

Abstract

The Algerian War of Independence 1954-1962 has become emblematic of the incompatibility of feminist and nationalist movements. This war represents the victory of the colonized through the sanctioned use of violence. It also represents the undermining of women's roles and rights, and the exploitation of their willingness to shelve their feminist agenda in favor of participation in the nationalist cause. This paper analyzes the francophone literature on the Algerian War in order to question these myths. The women's literature does not present women's participation as having been liberating. The men's literature, on the other hand, indicates a growing apprehension on the part of fathers, brothers, and husbands that their women were no longer theirs to control. This paper attempts to reconcile the conflicting notions of women's roles by deconstructing the myth of the post-war repression of liberated women.

About the Author

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Deconstructing War Discourse: Women's Participation in the Algerian Revolution

by

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DECONSTRUCTING WAR DISCOURSE: WOMEN'S
PARTICIPATION IN THE ALGERIAN REVOLUTION

The Angel and the Man work for Unity
Satan and the Woman for Division.
-Algerian Proverb

If nothing else is left, one must
scream. Silence is the real crime
against humanity.

-Nadezhda Mandelstam

This paper analyzes the Algerian War of Independence (or, Revolution) 1954-1962 through the discourse it generated. The Algerian war, like all wars, created its own narrative, and this narrative in turn recreated the war according to a particular desired image. War epics describe a glorious victory, brave martyrs, a sacred cause. The narratives of the vanquished, when they exist, justify and enumerate lessons to be learned. Both narratives generally emerge some time after the ending of the war when motives and outcomes have become "clear."

But what is a writer to do about a war whose outcome is not clear? This dilemma exists for the Algerian War as well as for many other wars of independence. The great hopes vested in the revolution have in many cases crumbled as the nationalist government, failing to come up with a new and effective ruling order, has fallen back on the exiled system. The neo-colonialism of self-rule has often been more painful than foreign rule, because it represents the frustration of dreams, the desperate loss of faith in oneself. Time in such cases serves only to freeze the disappointment and to exemplify the futility of any attempts to come up with a solution.

It is my contention that wars like these cannot be understood with the benefit of time only. They must also be dealt with as they happen. The novel or short story that appears during or immediately after a war is a truer guide to the dynamics of the situation than one written years later in the dull fearlessness of a paneled study. These later novels and short stories take the war as a pretext and build around its frozen frame. The early novels may not even mention the war. They do not have to. The war is their texture, their life.

However, the Algerian War presents a special problem. During this war, most writers refrained from writing or, at least, from publishing. Writing was considered "exquisitely useless as the Algerians continued to do the minimum: count the corpses."¹ They waited to see if the Revolution's promises were going to be kept. Only after 1962 did committed war literature begin to pour forth.²

The story of the Algerian War is a familiar one. After 124 years of French rule, the Algerian people--both men and women--mobilized in the cities and mountains. They struggled relentlessly against the entrenched foreign ruler, and in March 1962--after over seven years of fighting--they wrested

their independence from the loathed colonizer. They were finally free to create the government and the society of which they had dreamed. To the surprise of many, this government and this society presented an atavistic response to the colonial past. Among the many reactionary measures taken, the most painful and best publicized has been the institutionalized repression of women. National liberation did not bring women's liberation. Whereas nationalist consciousness emerged during the war, the expression of an activist feminist consciousness is a post-war product.

The Algerian cause was adopted by committed revolutionary intellectuals worldwide. The war became emblematic for the struggle of the colonized, cowed but not crushed, against the colonizer. The Algerian government after 1962 fashioned a radical self-image as a "beacon of the African Revolution. For Algeria was the only Arab, African nation to have waged a protracted war against a former colonial power in order to gain independence." Violence was sanctioned.³ Intellectuals like the Martinican Frantz Fanon, who died a year before the end of the war, and the French Simone de Beauvoir and Giselle Halimi, went to Algeria to witness firsthand the rising up of the oppressed against the oppressor.

Many of these foreign intellectuals were particularly interested in the Algerian women. Treated as animals⁴ and as sacred possessions, they represented the oppressed of the oppressed, and their perceived coming to feminist consciousness became for many a particularly fascinating aspect of this war. One of the most often cited works on the pre-revolutionary period is Frantz Fanon's Peau noire masques blancs (1952). It analyzes the symbolic importance of women to Algerian identity. In a society governed by notions of honor that depend on men's complete control of their women, women's behavior is considered to be everyone's business. Fanon describes the French as trying to undermine men's control by coopting their women and educating them in French values. The Algerian men felt threatened by French advocacy of women's independence at both the economic and social levels. In Woman in the Muslim Unconscious (1986), Fatna Sabbah explains the Muslim male's psychological vulnerability to his wife's or daughter's entry into the paid labor force:

...since virility in patriarchal Muslim society is defined in terms of economic power, economic failure is experienced by the male as castration, as a problem with virility, as impotence. In the same way, the invasion by women of economic spaces such as factories and offices, which is an economic fact of development, is often experienced as erotic aggression in the Muslim context, where the female body...has been neutralized by the traditional restructuring of space. (Sabbah 1986:17)

The Algerian men considered moral interference by the French to be a direct assault on their traditions, and therefore also on their pride, their confidence, and their identity. Their homes and their women had become the last, and only, bastion of their power and influence. The nationalist urge, then, was to further cloister women against the French.⁵

In 1954, war broke out and norms had to give. As the war raged on, women joined ranks to fight for their country. Centuries-old traditions were broken for the space of the war (Fanon 1956). Fanon writes, "Fathers no longer had any choice. Their constant fear of shame became illogical in the great

tragedy which the people were living" (Fanon 1975:94). The commands of the leaders of the nationalist opposition overrode the fathers' authority. Fanon writes that during the war men's attitudes toward all women, and particularly the fighters, changed. The women fighters, like Hassiba Ben Bouali and Djamila Bouhired, were revered. Those who had not only fought but also been imprisoned—like Djamila Boupacha and Zohra Drif—became revolutionary heroines.⁶ Fanon passionately dramatizes women's participation as a coming to maturity; for the first time they were living on equal terms and with equal rights with men to whom they were not married. The Algerian woman, he writes, "adapted herself to guerrilla activities with remarkable speed and effectiveness.... The woman ceased to be a mere complement for the man. Indeed it might be said that she had pulled up her roots through her own exertions" (Horne 1979:402). In their jointly written book, Djamila Boupacha (1962), which elaborates liberal French attempts to champion the revolutionary endeavor and particularly one of the heroines, de Beauvoir and Halimi carefully trace through what they describe as Djamila's growth in feminist consciousness.

WOMEN'S WAR DISCOURSE

How was it that a group--the women--that had been so important to the revolution could be so swiftly suppressed? How does the literature deal with this question? Since there was little arabophone literature written during the war, this paper will attempt to answer these questions through an analysis of some francophone Algerian novels written during and soon after the war. Men's and women's novels will be analyzed to highlight contrasting perceptions of this inclusion/exclusion cycle.

The first novel of this war was Aziza (1955) by Djamila Débeche, a middle class French-educated woman and one of only a handful of Algerian women to be actively concerned with western style feminist issues. As director of the feminist socialist literary journal Action (founded 1947), she spoke openly about the biculturalism of a pious Muslim with a French education. Débeche was adamant that in Algeria, religion and traditions were not antithetical to modernization. There was no contradiction, she claimed, between wearing a veil and going to school (Débeche 1946:143). She was out of the mainstream and yet, although she did not belong to any indigenous Algerian women's associations, she did represent Algeria at the 1947 International Women's Congress in Paris. Hence, Débeche's views cannot be considered to be representative of any but a few privileged French-educated women. In fact, her situation was one that male writers, and even some female writers like Zhour Ouanissi, criticized bitterly. Some even went so far as to claim that educating girls in French schools caused the "under-development of Algerian society" (Mosteghanemi 1985:31-32).

