approach in this discussion is aligned with current research in the field of Memory Studies, which focuses on the entanglement and evolution of meaning in the symbolic and medial processes of transcultural tradition.[4] The primary emphasis will be on the context of Algeria, where Augustine was at first incorporated into the French colonial patterns of legitimacy and where he has recently been reclaimed as national symbol, his figure shaped into a site of entangled memory.

Probably of Berber origin via his mother Monnica,[5] Aurelius Augustinus was born in 354 AD in Thagaste, a small town in Numidia (today's Souk Ahras, Algeria), and he died in Hippo Regius, today's Annaba, which at that time was the second-largest North African port after Carthage. He was already a prominent rhetorician and thinker before he converted to Christianity. From his baptism in Milan in 387 onward, Augustine dedicated his life and work to promulgating the Catholic faith. He spent all but five years of his life in the Roman provinces of Numidia and Africa Proconsularis.[6] Augustine openly acknowledged his African origins, expressing deep attachment to the continent of his birth; after his return to the African continent in 388, he did his best to overcome a growing tension between his identities as a *homo afer* and a *homo romanus*.[7] The decisive category defining his social and existential position was his affiliation with the Catholic Church.[8] This affiliation reflected an intellectual movement beyond Augustine's roots in Cicero, Mani, and Plato:[9] a process involving profound self-reflection, as articulated not only in the *Confessions*[10] but also in letters and sermons.[11] After his death, Augustinus Hipponensise emerged as an exemplary representative of the late Roman Empire – a status attested to in his first *Vita* (*Vita Augustini*) written in 437 by his disciple Possidius, the North African bishop of Calama.[12]

Of course, as one of the four most important Church Fathers, Augustine became a pivotal figure in the historiography of Christianity and Christian thinking, with its centering on Western culture; his African origins appear to increasingly recede from that history.[13] Although Augustine's status as an indigenous member of North African culture was never hidden, it has never been a focal point of his Western reception. With the Vandal invasion and conquest of Carthage in 439, the Roman State Church lost its influence in North Africa. A complex process of Christianity's attenuation now began, with eventual Islamization and Arabization, beginning with the *fatḥ* (Islam's introduction) in 647 and reaching a crucial stage with the conquest of Carthage in 698. The Christian and Jewish minorities now received protected (*dhimmī*) or tolerated minority status inside the new Arabo-Islamic societies. The number of bishops steadily diminished as Christian communities became ever more isolated. The eleventh century then saw the truncation of pontifical relations, marking what Mohamed Talbi has described as the "breakdown of Maghrebian Christianity" (323) within the Islamic epoch.[14] In examining this course of events, it becomes clear that the shrinkage of the Maghreb's Christian communities was not so much the result of direct religious repression but rather of profound political, social, and cultural changes over centuries. Presumably,

the idea of *jāhilīya*,[15] a demotion of previous knowledge and memory emerging from the region as part of an 'insignificant' prehistory, also contributed to the process. Thus, we can consider both that era and Augustine's thinking as a site of oblivion.[16]

Generally speaking, it is clear that Western Christian reception and specific accentuation of the Augustinian heritage worked hand in hand with its geographical dislocation during centuries of change in North African political and religious systems, identity, and culture. It is important to note that there was a fundamental, albeit gradual, rupture in memory of the historical figure of Augustine within local traditions.[17] Augustine was, for the most part, a hidden figure in African discourse until the French first occupied Algerian coastal towns in 1830 and then transformed the territory into a settler colony in 1848. If that Church Father was modeled in colonial times as 'Latin African,' if he is now labeled as an Algerian, an Amazigh, or a Carthaginian Philosopher, this does not result from historical continuity but rather constructs a specific cultural heritage by modeling Augustine each time as a 'figure of memory.' As one of the Catholic emblems of colonial culture, Augustine was mostly excluded from Maghrebi discourse until a postcolonial revival of his presence after 2000. In this light, one question that needs to be asked is whether such rediscovery would have been possible without the colonial construction and interpretation of Augustine as an African that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth century: an episode of knowledge production that initiated a complex process of entangled memory that remains to be fully explored.

7.2 Augustine's African Identity in Colonial Times

In the nineteenth century, within the Algerian and Maghrebi context, a new mnemonic inscription of Augustine was initiated through intensive work by French protagonists.[18] Emphasis on his Latin-African origin as no less than a decisive element in Algerian culture culminated in texts by the French colonial writer Louis Bertrand, whose literary work was deeply inspired by Flaubert's *Salammbô* and his own travels in the 'South,' as he referred to Algeria.[19] With a notion of *Afrique latine* as his starting point, Bertrand established a new vision of the Roman legacy in North Africa from his distinctly European perspective, while also creating a highly potent Augustinian portrayal in his novel *Saint Augustin* (1913).

