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From Inner Exile to Imaginary Shelter in Nina Bouraoui's La Voyeuse interdite, Garçon manqué and Mes mauvaises pensées

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Abstract

This article examines La Voyeuse interdite, Garçon manqué and Mes mauvaises pensées through a single imaginary trajectory, leading from inner exile to the progressive construction of shelters. The analysis shows that exile in Bouraoui's fiction extends beyond geographical displacement. It involves the subject's relation to origin, body, memory and language. In La Voyeuse interdite, urban space closes around characters deprived of stable landmarks and produces an experience of non-belonging. Garçon manqué deepens this experience by constructing identity within the in-between space of countries, cultures and gender categories. Mes mauvaises pensées moves the problem toward a writing of memory in which the house, the room, objects, sensations and words become sites of recovery. Drawing on Gilbert Durand, Gaston Bachelard, Jean-Pierre Richard and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, together with critical studies devoted to Bouraoui, we argue that shelter is less a fixed place than an act of recomposition. Memory revives lost places, writing restores them within the texture of the book, and language becomes a dwelling of its own. A poetics of shelter thus emerges through the passage from imposed space to inhabited space and finally from inhabited space to written space.

Keywords: Nina Bouraoui, inner exile, imaginary, memory, space, shelter, identity, language.

Introduction

Nina Bouraoui's work is built on a recurrent experience of rupture. The displacement between Algeria and France, the separation from childhood, the plurality of belongings, the uncertainty of the relation to the body and the difficulty of fixing a stable identity make up a set of situations that give literary space a strong existential significance. The three novels selected for this study, La Voyeuse interdite, Garçon manqué and Mes mauvaises pensées, allow us to observe three moments of a single questioning. The first sets up a universe of oppression in which the city, the house and bodies bear the marks of a deep fracture. The second inscribes this fracture in the cultural and gendered in-between of a subject searching for a place among several belongings. The third makes memory and speech the principal instruments of a recovery of the self. This progression allows us to read the relation between exile and the reconstruction of the self differently.

From this perspective, the term exile needs to be broadened. It designates first a rupture with a place and a history, but it also involves an inner experience of displacement. In Garçon manqué, the sentence 'I remain between the two countries. I remain between two identities' condenses this situation of in-betweenness and places the balance sought within a space of solitude[1]. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the statement 'I am, a subject in a blurred zone' further radicalises this impression of an open identity, difficult to reduce to a single

definition[2]. Exile is a way of inhabiting the world under the sign of separation, while identity takes shape in the very effort to link fragments.

This approach joins the framework of the imaginary developed by Gilbert Durand. In Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire, Durand defines the imaginary as 'the balancing dynamism that the imaginary is [...] presents itself as the tension [...] of two regimes, each of which lists images in two antagonistic universes'[3]. This conception makes it possible to think the coexistence of the figures of the fall, wandering, shelter, return and language. Jean-Pierre Richard's thematic reading completes this perspective by considering recurrent motifs as the elements of a secret organisation of the work. In L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé, Richard invites us to descend beneath the evidence of the text in order to identify the networks of images that structure a sensory and existential experience[4]. Bachelard's phenomenology, centred on reverie, inhabited space and the images of rest, provides for its part the tools needed to study protective places. Maurice Merleau-Ponty makes it possible to extend this reflection by considering the body and perception as the conditions of an originary relation to the world. Finally, Jaccard's analyses of inner exile[5], Kristeva's on the crisis of signification, Madelénat's on intimism[6], open a space of dialogue between a poetics of the imaginary, thematic criticism and the study of identity.

Our hypothesis is that Bouraoui's work evolves from exile toward a poetics of shelter. Shelter appears first as a dreamed and sometimes lost figure, then as a series of concrete places, and finally as a symbolic construction carried by memory and language. The house, the room, the garden, the island, memory, the body, music and silence constitute so many successive forms of dwelling. Dwelling remains mobile, because the subject from which it proceeds remains traversed by the plurality of its belongings and by the memory of ruptures. We shall therefore examine first the constitution of an inner exile marked by spatial and identity-related unmooring. We shall then study the forms of shelter constituted by the maternal figure, the house, the room and memory. Finally, we shall show how shelter shifts toward writing and language, to the point of making the book a place where the subject can reorganise his or her relation to the world.