Like its author, Aziza is an anomaly. It is a plea for the integration of French and Algerian cultures. The French-educated Aziza is married to a meagerly educated nationalist lawyer. Like many male revolutionaries in women's literature, he mouths pious phrases about the emancipation of the Algerian woman while keeping his wife, his possession, under lock and key. As his political preoccupations increase, his time for Aziza decreases. Finally he sends her to his village where she must submit to customs that include tattooing. After an initial rebellion which brings immediate retribution from

all, even her women friends, she submits. Like the author herself, Aziza lives on the edge of Algerian society. The women say to her, "You know very well that you can't bend to our customs and live like us. You're not a Muslim any longer. You want to live like a European women," [to which she replies] "It's true. I do have a western lifestyle. But why do you accuse me of my education when you yourselves are proud to be speaking French?" (Débeche 1955:24). Yet, the return of the charge of biculturalism does not exonerate Aziza; rather, it reveals her recognition of her own subjection to forces overwhelming other women. This novel might have been criticized as a premature effort to emphasize feminist self-assertion; instead it has been criticized as anti-nationalist, since it focuses on women as social problems rather than as symbols of opposition to the French. Nationalists resented the implication that male oppression is more painful than the biculturalism born of colonial oppression; they demanded that the feminist struggle be subsumed under the revolutionary struggle. They also deplored the focus on upper middle class women: the Revolution was not only political, it was also socio-economic.

In 1960, Marguerite Taos Amrouche⁷ published La rue des tambourins. Like Débeche, Amrouche is concerned with the struggle of a young woman faced with a choice between her French education and her traditional upbringing (Bamia 1982:207). She recognized the privilege in her university education, yet she is the first to acknowledge that her freedom is skin-deep only. Algerian society is not yet ready to integrate the educated women, who lament: "How can we stand the wait, the doubt, the deprivation?" (Amrouche 1960:83).

This passive pessimism is reflected vividly in the oeuvre of the leading Algerian woman writer, Assia Djebar. In all of her works, even those that deal with the war directly, Djebar explores love in the hidden, oppressed world of women. Hers is a languid, nostalgic evocation of a way of life that, although constrained, has a certain magic.

Djebar published her first novel, La soif (1957), three years after the outbreak of the war. In June 1956, students staged a strike with the Front de Libération Nationale. Djebar participated. Within a month she had written La soif. Eight months later it was published and successfully sold. Djebar denies any autobiographical references, claiming that the novel was not supposed to be a reflection of the war but rather the escape from it. La soif deals with the need for progeny, particularly male progeny. Jedla has a miscarriage and she is wrought with anxiety: will her husband divorce her? When Jedla becomes pregnant again, her childhood friend Nadia encourages her to have an abortion, since nothing will keep her husband by her side. It is only when Jedla dies from the abortion that Nadia realizes the consequences of her thoughtless words. She repents and reforms, having "lost her thirst for independence."⁸ Men have come between these two friends; they have destroyed not only their friendship but also their lives. The Revolution is not mentioned. Djebar's harsh indictment of a patriarchal system that turns women into their own worst enemies and oppressors was criticized for what was considered to be blatant unconcern for revolutionary reality. Joan Phyllis Monego writes, "Only after independence, when the expected liberation of women was not effected with the liberation of the country was the seriousness of problems raised in the novel appreciated: the affective relationship between spouses, infidelity, women's fear of sterility and of subsequent repudiation, the subordination of the wife to the husband" (Monego 1984:134). A year

later, Djébar published Les impatientes (1958). This time the writing took three months. Again there is no mention of the Revolution. The impatient of the title are cloistered women no longer willing to tolerate their segregation. Instead of attacking the system, they use deceit against each other to gain individual freedom. Djébar has said of Dalila: "I wanted to show how in a calm world, where objectively nothing had yet changed there was developing a process that allowed one to guess at future upheavals" (Monego 1984:136).

In 1959, Djébar left Algeria for Tunisia. There she wrote "Il n'y a pas d'exil," a short story she did not publish until 21 years later. The protagonist is a young woman, a divorcee who has lost her child. She hears the lamentations of her neighbor whose son has just been run over. She is plunged back into the misery of her own loss. While she is thus brooding, some women come to visit. They are looking her over for their son/brother. She remains aloof during the interview in which she is supposed to participate only in silence. When the visitors demand a decision from her mother who acquiesces nervously, the protagonist blurts out: "I don't want to marry!" (Djébar 1980:94). Everyone is shocked and she is hurriedly led away. But her remonstrance has come too late and her mother has agreed; the decision has been made without consulting her. This was normal, even though she was an adult woman who had already been through this ceremony before her first marriage. As she ponders her refusal, she seems surprised at the vehemence of her reaction. She was already coming to terms with her fate: "Who cares! I don't know what got into me just then. But they were all talking about the present and about how so much had changed and how unfortunate they were. I said to myself: What's the point of suffering far from our country, when I have to continue doing as I did in Algiers" (Djébar 1980:95). During the Revolution, exile in Tunisia made no difference; women were still expected to remain silent and to have all decisions made for them. The cynical pessimism of this piece explains why Djébar waited until 1980 to publish. But written as it was in 1959 in the middle of the war, it is a vivid depiction of women's continued powerlessness and silence during the war.

From Tunisia Djébar went to Morocco, where she reported on the fate of Algerian refugees. Her journalism gave her a perspective on the war and its participants. Her next two novels, derived from encounters with refugees, were Les enfants du nouveau monde (1962) which came out during the last year of the war, and Les alouettes naïves (1967). The protagonists have become conscious of their political role in the country's reconstruction. Yet, they remain victims of patriarchy: "...a body submits silently because the dialogue of mutual contact is missing" (Djébar 1962:18).

Les enfants du nouveau monde focuses on the experiences of about 20 women and men in Blida (Djébar's home village) during a 24-hour period during the war. For some of the women, love is still a major motivation. There are French-educated women; like Lila, they are ready to oppose the nationalist endeavor for fear of losing their husbands. Participation in the fighting is involuntary, not willed. Such participation serves as an antidote against the boredom of their lives, making it possible for them "to stop thinking of love only" (Djébar 1962:143).

There are others whom the war shocks into consciousness. When her husband Youssef is in danger, Cherifa leaves her house by herself for the first

time. She crosses the city, lightly protected by her veil, to warn him (pp. 137-150). This foray into the city is presented as a journey filled with significance, almost a rite of passage into adulthood. Although she knows that there are women in the maquis where Youssef must go, she does not demand to be taken there. It is enough that she has acted and that she has "discovered that she was not merely a prey to men's curiosity...but that she existed" (p. 162).

Others, like the French intellectual Suzanne, weigh their love against the mandates of the nationalist endeavor. Suzanne's husband Omar is the last Algerian lawyer left in Algiers, yet he wants to leave the country. Suzanne insists that he stay, saying that she will stay "even if [the war] goes on for ten years. If I leave you some day I'll only divorce you at the end, when it's all over and the country is free." The following day Omar leaves, saying: "I'll write. I'll give you my address in France" (p. 16). Her resolution and patriotism are as strong as that of the nationalist Youssef, who as a young man had discovered that: "Homeland (patrie) is not only common land, nor merely shared misery, but blood shed together and on the same day" (p. 194). Suzanne is an anomaly in Algerian writings, particularly those by men. Most writers present foreign women as incarnations of evil, of the temptations of the West. By presenting a foreign woman positively, Djébar is emphasizing the greater importance to the nation of women's solidarity and nationalism above traditional family ties.⁹ Such dramatization of foreign women's commitment to the Algerian cause flies in the face of Woolfian claims for women's inherent pacifism, summed up in the now familiar phrase: "As a woman my country is the whole world."

Amna is another nationalist. She lives next to Cherifa and Youssef and knows of the latter's clandestine activities. However, when her police inspector husband asks about their neighbor's revolutionary activity, she lies: "May God forgive me, I lied to him and I don't regret it at all" (p. 86). She tells this to Cherifa. The two women sharing in this subterfuge feel themselves strengthened by their opposition to the corrupt law, personified by a husband. This seems to be a first step toward the identification of a growing feminist awareness. Unfortunately, Djébar does not develop it.