In any case, even before Bertrand, the establishment of Catholic institutions intended to evangelize the local population laid fertile ground for reshaping the figure of Saint Augustine and for his renaissance in colonial Algeria.[20] Important Church representatives such as Antoine-Louis-Adolphe Dupuch and Charles Martial Lavigerie contributed to this reshaping with specific strategies. In the first years of colonization, Dupuch, as Bishop of Algiers, initiated a forcible public commemoration of Augustine. In 1867, Cardinal Lavigerie, founder of the *Pères Blancs* and *Sœurs blanches* congregations as well as of the *École missionaire*,[21] was appointed archbishop of Algiers retaining this position when he was also appointed archbishop of Carthage in 1884. Lavigerie was the apostolic delegate for Africa and consultant for the Holy See in Rome; he was expected to organize the indigenous population's conversion. His resuscitation of the ancient African Church in the Augustinian tradition, for the sake of 'returning' to Africans what was purportedly their old religion, needs to be understood in this light. To propagate Christianity in Algeria, he founded the *Œuvre de Saint-Augustin*. The institution's initial focus was on the Kabyle population, reflecting a belief that the Berbers (Imazighen) would turn out to be allies and be easy to assimilate,[22] in light of their perceived status as representing a (glorified) Roman past. To underscore what Dirèche describes as a "desire to make Algeria into a cradle of a modern and activist Christianity" ("Les écoles catholiques" 2), Lavigerie referred frequently to the Antique Church, to its four saints and ritual sites. The African origin of the modern Christianity's precursor, as he referred to Augustine of Hippo, thus seemed highly useful in disseminating Christian faith to the Algerian population, beginning with a Christianization of Berber culture.

While the Catholic Church's Algerian strategy aimed to establish and consolidate Christian faith in the country and convince the indigenous population to adopt a new 'true' faith, Louis Bertrand addressed his historical, novelistic, and journalistic writing to Algeria's European population, proposing the idea of *French* national renewal. Bertrand's program for what Jean Déjeux has described as a "physical, intellectual, national, and social regeneration" (Déjeux, "Louis Bertrand" 150) of France was, then, to start in *Algérie française*. Bertrand came to Algiers in 1891 as a *lycée* teacher; he would remain for a decade, during which he did a great deal of traveling around the country. In 1895, together with his friend the archeologist Stéphane Gsell, he visited the Christian Roman ruins of Tipasa, an experience he would describe as a groundbreaking event – something like the revelation and incarnation of the concept of *Afrique latine* that would continue to strongly influence his think-

ing.[23] In Bertrand's model, intrinsically related to the concept of empire, the African Roman era was an important reference-point for modeling the concept of *Algérie française*; it was defined as part of the old Latin-speaking world, now turned quasi-naturally into French territory, an "Afrique latine toute contemporaine" (Déjeux, "Louis Bertrand" 149). The Roman Empire was, then, a basis for justifying a French conquest that Bertrand labeled as a *return* serving to recapture a lost heritage.

While references to the Ancient African Church were vital to French clergy's missionary strategies in Algeria, Bertrand was himself strongly influenced by the idea of the Romanization of African culture. Hence, the Latin language served as the criterion interlinking ancient and French culture, both of which he viewed as equally of Roman origin. In a public speech in 1922, Bertrand expressed his conviction that "true Africa – that is ourselves, we the Latins, we the civilized ones," i.e. Rome's European successors, were now returning to the African continent.[24] His speech's title eloquently encapsulated his central thesis: *La France est héritière de l'Afrique latine*. (France is the heir to Latin Africa.) Here, then, the colonial occupation was justified as a form of regional continuity and recovery, the Muslim-Arab era deemed an accident or 'disruption' of the civilizational process, a gap between North Africa's heydays. For Bertrand, the act of colonial occupation was anything but barbaric. On the contrary, it guaranteed new prosperity, helping to overcome the 'disruption.' In several of his writings, he articulated an imperial vision of space, a vision closely linked to this concept of *Afrique latine.* Bertrand was one of a number of authors harnessing that concept to, as it were, symbolically conquer the new territory, rendering it part of the French empire.[25] In this manner, the colonial expansion was meant to contribute to the renewal of France, which at the end of the nineteenth century found itself in an economic and cultural crisis after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

Nevertheless, the symbolic conquest of Algeria that followed the military occupation, grounded in claimed ties to Roman antiquity, did not come out of nowhere. We find the same conceptual framework in other, earlier, French colonial contexts, including in Egypt. Thus, the cultural conquest is essentially a mimetic act, "a repetition of a repetition" (Hell 215). A discursive distinction is manifest in the Algerian context, with specific interest in Augustine evident in Bertrand's framework. The titular saint as presented in his *Saint Augustin* (1913) served as nothing short of an emblematic representation of his *Afrique latine,* reoccupied by the Third Republic's army to fulfill the nation's revital-

izing *mission civilisatrice*. The novel of this renowned writer was often being referred to and establishes, by literary success, a concept for Augustine's construction as a Latin African figure. Placing Augustine in his historical, local African context and using a narrative strategy suitable to the task, Bertrand aims at reviving Augustine as a literary persona attractive to a contemporary readership. To that end, Bertrand incorporates specific episodes from the *Confessions* (396-97 AC) into his narrative, culminating in the saint's baptism in 387 AC, but also covering the time after the conversion, as recounted by Possidius in his *Vita Augustini*.

