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Genesis and Genealogies: *Lieux de mémoire* and counter-monuments in the writings of Hélène Cixous

“[...] I followed the streets, I crisscrossed *places* on my desk piled up tens of files, folders, notebooks, journals, without exaggeration hundreds of pages, years from one sheet to the other I was in 1648, in 9, in 1561, in 1942, in 2020, two thousand years before me therefore two thousand years after me also [...]” (Cixous, 2020, 11)

In one of her most recent books, *Ruines bien rangées* (2020, translated as *Well-Kept Ruins*), Hélène Cixous returns to the city of Osnabrück, her mother's hometown in Germany, destroyed during the second world war and 'reconstructed'. There, in company of her son, she recalls personal memories, meticulously juxtaposed with archival findings about the city. Throughout her long career, Cixous has written about her many cities and History. She has written memories of her native city of Oran in Algeria under French colonial rule, and her latest seminar series at the Maison Heinrich Heine reflects on what is happening today in the form of 'encounters with the storms of History'.

In this paper I will show how her essayistic writing not only describes but also performs what Pierre Nora has defined as *Lieux de mémoire* (1984). In *Ruines bien rangées*, we'll encounter the description of a 'Counter-monument' (Young, 1992), that Cixous questions in an intergenerational dialogue with her son. This book tells us about the accidental concordance of her own genealogy with the 'genealogies of the City' (Cixous, 2020), inviting us to reevaluate architectural heritage through a 'genealogical' and generational lens.

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