

# Transgressing Boundaries: Gender, Race, Religion, and “Françaises Musulmanes” during the Algerian War of Independence

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**Abstract** Taking the example of women active in the Algerian National Liberation Front during the War of Independence, this article examines how different typologies of “the Muslim woman” were challenged, subverted, and reconfigured between 1954 and 1962. The article looks at how women who did not conform to colonial gendered ethnoreligious stereotypes came to threaten the continuing existence of French Algeria both on the ground and on the international stage. It then turns to consider the sexual abuse and rape that women often experienced when captured by the French army. Finally, the article examines the relationship between women, Islamic principles, and the independence movement. Based on extensive interviews with female participants in the war, the article focuses throughout on women’s appropriation and subversion of assigned roles and assumptions. A central concern is to compare the analytic categories of “gender” and “race” with the frames of reference these women use to articulate their own lives.

Recent scholarship has highlighted how Algerian women came to be at the heart of the independence struggle in Algeria between 1954 and 1962, both in terms of the roles they played and in terms of the ideological conflicts that they came to symbolize. On the ground women formed an essential part of the urban guerrilla tactics of the Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front; FLN), notably during the so-called Battle of Algiers in 1957, during which a number of women planted bombs. Equally important though less visible was the role played by rural women in *maquis* support networks, feeding, hiding, and nursing the soldiers of the FLN’s Armée de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Army; ALN).<sup>1</sup> Research on French policy during the Algerian War by Neil MacMaster, Ryme Seferdjeli, and Diane Sambroon has demonstrated how, as part of the campaign to “win hearts and

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<sup>1</sup> The official statistics, based on the records of the Algerian Ministry for Mujahideen (veterans), places the number of female combatants during the war at 10,949, out of 336,784 combatants. This certainly underestimates the extent of female participation (Djamila Amrane, *Les femmes algériennes dans la guerre* [Paris, 1991], 219).

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minds” and to keep Algeria French, the government and army made specific appeals to Muslim women with promises to “emancipate” them from what was depicted as the oppression of tradition and cloistering.<sup>2</sup> From 1955 on, with efforts intensifying after 1958, public unveiling, implementing voting rights, installing a Muslim woman in government office, bringing marriage under civil rather than religious jurisdiction, and establishing new schooling and health care programs were among the measures introduced to attract the “Française musulmane,” a complex term whose intersecting gendered, racial, and religious connotations I will explore in this article.

Although such initiatives did little to win over the Muslim population, they did prompt the FLN to launch its own propaganda, claiming that women could only achieve equality by fighting for a country freed from colonial domination. The theme of a revolution in gender relations regularly featured in the French-language organ of the FLN, *El Moudjahid*. The newspaper serialized the diary of a young woman in an ALN unit (“Journal d’une maquisarde”), and it also published extracts from Frantz Fanon’s *L’an V de la Révolution algérienne* (1959). In this work the Martinican psychiatrist argued that the roles and status of Algerian women had radically changed as a result of their engagement in the independence struggle: “Algerian society reveals itself not to be the womanless society that had been so well described. Side by side with us, our sisters upset a little more the enemy’s plans of attack and definitively liquidate old myths.”<sup>3</sup> Such at least was the rhetoric, and constructions of gender, and in particular constructions of the French Algerian Muslim woman, came to be a location in which the anticolonial conflict played out.

In this article I will consider, through the example of the participation of women in the FLN, the intersections of racial, religious, and gendered categories during the Algerian War of Independence and how apparently well-established boundaries between different colonial

<sup>2</sup> Neil MacMaster, “The Colonial ‘Emancipation’ of Algerian Women: The Marriage Law of 1959 and the Failure of Legislation on Women’s Rights in the Post-independence Era,” *Stichproben: The Vienna Journal of African Studies* 12 (2007): 91–116; MacMaster, *Burning the Veil: The Algerian War and the “Emancipation” of Muslim Women* (forthcoming); Ryme Seferdjeli, “Fight with Us, Women, and We Will Emancipate You’: France, the FLN, and the Struggle over Women during the Algerian War of National Liberation, 1954–1962” (PhD diss., University of London, 2004); Diane Sambon, “La politique d’émancipation du gouvernement français à l’égard des femmes algériennes pendant la guerre d’Algérie,” in *Des hommes et des femmes en guerre d’Algérie*, ed. Jean-Charles Jauffret (Paris, 2003), 226–42.