Bertrand's third-person narration idealizes Augustine as both a moral-ethical role-model of African origin and an exceptional figure. Yet this idealization is part of a broader strategy that situates the *Confessions*' genius in the transmission of a specific experience on North African soil, as encapsulated in the following sentence: "It was here, at Madaure, at Thagaste, during the eager years of adolescence, that he collected the seeds of sensations and images that would later blossom into ardent and effervescent metaphors in his *Confessions*."[26] This was, in effect, the sort of experience Bertrand himself would have in Algeria, where extraordinary sensations and images would shape his own literary production. North Africa no longer functioned as an exotic space for literary creation but rather as a forgotten world within Western culture. Writing from a transparently anti-modernist perspective, he idealized rural life, extolling the positive effects of European colonial contact with the local landscape – but also warning against the settlers intermingling with the indigenous population. In line with Gobineau's theory of unequal human races, he proposed an ethnic difference between the Muslim population and an ancient Latin African race that, it would appear, included Augustine in its ranks.

Bertrand's ideas about Augustine exerted a powerful influence, as he was the first author who, writing within a colonial tradition, restored Augustine's Latin African face – this through construction of a new mnemonic figure inside a more complex French political myth. For Bertrand, the historical Augustine represented a powerful, yet geographically marginal, figure. As an Alsatian, he saw himself as embodying that figure. The marginal personality here emerges as a specific cultural type incorporating significant national values, in this case Catholic values, which benefited from their distance from a supposedly decadent center: Rome for Augustine, France for Bertrand. In this way Bertrand rendered Augustine, the Church Father, into a utopian symbol of a renewed French nation. Since Bertrand thus offers an excellent example of how French colonial mythology was propagated in and by literature, it is

unsurprising that *algérianiste* authors such as Jean Pomier strongly criticized his writing and viewed 'de-Bertrandizing'[27] Algerian colonial literature as one of their primary tasks.

Continuing the traditions of Augustine's religious and literary, but also archeological modeling,[28] in the twentieth century, the Algerian Catholic Church made its own important contribution to promulgating and reshaping the saint's image so as to reemphasize his North African origins. In 1930, the Church organized an ambitious program dedicated to the saint's memory as part of a festival tellingly named the "Centenary of the French Conquest,"[29] intended to represent a revival of the ancient African Church. Furthermore, Church representatives added a second anniversary to that of the 1830 conquest, speaking directly of "two glorious centenaries,"[30] the second one being the 1500th anniversary of Augustine's death in 430. We thus find the Archbishop of Algiers, Monseigneur Leynaud, underlining, in his introduction to the festival publication, "the genius and virtues of the great African Doctor" (VIII). Likewise, locations important to Augustine's biography such as Thagaste and Bône now became important as sites of religious celebration.[31] In one ceremony in the south of Bône, at the foot of the hill where the Augustinian cathedral was located, Papal Legate and Archbishop of Paris Jean Verdier blessed the masses with one, particular famous relic, Augustine's aforementioned right forearm bone, handed over from Pavia to the community of Bône in the 1840s.[32] Verdier here spoke of the Roman ruins as blessed land. As Jan Jansen indicates, the entire underlying discourse had the effect – here as well – of suggesting that a Latin Christian revival was emerging in Algeria in the face of Islamic and Arabic culture.[33]

Writing before Jansen, Patricia Lorcin underscored the dispossession produced by an overarching process of renaming and classifying local material culture using Western terms and concepts.[34] After the military conquest, this imaginary symbolic collection of North African territory, implying a basic resemblance between "Rome and France in Africa", was consolidated, with the foundation of the diocese of Algiers (1838), the annexation of the *départements* of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine as French territory in 1848 and the establishment of a civil French administration in 1871. The preceding infringement of accepted international law through France's occupation was presented, in line with what I have argued, as a simple return to one's own territory for the sake of reanimating a past Golden Age.[35] To follow Lorcin "the spatial and ideological transition from East to West" (305) included a particular spiritual linking of the settlers with the African soil:

> Justifying a French presence in Algeria by attempting to shrug off Islam was one thing, but binding the settlers spiritually to the soil of the land as a regional extension of France required more than heroes of conquest and images of Arab 'ineptitude' in the face of modernity. … the French in Algeria created a tradition of regionality that bound them to France (Lorcin 297).

Consequently, the emphasis on the Latin origins of French settler culture was supposed to create a specific commemorative group and distinguish the settlers from the Arabic and Berber population. The majority indigenous population was marginalized and "lost" its cultural heritage when the imperial culture imposed its Latin roots and cut off the institutional support required for maintaining awareness and knowledge of other traditions (Lorcin 308).

There are other clearly identifiable historical stations of the ecclesiastic, political, and literary appropriation of Augustine in colonial North Africa, and also aspects that diverge from defining the saint as an African representing a settler culture of Latin origin. In René Pottier's *Saint Augustin, le berbère* (1945), for instance, we find a different version of the French colonial myth. Unlike Bertrand, Pottier foregrounds Augustine's supposed Berber identity, in line with the myth still visible in Lavigerie's "Kabyle bon Chrétien."[36] Pottier insists on Augustine's indigenous origin, presenting a political parallel to present times by underscoring presumed close resemblances between the French and Berber peoples in his preface.[37] This biography, in offering a conceptual schema centered around racial difference and, at the same time, cultural affinity, articulates an essentially ahistorical vision of Augustine as a pro-African, anti-Roman partisan. In elaborating on this vision, Pottier abstained from citing the historical fact of Augustine's struggle against the African Donatist Church.[38] When Pottier suggests an intent to convert the Berber Muslim population,[39] in the biography's epilogue, we may understand this in the context of an Algerian nationalist movement that already existed and was growing at the time.[40]