Axis One: Exile as an Experience of Unmooring

1.1. From Original Rupture to the Fragmentation of the Subject

The experience of exile in Bouraoui rests on an older representation of rupture. Birth constitutes a first model of separation, studied notably through Otto Rank, for whom entry into the world is accompanied by a traumatic experience of detachment[7]. Cioran formulates this inaugural fracture in a striking way: 'We are not running toward death, we are fleeing the catastrophe of birth, flailing about, survivors who are trying to forget it'[8]. The interest of this configuration for reading Bouraoui lies in the recurrence of one and the same symbolic structure. The being enters an already constituted world, loses a first state of unity and discovers separation as the condition of its presence.

The three novels take up this structure in different forms. In Garçon manqué, the scene in which the child is held against her mother's body before a departure brings into play a physical and emotional separation: 'She holds my body very close to her body' makes the maternal body the last point of a continuity soon to be interrupted[9]. At times, the narrator evokes maternal love as a protective force whose embrace she seeks and from which she seeks distance at the same time. This ambivalence belongs to the logic of an identity that forms in the gap between fusion and autonomy. In La Voyeuse interdite, the birth of girls is associated with a social universe in which the feminine receives an inferior value, so that entry into existence immediately becomes entry into hierarchy and constraint[10].

This first configuration sheds light on the notion of 'original insufficiency'[11]. The Bouraouian subject is constructed from this insufficiency and through an identity in becoming. Sartre offers a philosophical anchor here when he asserts: 'Man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself. The being which is what

it is cannot be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be'[12]. Bouraoui's fiction gives a sensible form to this principle. The characters remain bound to histories, places and legacies that contribute to their construction, while feeling the need to reinterpret them. Identity arises from the work of linking heterogeneous elements.

In Garçon manqué, this search passes through the encounter between several lines of belonging. Algeria and France, femininity and masculinity, childhood and adulthood, attachment and departure make up a constellation of poles that leads the narrator to construct a personal space between them. Judith Butler proposes to think gender from this mobility of categories: '[...] gender is a parody, does not presuppose the existence of an original that would be imitated by such parodic identities'[13]. In Bouraoui, this approach appears above all in the way the body becomes a place of trial and recomposition. The formula 'I am undefined. It is a war against the world. I become unclassifiable' inscribes this experience directly in language[14]. The word 'undefined' carries a constructive value here, for it marks an identity in search and in invention.

Mes mauvaises pensées deepens this logic through the writing of memory. The subject appears there traversed by fragments of memories, bodily impressions, voices and images that return according to an associative logic. The fragmented narration and the 'indeterminate ellipses' identified in the thesis, drawing on Genette, make the lack of information a principle of composition[15]. The fragmentation of the narrative then joins the fragmentation of experience. The text gradually gathers what consciousness receives in the form of pieces. The narrative device thus materialises the search for continuity that works upon the character.

This poetics of fragmentation joins the 'crisis of signification', which concerns the loss or displacement of the landmarks that made it possible to order experience[16]. In Bouraoui, this crisis does not lead to the cessation of writing. On the contrary, it produces a proliferation of images, memories, sensations and narratives. The text takes charge of disorder in order to seek a form of coherence. Writing thus already presents itself as an operation of shelter, even when the places represented remain hostile.

1.2. The City and the No Man's Land of Belonging

The experience of non-anchorage finds its clearest formulation in the opening of Garçon manqué, 'Here, we are nothing'[17]. The sentence engages a reflection on belonging and on the subject's place in social space. The 'here' has a spatial and existential significance. It designates a precise place while expressing the feeling of being deprived of consistency there. The city is one of the principal devices by which the novel makes the difficulty of dwelling visible.

In La Voyeuse interdite, Algiers is represented as a 'vast prison' that links urban space with relations of domination[18]. The inhabitants appear as prisoners occupying an imposed place. The spatial metaphor takes on a political value without exhausting its existential reach. The city encloses bodies, organises movements and produces a perception of existence dominated by constraint. The animal images identified in the thesis reinforce this dehumanisation. The 'city jackals' and the 'hyenas' of La Voyeuse interdite make the city a space of predation[19]. Moreover, the recurrence of certain verbs produces a dehumanising effect in the representation of the inhabitants[20].