<sup>3</sup> “C’est que la société algérienne se révèle n’être pas la société sans femme que l’on avait si bien décrite. Côte à côte avec nous, nos soeurs bousculent un peu plus le dispositif ennemi et liquident définitivement les vieilles mystifications” (Frantz Fanon, *L’an V de la Révolution algérienne* [Paris, 1962], 55). The article containing this quote first appeared in the FLN organ *Résistance algérienne* on May 16, 1957. All translations are by Natalya Vince and Jennifer Anne Boittin unless otherwise indicated.

“types” were blurred and subverted. A key aim will be to displace the concentration on top-down government policy, the public pronouncements of the FLN, and the iconic figures of the Battle of Algiers—the focus of much scholarship—and instead to focus on the testimonies of women from a range of socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds. The purpose here is not just to describe the impact of factors such as “gender,” “race,” and “religion” on the roles designated to women but also to consider women’s responses to these assigned roles and assumptions, seeing how they appropriated, manipulated, and subverted them. Much writing on Algerian women during the war has depended heavily on the work of Djamilia Amrane, a former combatant and present-day historian whose analyses based on eighty-eight interviews conducted in the 1980s with other former female combatants remain a valuable resource for researchers.<sup>4</sup> My article, however, draws on recent original research in Algeria, where I interviewed thirty women who participated in the war in a variety of roles in rural and urban areas. French military and FLN internal documents from army and colonial archives complement it.<sup>5</sup>

First, the article begins by outlining the nature of gendered ethno-religious typologies in colonial Algeria. Second, it examines how women who did not conform to gendered ethno-religious and cultural stereotypes became a serious problem for the French army and for settlers both on the ground and on the international stage. Notably, I take into account how women assumed and appropriated assigned roles. Third, the article considers the sexual abuse and rape that women often experienced when captured or raided by the French army. More specifically, it tries to understand how women dealt with such sexual violence in communities in which rape was a social and cultural taboo. Finally, shifting from considering the “Française musulmane” as a gendered, ethno-religious colonial category, the article examines the relationship between women, Islamic principles, and the independence movement. In particular, it explores the interactions between an emerging religiously informed social framework and the rapidly evolving place of women in the nationalist movement.

<sup>4</sup> Amrane, *Les femmes algériennes dans la guerre*; Djamilia Amrane, *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie: Entretien* (Paris, 1994). Other key works on Algerian women during the war include Monique Gadant, *Le nationalisme algérien et les femmes* (Paris, 1995); and Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (London, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> This was part of a broader program of research into the wartime and postindependence itineraries of Algerian women, exploring issues such as national identity, social change, and commemoration. All women who spoke in French are quoted in French in the footnotes. Interviews with women from villages in Kabylia, where I carried out my rural case study, were conducted in Tamazight (Berber) with the help of Tamazight-French interpreters. I have therefore quoted them only in English.

War is clearly a moment of identity consolidation, reformulation, and, perhaps particularly in the case of anticolonial struggles and wars of independence, of invention and transformation. The place of women simultaneously as signifiers of a new identity and as guarantors of an immutable national “essence” is of central importance, as can be seen in the examples of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, the Baathist regime in Iraq, and Qasim Amin in Egypt, among others.<sup>6</sup> In the Algerian context, Julia Clancy-Smith highlights that “the woman question became, and still is today, an ideological terrain for debating issues of identity, cultural authenticity and moral integrity.”<sup>7</sup> A central argument throughout this article is that the Algerian War was a moment in which religious, gendered, and ethnic identities—imposed on and assumed by the autochthonous population—were challenged, and concepts of belonging were contested and reformulated at the national, local, and individual levels.