In regard to the three levels of re-appropriation addressed here – those evident in the symbolic politics of the Algerian Catholic Church, in the literary writings of Bertrand and Pottier, and in official colonial commemorations – it would appear that Augustine became an important reference point within French colonial society. The examples outlined here show us that this construction had a powerful impact, initiating a process of foundational, symbolic historico-cultural rerooting on North African soil.[41] Strikingly, this process unfolded as a sharp paradox: the construction of a Western-

ized saint's Africanness offered new possibilities for postcolonial culture in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, its media, art, and literature, to reclaim, carry forward, and create Augustine and the larger Roman past from a new, suitable cultural perspective. On the strength of questioning the ideological content of this knowledge, the independent nations of the Maghreb created later on their own collective memory and discovered Augustine as their own cultural ancestor.

7.3 Postcolonial Memory of Saint Augustine: Political, Cultural, and Literary Discourses

To better understand how this situation changed – how Augustine took on that historical-mnemonic role as a "present past" – we need to understand the specific dynamic of postcolonial nation-building, with its creation of new patterns of legitimacy and patriotic identification. Unlike Western countries, when it comes to the precolonial period, postcolonial states such as Algeria do not have at their disposal the idea – however illusory – of a long-term historical continuity, usually based on a single language, a continuity that presents an overarching cultural narrative to all members of a nation or society. On the contrary, in postcolonial states, social, political, and cultural institutions – together with historiography, collective memory, and the social imaginary – are shaped fundamentally by imperialist structures and categories. Hence, in the Algerian context, a radical break with French colonial ideology was necessary, all the more so in that post-independence Algeria was organized along the lines of French Jacobin centralism and framed around the idea of a nation-state consolidating and fostering authoritarian structures. Accordingly, one of the most important responsibilities incurred by Algerian political leaders and officials was to create a new national consciousness, grounded in what were considered appropriate models of history and memory that would transcend French colonial ideology. In their nation-building efforts, many postcolonial states have made use of an anticolonial "structure of response," as Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink puts it,[42] a counter-historical discourse aimed at supporting a new collective awareness.

For its part, post-independence Algerian discourse was – and continues to be – based on an assumption that national unity is grounded in the Arabic language and Islamic religion. As the state's leading party and main political-military force in the struggle against France, the FLN hoped its program

would reunify a population that was deeply divided in the postwar period – that it would 'heal' the wounds resulting from a massive political, social, and cultural rupture. When public actors referred to historical themes and problems, they aimed at producing new forms of a cultural imaginary detached from colonial history. In this framework, the anti-colonial paradigm, established to foster a new form of Algerian identity, referred back to colonial knowledge and categories.[43] Augustine's legacy was not entirely forgotten, but, when the question of Roman antiquity happened to be raised, was approached as in conflict with official nationalist ideology. Some politicians expressly denied Augustine a place in Algerian history.[44] A number of authors promptly rejected him for purported colonial motifs in his work.[45] But this certainly was a response to the colonial period's shaping of Augustine as a Latin African figure of memory.

Several authors thus presented the historical figure of Augustine as an enemy of, even a traitor to, the Berber cause. They here referred to the saint's struggle against Donatism. In reality, the conflict between Catholics and Donatists in the early fifth century was of a complex religious nature; it did not divide Roman and indigenous believers. The Donatists, who had fought, sometimes violently, against the Roman Catholic Church in North Africa, were the object of various imaginations in Algeria's post-independence discourse, elevated into the first indigenous independence, their anti-Catholic struggle rendered into a basal form of anti-colonial (anti-Roman) resistance. From this perspective, the Donatists are conceived as the colonized and oppressed of the ancient world. Augustine, their opponent, is framed as a treacherous impediment to their autonomy from Rome. This reading clearly projected the binary, colonizer/colonized structure of the modern period into an entirely different historical situation defined by problems of religious dominance and affiliation. At the same time, an opposition between African Donatists and (Western) Roman Catholics overlooked a basic fact: African identity and Catholicism were not mutually exclusive, as Augustine and hundreds of bishops in North Africa demonstrated, especially if they generally maintained a certain distance from Rome, as was the case with Saint Augustine.

On the basis of various articles in official Algerian print media such as *Horizons*, *La Tribune*, and *El Watan* from the late 1980s onwards, we can identify a vibrant debate about the value of Augustinian memory for the post-independence state's identity. The articles are written by religious authorities as well as journalists, scholars, and literary writers. While the articles address

a range of themes, two approaches seem especially salient: a factually inspired approach, and a political one that directly focuses on Augustine against the backdrop of Algeria's modern political-national situation. To commemorate antiquity and, even more, to invoke the memory of symbolic Christian personae such as Augustine, are highly political acts: at play here above all is an understanding of the postcolonial present as the culmination of a process of overcoming the colonial past. That present is defined, at a basic level, as the recuperation of a heritage from which Algerians have been forcibly alienated – a heritage marked by dispossession.