Then there are the women who believe they can gain liberation through some military action that puts them on a par with men. These are the heroines. The 16-year old Hassiba marches off to the maquis with Youssef.¹⁰ Salima, the 31-year-old school teacher, acts as a go-between for resistance fighters and their families and is imprisoned. Although she longs to be married and to be like other women, her motto is: "Act like a man!" (p. 94). For ten days, she is tortured and forbidden to lie down. Her courage inspires a guard who tries to help her. But when he asks how she is, she "notices that she no longer has a voice" (p. 97). The guard calls her "sister" and thanks her for not talking. But the reader begins to suspect this speechlessness. Is Salima already, while yet participating, losing her voice?

Touma, the one responsible for Salima's arrest, also hopes for liberation through the war. According to Djébar, she is one of the "misguided" feminists who thinks that a western appearance is sufficient proof of liberation. She sacrifices the nationalist cause in the hope of gaining personal fulfillment and works for the authorities as an informant. Djébar claims that she used

Touma as a symbol of the evil the French were perpetrating on Algerian society by trying to westernize their women. The only outcome of such a program was to turn the seduced women into prostitutes and traitors.¹¹ The men in their families were "compelled" to kill these women to redeem their lost honor. Les enfants du nouveau monde gives a partial picture of those women who participated in the war. The picture is mixed.

In 1961, Zohra Drif, later known as a heroine, wrote her ten-page war witness, La mort de mes freres. In 1957, she had been arrested and detained in the women's section of Barberousse prison. She had been part of the terrorist network of the Armée de Libération Nationale, yet she remains resolutely realistic about terrorism. She flatly rejects Malraux's definition of terrorism as a "search for absolute personal realization, pushed to heroism, understood as individual exaltation. [Such a definition] contradicts the reality we are experiencing in Algeria" (Drif 1961:3). She describes the order of Algerian army where instead of any individual action there was adherence to a group ethos. They did not see themselves as individual terrorists but rather as soldiers with a responsibility to the group, and this group ran regular war risks, such as torture and death. She writes: "In this Algerian war in which all, civilians included, are participating in the struggle for liberation, my participation as a young woman student is natural and fairly common" (p. 6). This naturalness of women's military action is reiterated by women writers as well as by fighters.

MEN'S WAR DISCOURSE

A comparison of these women's writings with those by men helps to clarify images of women's roles during the war. Algerian male writers like Kateb Yacine, Mohamed Dib, and Malek Haddad fill their works with ideal types. In contrast with the women's writings during the war, they infuse all women's actions with significance. They express awe at the temporary change in women's status the war has occasioned. They write not so much out of admiration as of dread. The reader senses the fear that women are gaining control and that the danger they inherently pose to the social order, their fitna (i.e., physical attraction and political unrest), is about to be unleashed.

Most Algerian men describe tortured, alienated childhoods in a world of autocratic, irresponsible, absent fathers and deserted, bewildered mothers whose love is diverted from the father to the son. The first major war novel by a man was Kateb Yacine's Nedjma (1956). It is the story of a beautiful woman who is self-consciously presented as a symbol for Algeria: "Nedjma is the soul of the country. Nedjma is the link between the past and the present" (Yacine 1956:146). The circumstances of Nedjma's birth are shrouded in the same mystery that characterizes the birth of the new Algerian identity. She is an illegitimate child. Her mother is a mysterious French Jewish woman and her father is Si Mukhtar, an almost legendary figure who has fathered countless offspring, including one of Nedjma's four suitors. When she is three years old, Nedjma is adopted by Lella Fatma, a Kabyle woman (p.148). At a young age, she is married off and she laments: "Marriage isolated me. They did this to control me...but in the end it is the prisoner who decides" (p. 68). Early in the novel, prisoner Algeria/Nedjma announces her intent: to attack the jailor French and those asleep in their beds (p. 56).

Nedjma remains aloof and safe in her impregnable prison/palace called Beauséjour. It is here that her four suitors--who are also her cousins--must stay to share her experience of oppression and of the "tribally created illusion of fulfilment and significance."¹² This experience unites them to each other and to Nedjma. They are inspired to rebel. The constantly repeated image of Nedjma along with the "sun at its zenith" recalls the archetypal myth of apotheosis and sacred marriage. This is the marriage of Nedjma, the soul, with the people/suitors, the body. The revolution needs the lovers to fight for and with the beloved.

But revolution is more than a fight; it is the restructuring of society. Yacine pleads for an understanding of history to inform the restructuring. Algerian history goes back beyond the French to a tribal past. It is this tribalism that must be drawn on as a "link to reunite us and to allow us to find ourselves" (p. 128). Tribalism implies incest, but incest as a positive unifying factor: "Incest is our bond, our principle of cohesion after the exile of the first ancestor. The same blood carries us irresistibly to the mouth of the river" (pp. 186-7).

Tribalism also implies strength through communal solidarity, usually of the women. These women, like many tribal and rural women in Arab literature are the one who have stayed on the land, while the "vagabond men wander through mountain and valley, careless of the fate of the land" (p. 151). In their steadfastness and patriotism, the women represent the land, authentic values, and traditions. The hope of Algeria, Yacine tells the reader, lies in the women.

In his play, Le Cadavre Encerclé (written 1954 and published 1959), Yacine has another protagonist named Nedjma. This Nedjma leads the women to war, exclaiming, "It's now or never! This is war! Let's take our freedom!" She exhorts these women to throw away their jewelry, symbol of their worth in a traditional society, and to take up arms. Whereas most heroines are described as having been liberated by the war, the feminist consciousness of this heroine of a male writer precedes the war and allows her to use the war as a catalyst for raising the consciousness of others. In 1979, Yacine wrote an enthusiastic introduction to a novel on the war by a young Algerian woman--Yamina Mechakra's La grotte éclatée. He writes: "Now that the Aures insurrection has given birth to a new Algeria, this book must be read and reread so that there be others, so that others raise their voices. Right now, in our country, a woman who writes is worth her weight in gold" (Mechakra 1979:8). His belief in the importance of Algerian women has not abated, although the focus has changed from the woman participant/model to the woman writer.

Mohamed Dib also portrays women as formidable participants in the war. Qui se souvient de la mer? (1962) is a tortured cry of pain out of the debris. Dib has compared his surrealist oneiric discourse with Guernica, Picasso's masterpiece on World War II. Held within a rigid frame, the war, the narrative loops a tale of terror and abstraction, as people turn into stone, and stone into snakes. The narrator loses control as images hurtle past his bemused brain.

In the context of this paper Qui se souvient de la mer? is important for its portrayal of women. Although Dib's earlier trilogy, La grande maison

(1952), L'incendie (1954) and Le métier à tisser (1957), depicted women as social victims who are also incapable of acting, in this novel women are strong. It is they who initiate action. Almost invariably associated with women, the sea is the main character in this novel. Again and again Dib evokes the sea/mother/woman who prepares the men for the fight they would not otherwise be able to undertake (p. 38): "Without the sea, without the women, we would have remained orphans permanently. They covered us with the salt of their tongue and that, fortunately, preserved many a man among us! It'll have to be acknowledged some day" (Dib 1962:10; cf. 30). It is to be noted that the mer in the title, meaning sea, is homophonous with mere, meaning mother (mothers in Islam are greatly honored for the Prophet Muhammad said: "Paradise is under the feet of the mothers"). Hence, the alternative reading is Who Remembers the Mother? Already in 1962, Dib was warning Algerians that the mother, the most honored role for women within Algerian society, was going to be forgotten. Yet it was the women who were active and alert throughout the anarchy (Dib 1962:51). When the men are turned into stone (could this be a veiled reference to Medusa and, hence, to women's power?), it is the women alone who can save them from their paralysis (p. 18). Pulling together the pieces, they carry them aloft above the devouring flames.