### Colonial Categories: Race, Religion, and Gender

The rejection of ethnic or racial categories in contemporary France as fundamentally un-republican and the 1980s reinvention of a (supposedly) inclusive, color-blind “republican citizenship” mask a far older republican tradition. In the nineteenth century, and particularly under the Third Republic, categorizing according to race was not only the norm but in fact the product of French Republican values. Indeed, universalism and categorizing according to race have never been diametrically opposed but were symbiotic elements in the thought of a number of Enlightenment *philosophes*.<sup>8</sup> This would develop into the nineteenth-century Republican *mission civilisatrice* in which “superior” French men and women would educate “inferior” peoples in Africa and Asia to their

<sup>6</sup> As Suad Joseph underlines, “Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Middle Eastern nationalist reformers and leaders have often used women to imagine their communities as modern” while continually seeking to discover, as Deniz Kandiyoti puts it, “‘local roots for their reformist ideals’” (*Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* [New York, 2000], 6). See also, among numerous other works, Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ, 1998); and Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam, and the State* (Philadelphia, 1991). For theoretical works on women, gender, war, and violence, see Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (Lanham, MD, 2007); and Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge, 2001). On the importance of foregrounding how female participants in independence struggles frame their own lives, see Alison Baker, *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women* (New York, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Julia Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830–1962,” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialisms*, ed. Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 173.

<sup>8</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (New York, 1961); Hafid Gafaiti, “Orientalism and the Maghrebian Presence in Post-colonial France,” in *French Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele (Lanham, MD, 2003), 187–212.

Eurocentric definition of universal “civilization,” or indeed decide that they were beyond the pale of assimilation.

The racialized language of colonial France during this period was created and sustained by French historians, geographers, archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists, and ethnographers who threw themselves into the task of classifying conquered peoples and organizing them into hierarchies. Algeria, one of France’s oldest colonies and after 1848 an integral part of French territory, received particular attention. French scholars produced endless studies on what they saw as the two races of “Kabyles/Berbers” (the terms were often used interchangeably) and “Arabs.” The former were depicted as the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria, a Berber-speaking, sedentary mountain people, largely concentrated in the region of Kabylia, with pale skin and light-colored hair. The latter were portrayed as descendants of Arab foreign invaders in the seventh and eighth centuries, Arabic-speaking nomad plain dwellers with swarthy features.<sup>9</sup> The Kabyles, in the words of Viscount Amédée Caix de Saint-Aymour, a settler and the author of *Arabes et Kabyles* in 1891, were “hardworking, enterprising, practical,” and less religious, therefore representing a profile more conducive to assimilation; the Arabs were “lazy, slow, soft” and fanatical followers of Islam, making for a permanent impediment to becoming French.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, race was understood not just in physical but also in confessional terms—and as both “Arabs” and “Kabyles” were largely Muslim, we can also see that colonial categories were shifting and contradictory. This ethnoreligious categorization was confirmed under Napoléon III by the 1865 *senatus consultum* establishing the *statut personnel*. The Muslim *indigène* was described as a French national but was to be judged under Muslim civil law and could only become a full French citizen if he or she renounced Islamic family law.<sup>11</sup> The doubly racial and confessional basis of this legislation is demonstrated by the fact that the tiny number

<sup>9</sup> As for the majority of nineteenth-century racial theories, the scientific basis for such classifications was highly questionable. Gilbert Meynier highlights that the Arabo-Islamic conquest of Algeria in the seventh century was not accompanied by significant migration and emphasizes that it can be convincingly argued that the majority of Algerians are Arabized Berbers, whatever other ideologically inspired claims might be made (*L’Algérie des origines: De la préhistoire à l’avènement de l’Islam* [Paris, 2007], 11).

<sup>10</sup> Amédée Caix de Saint-Aymour, quoted in Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France* (London, 1997), 106. For more on the “Kabyle myth,” see Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London, 1995). See also Lorcin’s edited volume *Identity, Memory, and Nostalgia: France and Algeria, 1800–2000* (Syracuse, NY, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> This was also the case for Jews in Algeria, who by the 1865 *senatus consultum* could gain citizenship if they renounced Jewish family law. Unlike Muslims, however, Jews in Algeria were given full citizenship rights under the 1870 Crémieux decree. The comparable treatment of indigenous Muslims and Jews in Algeria until 1870 nevertheless emphasizes that “jurisprudence underlying the monogamous family structure in France became a colonial yardstick for citizenship and civilization” (Joshua Schreier, “Napoléon’s Long Shadow: Morality, Civilization, and Jews in France and Algeria, 1808–1870,” *French Historical Studies* 30 [2007]: 80).