A milestone in Augustine's memorialization as a North African, which therefore applies to the region as a whole, was the now-famous *Augustinus Afer* colloquium of 2001, held in Algiers and Annaba, organized in cooperation with the University of Geneva, and conducted under the authority of the Algerian president. Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the colloquium's central theme, the scholarly presentations were framed by political speech, and the entire event thus emerged as a highly symbolic commemorative act.[46] It marked the first official Algerian recognition of Augustine and, as it were, claim to his memory. Besides the interesting interdisciplinary research contributions on Augustine as African on the basis on very different methods, this official national contextualization is very striking for multiple reasons. To begin with, a Christian saint who had been forgotten after 1962, or else rejected as a purported opponent of the Donatists, was now being reified as part of the Algerian nation's official memory. Whereas Jugurtha and Massinissa embodied a combative and patriotic heroism as resistant warriors, Augustine was viewed as a North African who represented universal values. Also, it was in Bouteflika's interest to employ Augustine as a symbol of peace and reconciliation on three different levels. First, he wished to overcome the East-West divide and reconcile the Arabic and European worlds.[47] Second, he wished to recover lost knowledge, reconciling Algeria with an ancient, pre-Islamic past tied to humanist ideals of education.[48] But a third level is also implicitly present here: Bouteflika's domestic Algerian politics. With Augustine, the Christian saint, serving as a symbol of diversity and thus functioning as a unifying figure, the Algerian president could use this memorialization to promote his own project of national reconciliation. After the civil war of the 1990s, the population was deeply divided between victims and perpetrators. The *années noires* had been marked by horrendous violations of human rights by government armed forces as well as by Islamists, and political murder and group massacres were common. After the end of this conflict, a domestic politics of

reconciliation was needed. This shed a different light on Bouteflika's political motives and, in fact, the nature of this colloquium in 2001. Since his election in 1999 under dubious democratic circumstances, he had been on a quest for legitimacy; that project became a kind of personal mission.[49] In 1999, he proposed a first referendum on a *concorde civile*. Augustine, in short, was meant to help recreate an overarching collective imaginary for Algerian society.[50]

Whereas Western discourse considers Saint Augustine as a thinker whose ideas have universal significance, the figure of this Church saint has been adopted and translated into the Maghrebi context through his bridging of East and West. Alongside this figure's theological, literary, and philosophical contributions, his geographic and cultural origins came into focus there. In the process, the potency of these origins also raised the possibility of a certain cultural anteriority, as has been suggested in certain discursive frameworks. Whatever the reasons, one of the key authors in the history of Western thought has emerged as a privileged figure in the collective symbolism of the contemporary Maghreb.

If official forms of commemoration correspond to implicit or explicit political intentions, commemoration functions rather differently in literary texts. Creative writers often articulate highly personal perspectives, aesthetic and otherwise. In the Maghreb, Augustine's thematic presence has tended to be located outside a political-ideological framework. In this context, we find complex, ambiguous, and sometimes dissonant representations, aimed either at constructing new imaginaries, or at transcribing, overwriting, or deconstructing the collective myths surrounding Augustine. In this manner, Maghrebi Augustine-tied literary production, while developed in a context of established colonial and postcolonial memory, has taken its own expressive paths.

The (re)appearance, presentation, and development of the Augustinian figure in Maghrebi discourse reflects a process of re-appropriation of a confiscated heritage; at the same time, it is aimed at encouraging the emergence of a new understanding of the Maghrebi present. Observing this process, Augustine's interpretive recovery of a North African identity and the construction of that identity into a place of memory allow us to gain a more general understanding of the ways in which both cultural identities and individual poetics have developed in the Maghreb. Moreover, that process sheds light on the general interconnections between contemporary literary discourse and questions of history, identity, and cultural belonging – and finally, sheds light on

the ways such discourse reveals the complex processes at work in the construction of cultural memory itself.

Perhaps more than any other postcolonial Maghrebian text, and certainly in a unique fashion, Jean Amrouche's essay on Jugurtha – an essay that emerged as a key reflection of a growing national awareness – has opened up a new perspective on Augustine. Apart from scattered comments on Augustine as a political and cultural figure of North African origin, the first literary explorations and essayistic reflection began in the 1980s. In her novel *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985), Assia Djebar was one of the first Algerian authors to refer to Augustine as a compatriot and role model, though she never consolidated her vision on a larger scale.[51] For his part, the Moroccan-born writer Kebir Ammi discovered Augustine while engaged in a process of intensive reading as he mourned his Algerian father's death. In an interview, Ammi explained that, as an adolescent, he encountered a French translation of the *Confessions* in a bookstore. He was inspired to read the book because he had come across a reference to the saint being Algerian like his father. This early fascination with Augustine was, Ammi indicates, a primary inspiration for his becoming a writer.[52] In books such as *Thagaste* (1999) and *Sur les pas de Saint Augustin* (2001), he has explored the complex intertwining between Maghrebi and Western history. Both books address key aspects of Augustine's biography in order to offer complex personal and poetic reflections that rise above entrenched ideological positions.