Nafissa is the protagonist's wife.¹³ She is never clearly delineated, but as the novel progresses she becomes more and more elusive. Even when all seems to be well between the protagonist and his wife, there is an element of uncertainty because Nafissa's simple smile is accompanied by "defiance in her eyes" (p. 25). Her absences--presumably as she sallies forth on some military mission--are like "black holes" into which the protagonist is sucked. In her association with water, Nafissa's strength and power, disguised as fragility, become most evident: "Nafissa's voice overwhelmed me with its water, cradled me....Had the world hardened into one great block of concrete, it still would not have formed such a rampart as we find in this fragile water" (p. 19). Nafissa's voice is fragile water; it is also a rampart harder than a concrete block. Here a man is acknowledging the importance of women's voices, but also of this vulnerability. However, this vulnerability is beyond comprehension, hence the unexpected epithet "fragile" for this shimmering element.

Gradually, mentions of Nafissa and the sea become interchangeable; the growing fear that the threat each inspires is palpable (pp. 37-8). The protagonist dares not address Nafissa as she becomes increasingly "indistinct, peaceful, motionless and absent. She looks around her and leaves me powerless" (p. 51). To regain any strength, he must turn to her and allow her to "tranfuse her energy into him" (p. 63). Suddenly, he finds himself confronted by a "sea of women wrapped in snowy veils" (p. 66) that he had at first confused with the howling iriace, those horrifying mythical creatures that circle above the new constructions. This is the first stage in the mythopoeic transformation of Nafissa from comfort to uncontrollable threat. He writes: "Nafissa conquers the universe, establishes her dominion over everything and then uses her smile to put my worries to rest....I will never find out through what channels Nafissa acts upon me" (p.74).

But who is Nafissa? His wife, certainly. But also as her name implies in Arabic, like Nedjma, she is the "soul that designates our line of descent" (Dib 1962:80). He has recognized in her an essential part of himself: she is his soul, she is Algeria's tradition. He needs her, and this need makes him weaker still. The only hope for salvation out of the conflagration is

Nafissa. There is no role for the man. When he suggests that he might accompany her on one of her missions, she refuses. She compels him to play the role that had been hers before the war: to wait passively.

The protagonist submits to his new fate and justifies it as a communal necessity: "The guiltiest are those who distrusted the sea, who failed to place their confidence in her" (p. 103). All have to recognize that the sea, that women, are "preparing the coming of another world" (p. 106). Echoing Yacine, Dib is asserting that the future is the creation of women. They will shape it; they will cover it, as the sea, at the end of the novel, covers the whole of existence. The final archetype of the flood is a metaphor for the dissolution essential to the new beginning.

The anxiety that informs this novel enhances the role of women. In Malek Haddad's works, on the other hand, there is an ambivalence that emerges with the war years. Haddad wrote three novels on the war, Je t'offrirai une gazelle (1959), L'élève et la leçon (1960), and Le quai aux fleurs ne répond plus (1961). To discover how Haddad explores the role of writing during the Revolution, how the Revolution shapes identity, and how women increasingly subvert that identity, these novels should be read in the order in which they were written. In his first novel--a metatext that questions the fate of the book that he is writing as though it had already been written and submitted to a publisher--he lyrically denies the significance of writing: "Writers who have nothing more to say invent stories or go deep sea diving into the blasé depths of their skills. They have nothing more to say because they have not understood the need for silence, this silence that allows for the contemplation of the other. They exist too much. Their novels encumber them" (Haddad 1959:26). Later a friend writes from Algeria assuring him that the fighters could not care less "about your gazelle" (p. 120). In Je t'offrirai une gazelle, women play a minor role to the "auteur's" self-obsession. He collects and rejects women of all nationalities exerting a power that goes largely unchallenged. And of the women of his country he says that they are "veiled. It's not only modest, it's also very elegant" (p. 123).

A year later, Haddad published L'élève et la leçon, where his portrayal of women is markedly changed. The first line of the novel is: "I did not know that my daughter was so beautiful. Insolent and aggressive." The careless flings with the myriad women of je t'offrirai une gazelle have given way to the intensity of a father-daughter relationship. The protagonist has no power over this woman who "has come not to explain. She had come to demand her due and to condemn" (Haddad 1960:13). In a description reminiscent of Dib's Nafissa, the father/narrator compares Fadila to night, dark and frightening and incomprehensible. She smokes and he can do nothing, even though he "does not like women who smoke. Especially when they're Algerian" (p. 16).

Throughout the novel that is an interview, in which the narrator rarely speaks but only dreams in response to his daughter's urgent request, he condemns her immoral behavior so as to exonerate himself of his own guilt. But the worst is yet to come. Fadila has come to him not as a father, the father who left Algeria when her mother died, but as a doctor. She wants him to perform an abortion on her since she cannot have a child "under these circumstances" (p. 18). She has to be fit to fight, and for the first time in her life she has sought his help (p. 63). His daughter's nationalism makes the narrator confront his own inadequacy. He admits that he had always looked

for peace: "I am nothing but a vulgar egoist without a nationalist conscience, without any conscience. Being partial to easy solutions, I took refuge on the other side of the sea, on the other side of History" (pp. 19-20). To ease his non-existent conscience, he expresses shock at Fadila's unconcern for the unborn baby's father. He does not know how to deal with a woman who is a nationalist and at the same time a "prostitute" by the pre-war Algerian standards. This confusion informs everything he does: he condemns her, yet he wants her to accept him. When she includes him in a "chez nous" that refers to their common Algeria, he is almost unbelieving: "So she hasn't completely excluded me from her community" (p. 43). He has given Fadila the right and therefore the power to accept or to exclude him, to make him Algerian or to confiscate his birthright. He cannot understand and can "never forgive that they [Fadila and Omar] had thought of getting rid of that child that they alone had invited. That they asked me the father, me already the grandfather, me almost the father-in-law, to get rid of the child" (p. 62). Yet, remonstrances notwithstanding, he agrees, and then realizes that he has thus given "The Fadilas the final word" (p. 99). The novel ends with the completed abortion. It is not clear whether the acquiescence in the abortion, the accession to Fadila's demands, has allowed the narrator to feel more Algerian because he is freeing up a fighter for the war, or whether it merely symbolizes loss of control and therefore loss of dignity.

In Le quai aux fleurs ne répond plus (1961), Malek Haddad's attitude toward women has become unequivocal: family women who have participated in the Revolution are dangerous, not to be trusted. Khaled Ben Tobal goes to Paris where he takes emotional refuge with his old friend Simon. He has chosen to write and not to fight. Since he cannot exercise this choice in Algeria, he has left. In exile he must assert himself as Algerian by comparing himself favorably with those who have lost the right to call themselves Algerians, those in exile who do not even write. He hopes to become a fighting Algerian through his Parisian poems that are "read in the maquis, in the prisons. That gave him no pride, no joy. But fear. Panic. Was he as good as the men, as their explosions, their historic vocation? Does he know their fear, can he despise heroism as much as they who do not acknowledge that they are heroes?" (Haddad 1961:29). He knows that he is living a delusion: that writing can give identity, can replace speech, can give authority. In fact, writing, which demanded physical separation from Algeria, cut him off from Algeria.

Throughout his time in Paris and his affair with the French woman Monique (Simon's wife), Khaled longs for his wife Ourida (Little Rose). Like so many women in this literature, she stayed in Algeria when her husband left: "Ourida watches the rain, in Algeria. In France, Khaled looks straight into the eyes of boredom, his own" (p. 35). Why did Khaled leave? Was he afraid? Or did the need to write override all other feelings? Writing and his love for his wife became his bonds with Algeria and with himself.