Garçon manqué shifts the problem to Paris. The French city does not constitute an immediate solution to the experience of uprooting: 'The desert is in France. It is immense and permanent. It is in the city. It is in Paris itself'[21]. The figure of the desert here leaves the traditional geographical space and enters inner geography. The desert designates a lack of belonging and an impression of emptiness. The modern city concentrates the signs of displacement without automatically providing the feeling of being at home.

Mes mauvaises pensées multiplies cities and places, and this abundance paradoxically produces a feeling of dispersion. Geographical nomadism becomes a form of inner nomadism. The narrator walks, observes,

crosses streets and public transport while seeking a way of being in the world. The sentence ‘I walk down rue des Gravilliers’ introduces a concrete route that is immediately extended by a reflection on the relation to reality[22]. Paris represents a lived space before becoming a described space. The narrator’s body serves as an interface between the city and consciousness.

This relation joins Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach, for whom perception engages the body in the constitution of the lived world. The Bouraouian city is therefore never reduced to a backdrop. It is experienced through walking, sight, hearing, breathing, fatigue and solitude. In L’Œil et l’Esprit, Merleau-Ponty associates the gaze with a way of being caught in the visible[23]. This conception makes it possible to understand why Bouraoui’s gaze participates in the transformation of places. The subject sees a space and, in the same gesture, invests it with an affective charge.

The city is thus transformed into an architecture of the mind. The scene of Mes mauvaises pensées in which the father explains that ‘the city closed in on him, like one body on another body’ gives a particularly strong formulation of this[24]. Exterior space takes on a bodily form. The city squeezes, surrounds and disorients. The labyrinth becomes a privileged figure for thinking exile. Bachelard, moreover, links labyrinthine imagination to the anguish tied to past and future, two temporalities that intersect in the experience of confinement[25]. Bouraouian characters are exactly in this situation, caught between a past that claims their memory and a future that demands a new definition of the self.

The no man’s land constitutes less an empty place than a space saturated with ordeals. The absence of landmarks produces an obligation of recomposition. This is why the geography of uprooting already prepares the geography of shelter. The more the exterior presents itself as unstable, the more the text seeks forms of space that are reduced, habitable and bearers of memory.

Axis Two: Shelter as the Work of Memory and Space

2.1. The Mother, the House and the Room as Figures of Intimacy

The maternal figure occupies a privileged position among the forms of protection in the Bouraouian imaginary. Gilbert Durand associates the symbolism of intimacy with the ‘complex of the return to the mother’, which inscribes in human representations the desire to find an enveloping and protective space again[26]. The three novels give a singular form to this aspiration. The mother represents at once an origin, a body, a memory and a place of security.

Garçon manqué formulates the transmission of maternal wounds in the form of an inheritance: ‘For a long time I will carry my mother’s childhood within me’[27]. The verb ‘carry’ associates the family bond with a bodily burden. The daughter receives the mother’s fears, then seeks to transform them through her own existence. Filiation thus becomes a place of passage between pain and reconstruction. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the mother is described as a ‘fortress’[28], while the image of a ‘body that envelops’ inscribes the maternal gesture in the logic of shelter[29]. Protection takes a bodily form that recalls the representations of the envelope developed by Bachelard in his study of intimate spaces.

The scene of La Voyeuse interdite in which Ourdhia places one hand on Fikria’s forehead and the other on her heart reinforces this reading. The gesture transforms the body into a place of care and appeasement. The forehead and the heart unite thought and affect. Ourdhia stands at the edge of the bed and, by her presence, builds a small protective space inside a wider social universe dominated by constraint. Shelter is then built on a minuscule scale. A room, a bed, a hand, a voice suffice to suspend provisionally the violence of the outside.

According to Bachelard, the house is perceived as a space of integration: ‘The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind’[30]. The Bouraouian house accomplishes precisely this function. It gathers objects, smells, family scenes and memories. It creates a

material continuity in a trajectory marked by displacements. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the apartment in the Résidence concentrates the memory of things and gives the narrator the feeling of being included in a place that defines her[31]. Place thus participates in the constitution of the subject.