Djebar and Ammi each underscore a perspective anchored in the contemporary world; in both their work, it is narrators who are engaged in the mnemonic process, thus preventing political instrumentalization and a reductive interpretation of their poetic visions of antiquity. In the political commitment it articulates, Abdelaziz Ferrah's novel *Moi, Saint Augustin, Aurègh fils de Aferfan de Thagaste* (2004) contrasts with their approach. Ferrah retells the first part of Augustine's autobiography up to the point of his conversion, with famous episodes of the saint's life presented in the framework of an emphasized Berber identity. That emphasis is already placed in the novel's title, pointing to the saint's name as a Romanization of Berber *aurègh* (gilded). Situated in a familiar, secular, and Berber environment, Augustine serves here as a representative of contemporary Berber consciousness. Ferrah makes use of the Augustinian model in reverse. Augustine's story of his personal development presents readers, famously, with an exemplary movement toward Christian faith, a conversion process accompanied by intense self-interrogation, doubts, shifts, and sermons, culminating in a rupture that lays the founda-

tion for the entire text: a movement often seen as the basic model for Western autobiographical writing and the narrative account of subjectivity formation. In Ferrah's novel, by contrast, the focus is not on Augustine's evolution *toward* such a Christian identity giving meaning to the saint's former life. Instead, he focuses on a social, political, and intellectual development *originating* with and driven by his Berber character. The cultural strategy behind this literary modeling is the construction of Berber identity not in an essentializing way but in terms of a transcultural Maghreb with strong Muslim-Arabic, Berber, and Christian elements. Significantly, this approach, defining *berbérité* as one important dimension of a cultural and historical model for the Maghreb, is not linked to the Berber struggle for political rights and recognition as a minority. In locating Augustine's intellectual formation within a Berber tradition, Ferrah's novel thus seeks its inclusion within an historical awareness being transmitted to new generations of North Africans. Ferrah is responding to concrete social and political developments, his literary production thus contributing to the development of a new Berber historical paradigm that, starting in the 1980s, became what Dirèche has called the "texture of historical writing, in a way the grammar of historical narration" ("Convoquer le passé" 493) in that national context.

This rewriting of Algerian history rests on one specific premise: that Berber culture is the substrate upon which the whole Maghreb developed, a substrate that not only lost recognition, but was effaced from official historiography. Following the anti-French, revolutionary paradigm, in the official history, the birth of the Algerian nation is described out of an independence movement grounded exclusively in Arabo-Islamic identity. Such a homogenizing vision, constructed at the expense of the Berber component, involved a falsification of history. Inspired by humanistic and Enlightenment thinking, Ferrah and other authors responded to the falsification. Ferrah's focus on Augustine and other pre-Islamic figures, years after the Algerian colloquium devoted to the saint, was also a direct and specific response to Bouteflika's political appropriation of that figure.

7.4 Coda

What might appear paradoxical is in fact the reality of memorialization: ancient figures have been frequently selected not only on account of their individual and complex biographies but for having indigenous origins, i.e. *an-*

cienneté and nativeness, and because of their legendary defense of the local population. Hence, although they are meant to transmit an idea of homogeneity, their presence is not conveyed by local *memoria* in a steady stream of tradition. Rather, they are rediscovered with temporal distance, and mostly in times of crisis or cultural dissonance; they are appropriated and rewritten, each time anew, in order to establish a collective memory of a heterogeneous population. We have seen that representation of Augustine of Hippo in the modern Maghreb is the product of layers of memory that together constitute a complex figure of identification. Recognizing this complex structure offers groundwork for future research aimed at identifying and systematizing the important stages of Augustine's reception in Algeria and the wider Maghreb from colonial times to the present.

While he was treated as an important cultural figure in the colonial-era French Maghreb, after independence Augustine was mostly rejected, becoming a latent, maybe even haunting memory. This situation only changed after 2000. Regardless of the concrete objectives of every representation – be they linked to rejection, to his deployment as cultural myth, to the fragmentation and deconstruction of collective symbols, or to more complex poetic strategies – Saint Augustine has become a decisive reference in Maghrebi cultural memory, in a locus outside iconic Western tradition.[53] Nevertheless, it is important to note that recuperation of his African heritage was enabled by nineteenth-century French religious authorities and colonial writers who, rediscovering loci deemed Latin territory, declared Augustine's African origin as a symbol of superior (settler) civilization in order to create a new commemorating group. The colonial stamp thus placed on Augustine, implying a spiritual continuity between Latin antiquity and the French empire, deliberately omitted all reference to the long Arabo-Islamic history of the Maghreb; this clearly had an impact on the (mis)recognition of any Christian saint in the post-independent era. Augustine could not be a role model for a nation whose self-perception was based deeply on anti-colonial beliefs. Still, it is striking that a cautious recuperative process did take place in postcolonial Algeria, leading to official commemoration, even an 'Algerianization' of Augustine becoming a figure at the intersection of concurrent interpretations. It remains to be seen whether this process of entangled memory, which lays claim to antiquity and acknowledges a historical link with pre-Islamic figures, will persist in post-Bouteflika Algeria. As it happens, the commemoration of a Maghrebi Augustine has been experiencing a boom in Tunisia.[54]

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Notes

1 See well-known novels such as: Salim Bachim. *Le chien d'Ulysse.* Paris: Gallimard, 2001.

2 This involves independence from French colonial myths directed against Arabo-Islamic tradition and refers to a spectrum of anticolonial discourses.