Khaled's obsession with Ourida, whom he identifies with Algeria, is entirely self-centered. He dreams of her as loyal and unchanging. He cannot imagine that his departure could change anything. The ironic end is prefigured in a scene of a hit-and-run accident: "The car did not slow down....The man and the woman were no longer embracing. The wild fig tree culled the lovers' blood on its broad leaves" (p. 106). Haddad then flashes back to Paris and to Khaled who continues to sing to his French mistress of

his undying, unshakeable love for Ourida. Then, suddenly he is confronted with the truth. On page 3 of a newspaper, Khaled reads a short fine print note. It is in the Trivial News section, and it reads: "In Constantine, Boulevard of the Abyss, terrorists assassinated a Muslim woman and a lieutenant parachutist. The unfortunate victim had confirmed her belief in a French Algeria by participating in a tour with General X. Several months before, she had separated from her husband, the pseudo-writer Khaled Ben Tobal who is only permitted to continue writing because of the absence of authorities" (p. 116). Two dreams--his love and his self-worth--shattered in an instant and Khaled realizes that his "only distinction will have been to have believed in shit. To be shit" (p. 119). The fragmentation of the end of the novel into shorter and shorter paragraphs is mimetic of Khaled's fragmentation. The discourse splinters into increasingly smaller pieces as his beliefs in Ourida/Algeria and in his writing are exposed to be cruel jokes. His incalculable insignificance that he had previously confronted during a trip to the Sahara (p. 107) engulfs him. For his wife and his country had ceased to be his when he left. In this last war novel, Haddad explicitly states that when an Algerian left the war zone, he forfeited his birthright. All attempts to construct an identity by claiming to write for Algeria were part of a tragic farce. And although Ourida might be dead, she would live on forever as a testament to Khaled Ben Tobal's nothingness.

POST-WAR CONSTRUCTIONS

Between 1962 and 1967 intellectuals began to marshal their facts to produce a convincing case. So, it was a great war, a great victory? Although many men, particularly those writing in Arabic, produced encomia to the war and particularly to the women who participated, the women writers remained skeptical. A francophone novel published during this five-year hiatus that has attracted considerable attention is Zoubeida Bittari's O mes soeurs musulmanes, pleurez! (1964). Many are quick to point out that this is not a major work; they cite the schoolgirl French and the simplistic autobiographical style. Yet this work did cause a stir, because it chronicled the harrowing experience of women's oppression in 20th century Algeria.

Although Bittari scarcely mentions the war, the story--written in exile in France--tells of her growing feminist consciousness. The protagonist is married off at the age of 12, she is persecuted by her mother-in-law, and then, she is repudiated. Contrary to expectation, her new independent status gives her insight into her situation so that when the husband comes to reconcile she has the upper hand. Whereas until then she had referred to him with the distance of the third person, she addresses him on page 146 with the almost contemptuous familiarity of the second person. Calling him an "imbecile," she mocks his overtures and ends up taking him to court. She is awarded custody of her son, and she warns him that he will "learn how a mother who is separated from her sun suffers.... You thought that being a man you were strong. But French justice does not allow you to oppress the weaker sex. You must respect it. Obey" (p. 149). Note that it is French who have given her an awareness of her rights. By the end of the novel, the protagonist has taken charge of her life. Woman, she says, is "not born to be a servant, but to be man's equal" (p. 164). She has learned her own worth in a male-female relationship. She has also learned a lesson--the importance of female solidarity. Despite misgivings about her stepmother, she defends this

woman against her natural father. Written two years after the end of the war, this novel comes as an indictment of traditional values and as a rallying cry for awareness of oppression and for the need for women's community.

Bittari's work foreshadows the later literature that criticizes the Revolution and particularly the increase in polygamy and divorce that it witnessed. The French who had been the enemy are rehabilitated by some writers within the newly corrupt system as being the only true defenders women have ever had in Algeria. This recognition of the contribution of the French to some aspect of Algerian well-being has further implications. After 130 years of colonial rule and French integration into Algerian society, it was not possible for the Algerians to divorce themselves entirely from their colonial past. The search for asala (authenticity) could not be undertaken without a consideration of the French role in shaping Algerian identity. The insistence by the nationalists that all traces of the French be extirpated to make room for a pure Algerian ethos was unrealistic. What was realistic was to see Frenchness within the context of a multiple-layered identity that also comprised Arab, Berber, and various tribal elements. Asala demanded the validation of each constituent part of the national ethos, including the French. Bittari's novel is one of the first to salute a French contribution to Algeria. In the light of post-revolutionary developments, women are beginning to adopt what was previously considered to be an anti-nationalist stand: praise of the erstwhile oppressor without fear of the consequences. They have little to lose.

The essayist Fadela M'Rabet echoes this sentiment in her two studies La femme algérienne (1964) and Les algériennes (1967). In the first study she claims that the war has changed nothing because the men have not changed. She decries the 1962 Tripoli Program and the 1964 Algiers Pact recognizing women's rights as shallow disguises for the perpetuation of an oppressive patriarchy. Les Algériennes, although less violent in its language, is an even more trenchant criticism. Its primary target is Islam misinterpreted as tradition. It is Islam interpreted by men. It has deprived women of their rights. It has led to the increase in women's repudiations and in polygamy since the Revolution.¹⁴ Since patriarchy has benefited from the Revolution, the "greatest potential revolutionary will pause when she considers the historical record" (Bezirgan & Fernea 1978:339). The revolution has served only to further oppress women.

In the same year that Les algériennes was published, Djébar brought out Les alouettes naïves, a novel she had written between 1962 and 1965. Flashbacks, abrupt changes in narrator and in type face, volatile tenses, many reflexive verbs--all point to a carefully crafted text. It is a reflection of a "war [which] is often only a life led according to a disharmonious rhythm" (p. 228) and in which what is "essential is not the memory of the fighting but of its rhythm...the greatest curse is a kind of torpor" (p. 410). In this novel, Djébar writes of those, like Omar, "whom History has devoured" (Djébar 1967:397). Five years have elapsed since Independence and the writers are beginning to take stock. Who really won? What did winning entail? What happened to those who fought and sacrificed? Les alouettes naïves revolves around the lives of three couples who have participated in some way: Omar, the intellectual and predominant narrator with whom Djébar identifies,¹⁵ and Nessima; Julie and Farid; and, finally, the legendary lovers, Nafissa and Rachid, Omar's brother.

Although heroines, derived from Djamila Boupacha and Djamila Bouhired,¹⁶ are described and politics are indirectly evoked,¹⁷ this novel again focuses on personal relations. Like their predecessors in Les enfants du nouveau monde, all three of the woman protagonists are almost exclusively preoccupied by love and their need for a man and an escape from personal failure (Djebar 1967:334). At university, Nafissa meets Karim, falls in love and becomes engaged at the age of 19. She accompanies him to the maquis where he is killed. Later she meets Rachid and falls passionately in love. Rachid reciprocates, but finds himself adored by Julie. Julie's husband Farid maintains a low profile as Julie pines for the man she knows she can never have. Finally, Nessima longs for Omar, who longs for Nafissa (as he does for all the women whom Rachid has loved). The declarations of the lovers to the reluctant beloveds are uncontrolled, sometimes undignified and couched in the banal rhetoric of soap opera (pp. 240, 254, 280-9, 330). And throughout is the reiteration of the explicitly erotic bond that holds Nafissa and Rachid together (e.g., pp. 164-88).

The space around these Racinian couples is filled with shadows, most of them veiled. Again, and again, Djebar introduces women as veiled, belonging to a world apart (pp. 79, 101, 147). This world and those veils are not described as oppressive but rather as seductive (e.g., p. 102) and safe: they encompass the seer who is not seen (e.g., p. 104). They evoke a special passing femininity. When Nafissa wears the veil for the first time, she "was proud to demonstrate that she could drape the veil with confidence...Nafissa followed her companions through the dark streets. Her gait became more harmonious: she discovered a hitherto unnoticed majesty" (emphasis added, p. 102). The hammam (public bath) is a "kingdom [emphasis added] of whispering shadows" (p. 129). When she leaves the hammam, Nafissa feels as though "she had returned from an enchanted world that did not know the others; that is, the men" (p. 132). The veiled women are described as "alone, they glide along in the twilight like translucent goddesses" (p. 194). Note in each case the association of this women's past world with majesty and sanctity. This association might be construed as a feminist statement lauding women's strength and solidarity. But structure is far from meaning, since the context militates against such an interpretation: women's bliss is said to derive precisely from their ignorance. Nessima tells Nafissa that she envies her unliberated mother: "You walk on with eyes closed, listening only to your instinct. In the desert, that is the only way one has a chance of arriving" (pp. 294-6).