The role of objects remains important, for their presence introduces into space a series of traces that resist erasure. In Garçon manqué, the great-grandmother's apartment is filled with bronze, terracotta, marble, sculptures, watches and paintings. The narrator associates it with an 'Ali Baba's cave' and with the presence of 'the Orient in France'[32]. Domestic space thus becomes a place of coexistence between several cultural histories. The house receives displacement instead of denying it. It allows the in-between to become habitable.

Jean Onimus speaks of 'the house that remembers' to characterise this capacity of domestic space to preserve the traces of life[33]. The formula suits the Résidence in Algiers and the apartments of Mes mauvaises pensées particularly well. The house acts as a material memory. It keeps objects, gestures and absences. Shelter therefore takes the form of a repository of traces. Identity finds a concrete support here.

The room pushes this spatial reduction still further. The house protects through its overall envelope, whereas the room creates a more confined space in which the subject can withdraw and find himself or herself. Bachelard associates these spaces with a reverie of intimacy and rest[34]. In Bouraoui, the room receives sleep, reading, solitude, writing and memories. It becomes a threshold between the world and consciousness. Its function is not only to isolate the subject; it gives him or her a frame in which to organise what comes from outside.

The multiplicity of shelters thus confirms the logic proposed by Durand. Shelter never resides in a single object. It is distributed among the maternal body, the house, the room, objects, writing, night and reverie. This plurality constitutes a veritable poetics of intimacy. It allows the subject to recover, from time to time, a form of coherence without erasing the history of exile.

2.2. Sensory Memory, Childhood and the Reconquest of Origins

Spatial shelter finds its depth in memory. In Bouraoui, memory acts as a force capable of resisting the disintegration of time. Durand presents the imaginary and memory as powers that answer becoming by maintaining certain originary images[35]. To remember amounts to reconstructing a space in which the past remains accessible.

Bouraouian memory often relies on sensory elements. The smell of resin in Mes mauvaises pensées, the grandmother's rose soap, the music of the piano, colours, the fruits of Petit Hydra, trees and the sea make up an embodied memory. The scene in which the narrator remembers 'the smell of my grandmother, of her rose soap' illustrates the resistance of sensation when the events themselves become blurred[36]. Smell preserves a relation that the cognitive narrative has allowed to drift away.

Bachelard associates childhood with 'the archetype of simple happiness'[37]. This conception makes it possible to understand memory as a form of presence rather than as the mere conservation of the past. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the child returns through sensations. In Garçon manqué, Algeria returns through landscapes, people and gestures. The past becomes a perceptual matter that circulates in the present.

Photography also plays an important role. In Garçon manqué, the narrator keeps the photograph of Amar and describes it as a secret, associated with pain and struggle[38]. The image becomes a point of contact between the one who looks and the one who belongs to the past. The gaze crosses time. The album, for its part, allows the question 'What was I like as a child?' to be posed[39]. Photography thus acts as a device for searching for the self. It makes visible an earlier figure of the present person and allows a confrontation between several states of the subject.

Goucem Nadira Khodja shows, in a study of Bouraoui, that the memory of places participates in a poetics of relation and of the in-between[40]. This perspective sheds light on the functioning of Bouraouian spaces. The place of childhood remains present despite distance. Its value stems precisely from the gap that separates it from the present. It becomes a reservoir of traces capable of reactivating a belonging.

Childhood constitutes in this poetics a founding space; it is represented as an ‘age of myth’ in which images and values are deposited that orient the later construction of the subject[41]. Bachelard speaks for his part of ‘the archetype of simple happiness’ to characterise certain images of childhood[42]. In Garçon manqué, the happy children of the Maurepas garden offer an image of this original happiness[43]. In Mes mauvaises pensées, childhood is transformed into symbolic space when the narrator declares that she builds her ‘woman’s country’ and her written language like the stones of a new house[44]. The image is revealing, since country, language and house are brought together in a single operation of construction.

This passage makes it possible to go beyond a merely nostalgic reading of memory. The return toward childhood serves to produce something new. Mircea Eliade shows that the return to origins has, in the structure of myths, a function of renewal[45]. In Bouraoui, this logic translates into a writing that revisits the past in order to constitute a more habitable present. The return thus becomes creation.

The motif of the thread reinforces this logic of linking. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the narrator evokes an ‘immense invisible thread’ linking the generations despite distance[46]. The thread represents an affective continuity that crosses space and time. It corresponds to the ‘complex of binding’ identified in the thesis on the basis of the structures of intimacy. Existence is rebuilt by linking fragments. The gesture of weaving appears as a symbolic operation by which the subject composes a story from scattered elements.