of Muslims who converted to Christianity after 1865 were not automatically accorded French citizenship. Indeed, in 1903 the Algiers Court of Appeal declared that “the term *Muslim* ‘does not have a purely denominational meaning but, . . . to the contrary, designates the entirety of individuals of Muslim origin’”—whether or not they were followers of Islam in belief or practice. As Patrick Weil underlines, such a definition demonstrates the “ethnopolitical, and not merely civil or religious, character of this status.”<sup>12</sup> Despite some small opening up of French nationality after World Wars I and II (for example, to Muslim veterans), the category of “Français musulman,” with its diminished civil rights and disproportionately small elected representation in contrast to the “Européens d’Algérie,”<sup>13</sup> remained largely in place until Algerian independence in 1962. After 1958 and the establishment of the Fifth Republic, attempts to implement far-reaching reforms and full citizenship were hampered by settler opposition and the intensifying war, and stereotypes remained engrained among bureaucrats, the police, the military, doctors, and teachers in Algeria.

To talk about racial categories in colonial Algeria thus requires broad definitions, taking into account overlapping concepts of race, religion, and other aspects of culture. Ethnoreligious stereotyping in colonial Algeria was also gendered. The Muslim/Arab man, often collectively and pejoratively referred to as “Mohamed,” was characterized as fanatical and violent, a polygamous patriarch. His female counterpart, “Fatma”—many settlers also used the term to refer to their domestic servants—was alternately submissive, oppressed, and silenced or an exotic, titillating, veiled mystery. “As military domination gave way to civilian rule and moral subjugation after 1870, the status of Muslim women became,” Clancy-Smith stresses, “increasingly significant for judging the culturally different, subordinate other.”<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen, the French authorities tried to win over the French Muslim population through appeals to its female elements. The idea that one could enter more easily into, and thus control, the space of the “other” through women is also demonstrated, this time from the perspective of the FLN, in Gillo Pontecorvo’s classic film, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966). In an iconic scene, three women bombers prepare to

<sup>12</sup> “Le terme musulman ‘n’a pas un sens purement confessionnel, mais . . . il désigne au contraire l’ensemble des individus d’origine musulmane.’ . . . Cette assignation à l’origine ethnique ou religieuse . . . montre le caractère ethnico-politique, et non pas simplement civil ou religieux, de ce statut” (Patrick Weil, *Qu’est-ce qu’un Français?* [Paris, 2004], 354–55). For more on Muslim conversions to Christianity, see Karima Direche-Slimani, *Chrétiens de Kabylie, 1873–1954: Une action missionnaire dans l’Algérie coloniale* (Paris, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Many settlers (*pièd-noirs*) in Algeria were not French men and women from the metropole but naturalized Spaniards, Italians, and Maltese, who were automatically French if born in Algeria from 1889 on.

<sup>14</sup> Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities,” 154.

leave the Casbah, the “Arab quarter,” avoiding French army searches and entering the bars and shops of the European quarter by cutting and dyeing their hair and dressing in “Western” clothes. From the perspective of historical accuracy, the scene is problematic. In reality, the women chosen for such tasks often already looked and dressed in a European way and were part of a tiny minority who had received a French education alongside European students.<sup>15</sup> Algerian society was highly segregated along ethnoreligious lines in many ways, but this was not a system of apartheid and some mixing did take place. That these young bombers already partly belonged to the world they were about to attack complicates clear-cut divisions of “Europeans” versus “Muslims/Arabs.”<sup>16</sup> Yet we might still consider this cinematic representation symbolic of how gender could be used to transgress visible and invisible racial boundaries during the war, and it is to this question that I now turn.

### Subverting Types: The Challenge of the “Française Musulmane”

Zohra is a little woman, rather pretty but above all intelligent, marked by French education and culture. She dresses in the European style, and, with her chestnut brown hair that betrays a Berber ancestry, she can pass for a colonist’s daughter. That’s what she’s aiming for, moreover, but at the university there are idiots who remind her that she is called Zohra. So she starts to show an interest in those we call outlaws.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In 1954, 91 percent of the “French Muslim” population was illiterate. Only 4.5 percent of women could read and write, and 13 percent of men (Amrane, *Les femmes algériennes dans la guerre*, 27).

