

Historical Trauma and Multidirectional Memory:
from Léthé, Art of Oblivion to the Art of Memory in
L'empreinte de l'ange and *Arbre de l'oubli* of
Nancy Huston

Sihem GUETTAFI

Abstract. The novels *L'empreinte de l'ange* (*The Angel's Footprint*) and *Arbre de l'oubli* (*Tree of Oblivion*) by Nancy Huston explore themes related to history, memory and identity issues. They deal with topics such as the Shoah, slavery, the Algerian war of liberation, feminism, racism, forgetfulness and the duty of memory. Memory and oblivion, inseparable processes, are part of the formation of our representation of the past and can be manipulated to build or shape an identity in search of authenticity and truth in historical discourse. This idea opens the way to an analysis of the relationship between oblivion, memory and identity in the author's two works, allowing us to question how these elements interact and influence identity construction. The stripping bare, like a leafless tree, by a past that never ceases to catch us, makes Huston wonder whether this footprint has all the power to remain innocent. What would have happened if this Angel had not become an Angel of oblivion? Can the Angel erase all the pain of the exterminated, tortured and slaves of Ouidah walking around their Tree of Oblivion?

Keywords: History, memory, oblivion, identity, past, racism, torture, slavery.