The book ends with a visit to a mental hospital full of "women recently returned from the front" (p. 414) or from the forests of the maquis (p. 415). Meanwhile the streets fill with veils that had never before dared to appear in public (p. 424). So that is what happened to the women: the fighters were locked away so as to make room for the "veils." The women who had stepped into the public realm had opened a crack; they had paid the price and now others were beginning to emerge.

At this transitional phase there is considerable ambiguity about women's roles and power. The men in Les alouettes naives, like male protagonists in men's war literature, register a loss of authority, even of identity. When Julie asks Omar, "What are you looking for?" using the intimate and singular "tu," he replies "You've caught me short. I? During this war I've become so used to saying 'we'" (p. 389). When Omar realizes that he has truly lost

Nafissa, he is angry: he cannot hope to possess her because she had become "like others of her sex, independent" (p. 329). Si Othman also is disturbed by these new independent women, represented by his daughters. He feels that he who had once been the "master, was today merely a man who trembles" (p. 408). The women, however, do not see themselves in this light. The men's perceived loss of authority is not paralleled by women's growing sense of power. There is radical dissonance between male and female perceptions of gender roles consequent to the war. While the men are threatened, the women remain unaware.

Participation forced women into the public realm, but this exposure alienated them: "Our women are our men" (p. 230). They are not quite ostracized, yet they are not quite part of things. They are the new women who are neither virtuous nor dishonorable while being both. For the families, their heroine daughters are their "real Muslim daughters" (p. 407). Women are reduced to the symbol "good Muslims"; their individual identities are lost. Because they are neither vestal nor virgin, they are marginalized. In Algeria such elusiveness to categorization points to loss of control. Nafissa and some other "femmes-soldats" (p. 44) are ambushed by the French. When the French realize who their captives are they exclaim: "Ah! There they are!...The larks [allouettes]!" (p.39) This line is echoed almost 400 pages later when the reader is told that the alouettes naives of the title are "the prostitute-dancers...symbols at once of an external decline and an altogether anonymous internal light" (p. 423). These are the women who participated and about whom Omar mused, as though echoing the sentiments of Haddad's narrator in L'élève et la leçon: "I don't know how, but thinking of today's heroines, I remember yesterday's prostitutes...maybe because they are unexpected. Yet, they are not prostitutes, nor are they part of a respectable harem of cloistered wives. What is to be done with these war heroines? How are we to act with them?" (p. 235). How, indeed can these women be fitted into pre-war categories? They cannot. For the time being they are in the "Heroines' House" (p. 237). In their splendid isolation they are exceptionalized and can eventually be forgotten. It is not only in literature but also in reality that they were neglected: in 1970, Algerian radio adapted Djebbar's play Rouge l'aube (written in 1960) and omitted all references to women's struggle in the war. By 1971, women's participation could not only be omitted but also denounced. Moustapha Toumi published a poem, entitled "Femme, Femme, Femme" in El-Moudjahid in which he criticized women's liberal behavior and extolled a neo-traditional femininity.

In the short story "Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement" (1978), Djebbar revisits the "fire carriers against whose eyes and stomachs the bombs still explode" (Djebbar 1980:61-62). The fighters have become drug addicts and prostitutes. The tone is not so much indignant as bitter and nostalgic. Something has gone wrong, and the only solution seems to involve a turning in on oneself and on the past. In Ombre sultane (1986), the romance of the harem--a place of female bonding--inexplicably persists. Djebbar writes extensively of the drama of unveiling. For example, she describes how strange it was "to be able to let go of the edge of the material, to look with face uncovered. Even to look up to the sky, as I did when I was ten" (p. 27). How wonderful to unveil, but also how dangerous; it entails exclusion (Djebbar 1986:53). In 1986, she calls militantly for universal unveiling, for an assertion of individuality (p. 42). The protagonist's daughter challenges her mother in the following terms: "No. It's your fault, Mom. Your fault. If

only you did not run to him every time he hits the slipper on the floor to summon you. If only you did not even stand up!" (p. 143). In this literature, activism on behalf of women's rights seems to be in its infancy.

Djebar hints at the reasons for men's and women's neglect of women's revolutionary accomplishments. At the time no one, even the women, spoke out on behalf of women. It was only in retrospect that awareness dawned. Although in Les alouettes naives, Nafissa warns: "I'm forgetting the war" (Djebar 1967:298), she is alone in her perception. By 1978, this neglect by women of the war and its impact on women has become a leitmotif. In Femmes d'Alger, Djebar constantly reiterates the lack of, and the need for, the feminine voice: "My voice does not reach them. It stays inside" (Djebar 1980:15)...and "I am the collective voice...that touches one, embraces another" (p. 145). Women must speak, must ask if there had ever been brothers, must tell the world of their experiences of prison and torture. Sarah muses: "I've always had problems with words" (pp. 62-3). Later, she tells of her time in the Barberousse prison: "I howled silently.... All the others could see was my silence."¹⁸ And then, it is as though talking has made her realize both the importance of talking, and the dangers of silence. She announces categorically: "There's only one way Arab women can unblock everything. They must talk. They must keep on talking of yesterday and today!" (p. 68). If they do not talk, they will get nothing. In "Les morts parlent" (1970 and 1978), Hadda is described as having "kept a morose silence during the war" (p. 126). In a speech that she gave to the International Symposium at Siunto Baths, Finland, in 1987, Marieme Helie Lucas wrote:

I feel the need to remind us all that we women, we non-religious beings, we internationalists, did not raise our voices--it would have been difficult and dangerous--or our consciousness.... In Algeria, many, including myself, kept silent for a whole decade after independence. We gave those in power the time to strengthen and organize and enforce discriminatory laws against women.... Of course we congratulated ourselves on the freedom that women had gained during the struggle. We were inside the myth talking about the myth. (Badran and Cooke, forthcoming)

Women were recognizing and condemning their silence during the war. But too late. Although Djebar tries to formulate a war narrative, hers is a solitary voice. In 1976, Aicha Lemsine published La chrysalide. Chroniques algériennes. This novel presents a feminist dystopia. The protagonist, Khadidja, is dismayed not at women's perfidy but at her husband's collusion with his mother against her, his new beloved but barren wife. When traditional methods do not help to cure her infertility, Khadidja goes secretly to Marielle, the boycotted French woman doctor. She is amazed to find herself spontaneously drawn to this foreign woman as though "united by the same ancestral evil" (Lemsine 1976:39). In Algérie, femmes et écritures (1985), an accolade for Algerian women writers' feminism, Ahlem Mosteghanemi idealizes this relationship between two individuals who "have only their sex in common" as being the "struggle for the cause of Woman" (Mosteghanemi 1985:104). Mosteghanemi also lauds Khadidja's courage and innovation in turning to French medicine in an environment where it was profoundly distrusted (p. 198). However, the struggle is unavailing. Although Khadidja does give birth to a son, her husband nevertheless takes a second wife when it is discovered that childbirth did finally render her incurably barren.