Memory transforms abandoned places into places that are still accessible, old sensations into present signs and family figures into elements of continuity. Shelter takes shape in this passage from memory to imaginary dwelling. Once the place has been reinvested by memory, writing can in turn receive it.

Axis Three: From Spatial Shelter to Linguistic Shelter

3.1. Naming, Recomposing and Dwelling Through Writing

In the three novels, shelter reaches a new form when space shifts toward writing. Jean-Pierre Richard’s analysis shows that writing organises networks of images and allows the text to bring out meanings beneath first appearances[47]. In Bouraoui, to name means to establish a relation between the subject, the world and the traces of experience.

In Mes mauvaises pensées, speech develops from a necessity to say: ‘You take no notes while I unfold a book, the dreamed book, which is not written but spoken’[48]. The dreamed book connects speech, memory and creation. Writing is born from what is said, but at the same time it opens a space wider than the mere recording of a testimony. The narrative becomes an experience of thought.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty attributes to speech an essential function in access to meaning and truth. The thesis thus recalls that ‘speech is the vehicle of our movement toward truth’[49]. This is what we find in Bouraouian writing: sentences extend, resume, fragment and return to memories already evoked. Their repetition accompanies the effort of understanding. The sentence participates in the constitution of the experience that it seeks to express.

The relation between language and identity becomes particularly visible in the sentence ‘My work as a writer is also a forger’s work. There is only my truth, there is only my interpretation of things’[50]. The term ‘forger’ calls into question the idea of a writing that would faithfully reproduce an already given reality. Literature works upon perception, selects, assembles, displaces and interprets. In this process, truth becomes a situated construction. Language provides the subject with a space in which to bring together several versions of himself or herself.

Foucault thinks identity in terms of relations and processes rather than of an immediately given essence: ‘What we are is not an essence, it is a crossing, an intersection; it is not a substance, it is a resonance’[51]. Bouraoui transforms this problematic into a literary experience. The narrator constructs herself by recounting her memories, relations, displacements, desires and fears. Identity proceeds from a narrative that links the heterogeneous elements of existence.

Writing also assumes a function of recording. Anne-Martine Parent analyses in Bouraoui the figure of the ‘blotting-paper skin’, receptacle of family and historical traces[52]. Through Mes mauvaises pensées, the subject absorbs the stories of others, then retranscribes them. The book becomes a second surface of reception. ‘I am also the blotting-paper skin of this world’[53]. The image establishes a continuity between body and text. What the body receives, writing inscribes. Linguistic shelter therefore proceeds by inscription. The page receives the traces and gives them a durable form by transforming the gathered matter. The past becomes narrative, the place becomes image, the sensation becomes sentence. Literature produces a symbolic dwelling that resists geographical displacement. In Bouraoui, writing becomes a space of relation[54]. It links the subject to others, to the past, to intellectual and literary figures, but also to forms of thought that help her situate her experience. According to Chelebourg, the literary imaginary gathers representations that organise a relation to the world[55]. Shelter is situated here at the intersection between lived experience and its shaping. Writing does not suppress exile, but it gives it an architecture.

3.2. Music, Silence and the Frontiers of the Sayable

The power of linguistic shelter becomes more precise when Bouraoui confronts writing with its own limits. Music and silence then become two forms of language that extend experience beyond explanation. The text recognises that certain states of consciousness, certain sensations and certain memories resist direct formulation. Speech must then open itself to other modes of presence.

In Mes mauvaises pensées: ‘There is this spiral with music, this spiral of the body that goes from the belly to the eyes and brings tears’[56]. Music passes through the body. It acts before any conceptual interpretation. Marc Richir recalls that: ‘When we “perceive” music, it is music that we “perceive” and not sounds or successions of sounds’[57]. Music constitutes a phenomenon of language that lets us experience a meaning without reducing it to a definition. In Bouraoui, music makes possible an immediate experience of emotion.