3 This article, as part of a larger research project, covers several topics of my work "Rewriting Antiquity: Saint Augustine as Mnemonic Figure in Francophone Texts of the Maghreb", *Études Littéraires Africaines* 49 (2020) 189-204. For more information about the interdisciplinary research project *North African representations of Augustine of Hippo,* see: http://dfg-projekt-uni-koeln.uni-mannheim.de/Start/.

4 I refer to recent Memory Studies that created concepts as 'travelling' or 'multidirectional memory' supposed to concentrate especially on the entangledness, the concurrent dynamic and polyphony of acts of remembering on a synchronic and diachronic level, see Rothberg (2009), Erll (2011). Especially on entangled interpretations of history "taking into account multiple perspectives, asymmetries, and cross-referential mnemonic practices", see Feindt et al., 24-44, 35.

5 Lancel explains that Berber, at this time, meant above all "of indigenous blood," which was probably (statistically speaking) the case with Augustine. But Lancel rejects any attribution of a specifically Berber personality to Augustine as biased (Lancel, "Augustin (saint)").

6 For relevant biographies of Augustine see Brown (2000[1967]), O'Donnell (2005) and Fox (2015). For a critical overview of ancient and modern biographies of Augustine, and, also of fictional and non-fictional forms of counter-memory centered on Augustine's life, including criticism of the iconic approach to this Church figure, see Baker-Brian (2007). Therese Fuhrer offers an intriguing introduction to Augustine's life and work linked to existing research base (2004).

7 See Conybeare (2017) who explores the surviving letters written by Saint Augustine and shows that he perceived his African origin differently after his homecoming in 388. Although in Rome and Milan he had been recognized as a foreigner through his pronunciation of Latin, he was now considered too Roman at home. His return was thus marked by ambivalence, complicating his role as both an African native and a Christian (115).

8 Lancel observes that "le seul vrai particularisme à retenir chez l'évêque d'Hippone est son sentiment d'appartenir à une Église qui défendait son autonomie au sein de la catholicité et devant le siège de Rome." ("Augustin (saint)" 10).

9 See Chadwick (1986), especially relevant is chapter 1, 1-31.

10 This text can be understood as the foundation for all the historical and biographical studies concerning Augustine's life until 396 AC; while Possidius's *Vita Augustini* laid biographical ground for his period as bishop.

11 Augustine introduced the Western paradigm for autobiographical writing. As Peter Brown indicates, he "not only offered himself as a subject for biography; he showed how it should be done" (488).

12 See the text editions Geerlings (2005) and Bastiaensen (42-63). A new text commentary is prepared by Moritz Kuhn (forthcoming, 2021).

13 We thus find Eric Leland Saak stating bluntly that "[i]n the period between Augustine's death in 430 and the year 1000, [he] lost his African heritage: he became a European saint" (467).

14 Mohamed Talbi gives a detailed description of the lengthy process this "dissolution of Maghrebian Christianity" meant (323, 326).

15 The term refers to the pre-Islamic period and means the "age of ignorance".

16 See Porra, "Des lieux d'oubli".

17 At the moment, no documentary evidence is found of a relevant local *memoria* of Augustine from the Middle Ages until the French colonization.

18 Before the nineteenth century Augustine has been translated and intensively studied in the context of France's historiography extending from the Middle Ages to Jansenism and in literary tradition.

19 See the biographical introduction Déjeux, "Louis Bertrand (1866-1941)". See also : Bertrand, *Sur les routes du Sud*.

20 This process was complicated because the religious and political authorities had different interests. The colonial administration wanted to avoid violent conflicts with the local population, Lavigerie thus having to renounce his project of Christian cities. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church established a long-term strategy for a Christian majority. On the constitution of the Algerian Catholic church, see Saaïdia (2018).

21 See Dirèche, "Les écoles catholiques".

22 Dirèche also notes : "La Kabylie, plus qu'ailleurs en Algérie, fut tout à la fois une région d'expérimentations politiques et une région qui nour-

rit de multiples projections idéologiques et fantasmatiques" ("Les écoles catholiques" 3).

23 "Je voyais se lever devant mes yeux, l'image d'une Afrique inconnue de moi et pourtant fraternelle" (Bertrand, *Sur les routes du Sud* 216). See also Lüsebrink, "Imperiale Träume"; Lorcin (2002); Dunwoodie (2010); Hell (2019).

24 "[…] la véritable Afrique, c'est nous – nous les Latins, nous les civilisés" (Bertrand, "La Résurrection de ‚l'Afrique Latine'" 194; quoted in Lüsebrink, "Imperiale Träume" 219).

25 See Lüsebrink, "Imperiale Träume".

26 "C'est ici, à Madaure, à Thagaste, pendant les années avides de l'adolescence, qu'il amassa les germes de sensations et d'images, qui, plus tard, écloront en métaphores ardentes et bouillonnantes dans ses *Confessions*." (Bertrand, *Saint Augustin* 65). My translation into English.

27 I refer to Déjeux's notion "débertrandiser" ("De l'éternel Méditerranéen" 154) which indicates the overcoming of Bertrand's ideas.