Khadidja develops a close relationship with the second wife, Akila. She needs companionship and help to eke out a miserable existence. The reader expects this friendship to symbolize the beginnings of a community of women. But again, structure is far from meaning; women's solidarity here merely serves to emphasize the tragic conditions in which these women continue to live. Mosteghanemi exaggerates when she describes Khadidja as a "unique case in Algerian literature." She goes on to describe her as a woman who "has the courage to defend all oppressed women in her entourage, even her rival" (p. 198). In fact, Khadidja cannot even defend herself. Her only hope for improvement in her status is through her son, and he obligingly goes off to the maquis to fight. Her jingoistic pride is satisfied. This Patriotic Mother now has the courage to stand up to her husband. When he suggests taking on a third wife, she explodes: "Have you not understood the lessons of this war we're living?" (Lemsine 1976:108-112). Mosteghanemi reads this passage as a strong feminist statement. She quotes: "Assuming the anger of Akila, Faiza, Malika and Hamia, the anger of all women, she roared. She became 1000 women!" (Mosteghanemi 1985:198). Khadidja manages to dissuade her husband from taking the third wife. But for herself and for all the women on whose behalf she "roared" she gains nothing but the honorific title, Lalla Khadidja. Again her demand is not feminist: She does not aim to subvert the system in which she lives. She wants, and gets reward within the status quo!

If there is no hope in the older generation, what of the new? Who is the chrysalis of the title? It is Faiza, Akila's daughter. She teaches herself to read and write. When Mouloud, her half-brother and Khadidja's son, returns from the war, he takes her to the university (Lemsine 1976:163-9). By 1965, she is doing brilliantly in medical school. Although her half-brother has been a staunch supporter, he is no feminist. One day, he announces his engagement to an uneducated girl. Faiza is amazed, especially when Mouloud confesses that he has always been somewhat afraid of highly educated women (p. 191). Faiza comes to terms with the marriage and moves in with the young couple. She continues her studies and considers herself the equal of any man (p. 213). Then, one day Faisal walks into her life and Faiza feels like "the traveller who has finally reached his goal...she knew that it was him she had always awaited" (p. 219). Until this book it was only male writers like the Egyptian Ihsan Abd al-Qaddus and the Lebanese Habshi al-Ashqar who had written so eloquently of the futility of women's education. There is not enough irony in the following exclamation: "Fortunately, there are men in this country. They know how to get rid of the powerful foreigner. They'll know how to control you, my daughters!" (p. 239). The melodrama reaches its climax when Faisal is killed. Faiza is pregnant and she decides to have the baby in the village, where she finds support for what before would have been punishable by death. Such romanticism stretches credulity and does not seem to frame an ideological desideratum: can the liberated, brilliant woman really prefer to live in a village with the illegitimate child of an impossible love rather than to pursue a career?

One wonders what happened to the women fighters. Forgotten, they were in a few cases exceptionalized as heroines. They gained nothing for themselves. Why? Did they constitute a threat that had to be suppressed? Did winning the war give men immediate and immense power they turned against women? Or, is there another explanation altogether? Perhaps the war did not change anything. Perhaps it was mere idealism to project a new society of liberated, then viciously repressed, women. Was military involvement really

only a brief interlude of exploitation? A careful reading of women's texts written during and soon after the war indicate that strong heroines during the war were more or less a fiction. Even critics like Mosteghanemi, who are trying to portray the blossoming of feminist consciousness, admit that the Revolution "did not shake the social structures" (Mosteghanemi 1985:222-230). In her paper "Women, Nationalism and Religion in the Algerian Liberation Struggle," Lucas wrote:

...even in the hardest times of the struggle, women were oppressed, confined to tasks that would not disturb social order in the future. Although these tasks were essential, they should not have absorbed all female energy. One woman bore arms, none was in a decision-making position! 65 dealt with bombs in the urban sectors [probably carrying spare parts!] and there were two political commissaires! (Badran and Cooke, forthcoming)

So much for Fanon's and others' myth of the Algerian woman liberated along with her country. It would appear that only later did women acknowledge the participation of other women and perceive its potential significance to feminist consciousness.

Interviews with women fighters from other parts of the world suggest that, for women, involvement in some aspect of war does not necessarily entail raised feminist consciousness. In Woman at War with America, D'Ann Campbell describes women returning to the home after World War II. They were not "coerced en masse to 'return' to the home: most of them had never left it to begin with, and those who had shared the domestic dreams of those who had not." (Elshtain 1987:7) A Jewish woman who fought the British in Palestine said: "And anyway, we girls weren't fighting to prove anything....I have no hang ups about feminism. I fought when there was no choice, but when I was no longer needed in that role I was happy to move on to something else" (Saywell 1985:189).

In Algeria, Débeche, Amrouche, Djebbar, and Lemsine as well as poets like Nadia Guendouz, Anna Greki, Danièle Amran and Leïla Djabali wrote, but they wrote alone and without commitment to a feminist cause that could stand side by side along with, but not under, the nationalist cause. Unlike the Lebanese women writers--the Beirut Decentrists--who wrote as a group on the Lebanese Civil War, the Algerian women writers did not share a sense of participation, of discursive creation and of a consequent change in consciousness. The war was not so much a consciousness-raising event as an exciting interlude in the grey monotony of an unchanging routine: "They felt as though they were playing a game" (Djebbar 1967:37). As Nafissa in Les alouettes naïves exclaims: "In the maquis I was alive. Here I'm dreaming" (p. 110). As though echoing this sentiment, Jean Bethke Elshtain quotes a French woman who said of World War II, "You know that I do not love war or want it to return. But at least it made me feel alive, as I have not felt alive before or since" (Elshtain 1987:10).

A brief survey of men's writings after the Revolution would indicate a change in male portrayal of women who participated. The anxiety of the war years has dissipated. Mouloud Mammeri's L'opium et le baton (1965) is a highly acclaimed dramatization of the Revolution. Written as it is three years after Independence, it has a certain temporal perspective that allows

for conscious construction. The plot is dotted with stereotypes—even a male Touma who had rejected his own culture and religion in the hopes of profiting from the French—who act out highly determined roles. The anguished self-questioning of the Algerian intellectual in Paris has given way to formulaic rejection of writing and advocacy of militancy. Bashir, Mammeri's intellectual who is a doctor, is shown at the beginning of the book and the Revolution as being almost trapped into marriage by Claude, his conniving French girlfriend. The Revolution is his salvation. The threat posed by women is restricted to a dream in which Bashir sees his mother with her cold eyes and her right hand "furiously spurring on her horse" and her left hand "furiously shaking a rattle" (Mammeri 1965:46). Nevertheless, there is still emphasis on women as those who stayed in Algeria while husbands and sons left for Paris (p. 80).

The women who had participated in the Revolution are no longer portrayed in fearful terms. For example, Farroudja, who is used as a decoy, is shown to be dumb and unthreatening since under torture she has nothing worth telling (pp. 125, 300). Women are becoming one-dimensional army whores (p. 204), and stereotypes of bitch goddesses are returning en masse (p. 211). Itto, the activist, no longer cares what people think of her: "Tomorrow I shall be gone...with you...or alone...or with some other man. You're crazy! You're married! Do you believe that? Well, take it easy, everyone! I don't plan to abandon him. In a month--no, in 29 days I'll go back to him" (pp. 226-7). She is not so much a heroine as a shameless campfollower (p. 295). Neo-traditionalism is indicated by the respect shown for the veil not only by the Algerians but also by the French: "In the tram the Europeans gave up their seats for veiled women. They used to call them Fatmas, now they said: Please, Madam" (p. 249). Women's attachment to nature, to the trees, is almost mocked (p. 258). Yet it was this very attachment that had made them stay and that writers like Yacine had lauded as the very essence of a life-sustaining patriotism. Then there are women like Titi who have lost their only son and who accept their fate with the stoicism of Rousseau's Spartan mother (p. 266). In L'opium et le baton, women are once again helpless victims of men's craving for power.

In 1969, Rachid Boudjedra wrote La répudiation. The war is merely alluded to, glimpsed in the interstices of flashback, memory, hallucination, and in the violent staccato of its language. This memoir of a crazy, disillusioned fighter traces through the development of misogyny in the son of a woman repudiated at the age of 30. This repudiation by a hypocritically religious man has been compared with the betrayal of the motherland by its insincere, opportunistic leaders. In a language that often comes across as gratuitously obscene, Boudjedra documents the sexual experiences and fantasies of a boy born at the end of the second world war. This oedipal tale illustrates the fine line that Algerian women once again walk--the line between lust and disgust. The only woman to be granted a measure of humanity is the repudiated mother. In her moment of greatest pain and with "death on her face" (p. 63) she prepares the marriage of her husband to his second wife, and her son finally relates to her not as a sexual being but as an individual.