Music seems capable of achieving a perfect union between form (the signifier, that is, the sounds, melodies and rhythms) and content (the signified, that is, the emotions, ideas and messages it conveys)[58]. In Mes mauvaises pensées, music makes it possible to reach precisely what remains difficult to verbalise. The narrator insists that ‘no writing comes upon the melody’ of the singer and compares this experience to a stone falling into a bottomless well[59]. The metaphor of the well opens a space of depth. Language here recognises an experience that exceeds it while seeking to gather its echo.

Silence constitutes the other form of this displacement. In Bouraoui’s work, it accompanies suffering, but it can also become a choice of protection and of existence. Literary silence can function as an active mode of signification, linked to interruptions, blanks and zones left open in the text[60]. In Bouraoui, silence becomes a way of preserving an inner zone.

Marc De Smedt’s thought on the praise of silence makes it possible to extend this observation. Silence offers a space of withdrawal and listening that modifies the subject’s relation to the world[61]. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the silence of the mother, the silence of the narrator and the silence of places form a continuity. The scene in which the mountain in Zurich is associated with the mother’s silence inscribes memory in a stripped-back sonorous form[62]. Silence thus links space, memory and affect.

In Bouraoui, writing follows precisely a path. It advances by resumptions, bifurcations, associations and returns. It makes language an experience in progress. This form of speech also joins Wünenburger’s

reflection on the imaginary as an activity capable of producing symbolic representations that exceed abstract thought[63]. Literary language becomes a matter in which sensation and thought meet. Linguistic shelter therefore possesses an open structure. It welcomes the sayable, but also the silence that surrounds it. It transforms the limit of language into a poetic principle. Speech seeks truth, while music and silence propose other paths of presence. This shift corresponds to the general itinerary of Bouraouian poetics, which passes from the lost place to the reconstructed space, then from this space to the speech that inhabits it.

Conclusion

The study of La Voyeuse interdite, Garçon manqué and Mes mauvaises pensées reveals a coherent trajectory from exile to shelter. The point of departure is an experience of unmooring that engages at once place, body, memory and identity. Original separation supplies the symbolic schema of this experience. The city, urban space and the no man's land then express the difficulty of inhabiting the present. In La Voyeuse interdite, Algiers closes around the characters and transforms space into a place of domination. In Garçon manqué, the in-between of countries and identities places the subject in a search for a place. In Mes mauvaises pensées, the plurality of places further reinforces the need to build an inner continuity.

Shelter then appears as a symbolic response to this dispersion. The mother, the house and the room offer forms of protection based on enveloping, intimacy and the conservation of traces. Objects and places become mediators of memory. The house gathers the fragments of a family and cultural history, while the room creates a space of withdrawal where the subject can receive his or her memories. Bachelard and Onimus provide here the principal tools for understanding domestic space as a place of memory and reverie. Durand makes it possible to situate these figures within a vaster structure of intimacy and return.

Memory then deepens the function of shelter. It is not reduced to the conservation of a bygone past. It acts as a faculty of resumption. Sensations, photographs, smells, landscapes and objects reactivate a childhood that continues to nourish the construction of the subject. Khodja shows the importance of the memory of places in Bouraoui's writing, while Bosetti and Bachelard make it possible to understand the founding value of childhood. The return then becomes an operation of creation. The narrator takes up fragments of the past to compose a more habitable present.

Finally, shelter shifts toward language. Writing receives the traces that the body and memory have preserved. The figure of the 'blotting-paper skin' analysed by Parent expresses this function of recording and transmission. The book becomes a surface where individual, family and historical experiences can find a form. Speech progressively organises what had been received as a set of fragments. Merleau-Ponty makes it possible to think this speech as an experience of the constitution of meaning, while Richard illuminates the role of networks of images and motifs.

Music and silence extend this search to the frontiers of the nameable. Music gives form to an experience that reaches the body directly. Silence preserves a zone where identity is built otherwise. Bouraouian writing thus finds its originality in a conception of shelter that remains mobile. Shelter never corresponds to a place definitively recovered. It consists in a series of operations that make existence habitable. To dwell then means to link, to preserve, to transform and to name.

From inner exile to imaginary shelter, the three novels thus draw one and the same trajectory. The subject starts from a world marked by separation and builds, from his or her own fragments, places of memory, places of intimacy and finally places of language. Shelter becomes the name of a work of recomposition. Nina Bouraoui's work thus gives writing a singular function. It is not a space external to the world but becomes one of the deepest ways of inscribing oneself in it.

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