28 Notable in respect to archeological modeling is the work of Stefan Ardeleanu in cooperation with Anouar Nouara, director of the Musée d'Hippone of Annaba. See their article in *Römische Quartalschrift* (forthcoming, 2020).

29 As Jan Jansen observes, this *Centenaire de l'Algérie française* became an important public stage for presenting colonial symbolism grounded in antiquity and celebrating, in the sense of Bertrand, both Roman traces and the Latin African past – all this to create a feeling of community in the present. In this way, scholarly work, theatre performances, sporting events, and religious celebrations were oriented toward a legitimizing of the French occupation, see Jansen (2007).

30 Archevêché d'Alger, *Deux Glorieux Centenaires : La Mort de Saint Augustin 430-1930. La Conquête de l'Algérie, 1830-1930*, 1932.

31 "…sur la colline même d'Hippone, où le grand Docteur rendit son âme à Dieu, le 28 août 430, et dans la jolie ville de Bône, ardemment attachée au culte de son incomparable évêque, et fière de garder fidèlement sa mémoire; puis à Souk-Ahras, l'ancienne Thagaste, où le fils de Monique était né en 354" (Ibid., VIIIf).

32 See Altekamp 214.

33 Jansen finds references to the Christian crusades in various discursive treatments of the centenary that describe Islamization as a process of usurpation (195).

34 Lorcin refers to the high level of classical education and linguistic competence of French military personnel.

35 Lorcin (319) and Lüsebrink, "Imperiale Träume".

36 See Dirèche, "Les écoles catholiques". Other authors likewise considered the Berber population as more closely resembling Western than Arabic society.

37 Pottier writes "…si, entre lui et nous, il y a des liens, c'est qu'entre les Berbères et nous, il y en a également." (27). Pottier's image, first presented in 1945, of Augustinian resistance may also allude to the French *Résistance.*

38 For a scathing review, see Bardy (1946).

39 "Ils seraient étonnés de constater que l'un d'eux ait pu être une gloire de la chrétienté sans rien renier des qualités de sa race, et les conversions se multiplieraient. Ce faisant, ils se rapprocheraient de nous encore davantage, car ils ne peuvent admettre qu'un peuple soit sans religion…Il suffit de faire entendre aux Berbères musulmans la grande voix d'amour, la grande voix libératrice de l'un des leurs, celle de saint Augustin le Berbère." (Pottier 265).

40 The first Muslim congress aimed at unifying nationalist currents, the Congrès des oulémas musulmans, took place in 1936. That same year, the Blum-Violette project to offer full citizenship to a minority of Muslims failed because of the protest of French settlers in Algeria.

41 Dunwoodie underlines the link between Bertrand's thinking and contemporary political ideas, as manifest, for instance, in Barrès's concept of settling as racinement (1000).

42 On the problem of postcolonial history and national figures of identification, see Lüsebrink, "Geschichtskultur" 417f.

43 Lüsebrink emphasizes that in respect to both national identity and history, postcolonial forms of collective conscience have their origins and central reference in colonial culture, its sociocultural dynamics and inconsistencies, not in precolonial identities or post-independent societies (Lüsebrink, "Geschichtskultur" 403).

44 For example Réda Malek, member of the FLN and former Algerian prime minister (1993-94), considered Augustine's conversion as grounds for such exclusion. See Bennadji (2017).

45 Among these authors are Kateb Yacine, Boualem Sansal, and Ahmed Akkache.

46 Starting in 1999, a series of three conferences were held in this context, all patronized by the former Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The

first took place in Rimini (1999), the second at Algiers and Annaba (2001), and the third in Annaba (2017). For more information see the conference proceedings: Fux, Roessli, and Wermelinger (2003), a rich volume with articles by specialists from different disciplines.

47 See Pollmann (2003).

48 Dirèche refers to Bouteflika's strategy as a "réconciliation avec une histoire ancienne quelque peu oubliée dans les manuels scolaires" ("Convoquer le passé" 499).

49 For the Algerian process of national reconciliation, see Ben Hounet and Belhimer (2017).

50 It is interesting to note that Bouteflika, the president who brought up a bill in 2016 to amend the Algerian Constitution in order to officially recognizing the *Amazigh* language (2018), does not claim the Berber identity of Saint Augustine.

51 Unfortunately, the author died before being able to complete her last book, which was supposed to foreground Saint Augustine and his mother Monnica. See Ruhe (2017).

52 It was my great pleasure to moderate the public lecture of Kebir Ammi in 2015 during the *Französische Woche Heidelberg*, where we realized this interview. I am deeply grateful to Kebir who has inspired this work with his literary texts, and as regular interlocutor.

53 See: the articles on Ancient and Modern Reception of Augustine in North Africa written by Winrich Löhr, Therese Fuhrer, Konrad Vössing, Moritz Kuhn, Elena Zocca, Anna Esposito, Stefan Ardeleanu, Jutta Weiser, Ahmed Cheniki, Habib Kazdaghli, Khalid Zekri, Anja Bettenworth and myself published in the *Römische Quartalschrift* (forthcoming, 2020).

54 In November 2019, the *Journées Augustiniennes de Carthage* (JAC) were initiated as an annual commemoration. See: https://www.agendas.ovh/jac-2019-journees-augustiniennes-de-carthage/.