Otherwise women are contemptible: "All the women in the country were organizing clandestinely to march on the seat of government" (p. 242). So, they must be threatening! What was their plan? To "suffocate the president with their farts!" (p. 242). So much for women's power and threat in 1969! Boudjedra has dissipated the threat, but its shadow remains. The obscene

fantasies of women's unbridled sexuality finally drive the protagonist into a mental hospital.

PERSPECTIVES

What is the reader to make of the contrasting images of women found in men's and women's writings both during and after the Algerian Revolution? Is it possible to claim that any one of them is more correct than another? I think not, because there is apparent incongruence. The crucial difference lies in perception. In the women's writings, female protagonists are focused on love. When they recognize their oppression, they fight in non-threatening ways to assert themselves in a traditional world. It would seem, then, that during the war, and even after, the women were blind to the import of their actions, unaware that they were challenging the social fabric. The only woman writer to indicate awareness of this dissonance is Assisa Djebar. In Les alouettes naïves, she hints at the gap between men's and women's perceptions of the significance of women's participation. On the other hand, the men who wrote during the Revolution describe a new world overshadowed by the specter of radical change. Their women are no longer theirs to control. These male writers describe protagonists lying in anxious wait for what the future will unfold. This incongruence in men's and women's perceptions of women's power is not confined to writings on the Algerian Revolution. In No Man's Land. The Place of the Woman Writer in the 20th Century (1988), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have radically reinterpreted English and American literature of the late 19th and 20th centuries, seeing it as a battlefield where women and men are fighting for literary primacy. They argue that women's recent eruption on the public domain as professionals has constituted a threat that men have tried to parry through their writings. They maintain:

That women have been less confident may seem paradoxical, in view of the resentment with which such men as W.S. Gilbert, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, and Norman Mailer reacted to what they perceived as unprecedented female power. Yet when we turn to works by women who were contemporaries of these men, we find that the female writers have often felt even more imperiled than men did by the sexual combat in which they were obliged to engage. For as is so frequently the case in the history of sex relations, men view the smallest female steps toward autonomy as threatening strides that will strip them of all authority, while women respond to such anxious reaction formations with a nervous sense of guilt and a paradoxical sense of vulnerability.

It was assumed that only a "madwoman would attempt to win such a battle [against the men] through 'virile force'" (Gilbert and Gubar 1988:66, 72, 80).

Since the Algerian women did not recognize the men's trepidation and the impact of their new roles, they did not exploit their opportunity. When the war was over, the men imposed neo-traditional demands as part of national self-assertion. They encountered no resistance and quickly patched up their tattered egos. The moment was lost.

You weren't
a symbol
Fatiha Iratni
weapon in hand
dressed in khaki
that should have been
white
as your purity
you are the forgotten one
from the days of glory
you will be the reminder
of happy days
19 years
without a cry
without a tear
in the maquis
you fell
dead in the village of honor
dead and forgotten
but during this feast
a friend of yours
gave me your name
it's so easy
to render you homage
in our hearts
.....
I salute you Fatiha Iratni (Guendouz 1968)

Notes

This article was first presented as a paper at the 7th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women held at Wellesley College, June 1987.

1. Aida Bamia, "Algerian Literature," lecture at SERMEISS, Charlotte NC, March 1987.
2. This was particularly true for short stories in Arabic--a nationalist gesture by those who had participated and who were protesting the use of the French language. Even the earliest works hint at the later tone of negative criticism that was to prevail. In Al-muadhdhin (The Muezzin, 1968), Murad Bourboune denounces the failed revolution and calls for a new revolutionary effort to replace religious with secular rule.
3. Peter R. Knauss, The Persistence of Patriarchy. Class, Gender, and Ideology in 20th Century Algeria, New York: Praeger, 1987, p. xi.
4. Until well into the 20th century whenever a woman was mentioned in public, Algerians would say hasha' (meaning God forbid) as they would after referring to something they believed to be defiling like an animal. Even today, some children in Algiers do not dare to utter the word Mom in public and use instead al-dar or home (cf., Mosteghanemi 1985:228).
5. Marnia Lazreg has indicated discourse about Algerian woman as succumbing to a "prevailing paradigm [whose] ultimate effect is to preclude any understanding of Algerian women in their lived reality [sic]: as subjects in their own right. Instead, they are reified, made into mere bearers of unexplained categories" (Lazreg 1988:94).
6. An ex-prisoner described her time in detention as follows: "The Oran prison was very tough. We had organized classes. Each did what she could. A seamstress revealed her secrets....We taught all the Europeans Arabic, and to those Muslim women who were not too old we taught reading and writing. We also had philosophy classes. There were lectures on all sorts of topics, particularly politics....There was complete solidarity among the women. There was no distinction between us, no difference of opinion about the future as though we had belonged to the same milieu for a long time." 'Femmes Algériennes dans la Guerre' in El-Moudjahid, 72/3, 1 November 1960.
7. She was a Kabyle Berber (1913-1976) whose family converted to Catholicism. She created a chair of Berber literature and society at the University of Algiers.
8. Interview with Djébar, Paris, October 1987. See Dejeux 1973:250.
9. Even male Algerian writers have recognized women's greater steadfastness; Haddad's war novels each deal with men who have left Algeria during its time of greatest trouble to live in Paris. Such criticism of men who leave women in a war zone can be seen in most of the Beirut Decentrists' writings on the Lebanese Civil War. See Cooke 1988.

10. Meriem Cadi-Mostefai considers the description to be unconvincing (Cadi-Mostefai 1978:165).
11. Interview with Djébar, Paris, October 1987. Cadi-Mostefai claims that there are no instances of such women traitors reported in Djébar's El-Moudjahid articles on the war. These are "women who have found themselves. They have a job to do, a mission. For them the situation is clear. There are no problems." She suggests that this might be due to the propagandist nature of such articles (Cadi-Mostefai 1978:175, 185).
12. "But Nedjma remains unattainable, being herself the very 'image' of experience which has become self-paralyzing and self-destructive--the persistent desire to turn one's back on the world and to generate life-sustaining principles within the exclusive world of the self or of the enclosed group. Nedjma is the tribally created illusion of fulfilment and significance, and her continued pursuit only prolongs the group's inward violence and outward 'absence of itinerary' or inability to act meaningfully to restore direction and significance to the world" Tremaine 1979:157.
13. The name Nafissa, derived from the word "nafs" or "soul" and meaning precious, is used by many of the Algerian writers on this war.
14. Fadela M'Rabet, Révolution africaine, December 20, 1964. Mosteghanemi compares M'Rabet's anti-male rhetoric with that of Débeche in the 50s (p. 286).
15. Interview with Djébar, Paris, October 1987.
16. Lila, Fatouma and Nadjia. See Cadi-Mostefai 1978:163.
17. For example, the Arabic teacher "denounced by his djellaba that seemed to retain in its folds his dusty theology" (Djébar 1967:386).
18. Djébar 1980:65. To fight silence is the challenge that faces not only women who have acted and then have been repressed, but all women. Chastity, silence, and obedience are universal desiderata for women. As Margaret Ferguson writes, "chastity [for Renaissance women writers] was intricately bound up with the problem posed by the [ideological] logic that made silence an equivalent of bodily purity.... [in 1417, Francesco Barbaro wrote] 'the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs'." The English translator of Varchi's Blazan adds this marginal gloss to his text:

Maides must be seene, not heard, or selde or never,
O may I such one wed, if I wed ever.
A maid that hath a lewd Tongue in her head,
Worse than if she were found with a Man in bed.

(Ferguson 1988:97-100)

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