<sup>16</sup> As does the activism of a minority of politicized male and female “Européens d’Algérie” and metropolitan French in favor of the nationalist cause. Their role clearly subverted expectations based on categories of “race” or national affinity, and they were often more harshly judged as “traitors.” Yet the government and press often suggested that their lack of national loyalty was hardly surprising, given the communist sympathies attributed (justifiably or not) to many of these men and women: the familiar accusation of “Moscow agent.” It is not, however, within the scope of this article to speculate on the motives of these men and women; the focus here is instead “Françaises musulmanes,” because such efforts were exerted during the war to win them over to the cause of *l’Algérie française*. See, among other works, Andrée Dore-Audibert, *Les Françaises d’Algérie dans la guerre de la libération: Des oubliées de l’histoire* (Paris, 1995); Martin Evans, *The Memory of Resistance: French Opposition to the Algerian War (1954–1962)* (Oxford, 1997); and Henri Alleg, *Mémoire algérienne* (Paris, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> “Zohra est une petite bonne femme, assez jolie mais surtout intelligente, d’éducation et de culture françaises. Elle se vêt à l’européenne et avec ses cheveux châtain clair qui trahissent une ascendance berbère, elle peut très bien passer pour une fille de colon. C’est ce qu’elle cherche d’ailleurs, mais à la Faculté il y a des imbéciles qui lui rappellent qu’elle se prénomme Zohra. Alors, elle se met à porter intérêt à ceux que l’on dit hors la loi” (Yves Godard, *Les paras dans la ville*, vol. 1 of *Les trois batailles d’Alger* [Paris, 1972], 340–41). As a negotiated peace seemed increasingly likely after the Battle of Algiers, Godard was condemned to death by a French court for having joined the extreme right-wing Organisation de l’Armée Secrète (lit. Organisation of the Secret Army; OAS), determined to maintain *l’Algérie française* at all costs.

This is how Colonel Yves Godard, one of General Jacques Massu's commandants during the Battle of Algiers, depicts the urban bomber Zohra Drif. The language Godard uses to describe Drif, the daughter of a well-to-do *qadi* (judge of "indigenous affairs"), emphasizes that he sees her involvement in the FLN as an aberration, as something transgressing social, cultural, and racial types. She looks European, she acts European, and, in the context of the "Kabyle myth," that her family is of Berber origin is not an anodyne statement by Godard. The only way the colonel can explain what he sees as such entirely uncharacteristic behavior is teasing by fellow law school students about her Muslim name, a singularly unsatisfactory explanation given the extent of Drif's involvement in the FLN. Indeed, in his memoirs Godard seems almost obsessed with the apparently Europeanized female bombers. Talking about Hassiba Ben Bouali, who was killed by French paratroopers in the Casbah in October 1957, he states that "nothing in her language or her attire differentiates her from a young European woman of bourgeois background." Another bomber, Djamilia Bouazza, is described as a young woman who was "very de-Islamicized and, to be trendy, had her shoulder-length mane of hair lightened." Later in his account Godard cannot help going back to Drif: "All the same, the case of this girl is strange!"<sup>18</sup>

It is revealing that in Godard's essentializing descriptions of these young women—based almost exclusively on their physical features, style of dress, and supposed religious beliefs—political convictions have little, if any, place. For the colonial authorities and the army, the social background, education, apparent secularization, and, perhaps above all, exterior appearance of these young women—their actual or symbolic "whiteness"—should have been clear indicators of their ideological affinities. These young women were, to use the contemporary colonial term, *évoluées* (evolved women), those who had seized on the benefits of French civilization and turned their backs on supposedly oppressive traditions, superstition, cloistering, and the veil. They were the kind of women who should have been like Nafissa Sid Cara, elected to the National Assembly in November 1958 and the first Muslim woman to be named junior minister in a French government in 1959. They should have been at the vanguard of *l'Algérie française*; they were the kind of women that the political and social reforms made by the French government during the war hoped to promote.

<sup>18</sup> Ben Bouali: "rien dans son langage ni dans sa mise ne la différencie d'une jeune Européenne de famille bourgeoise"; Bouazza: "très désislamisée et, pour être dans le vent a fait décolorer sa crinière qu'elle porte longue jusqu'aux épaules"; Drif: "Il est curieux quand même le cas de cette fille!" (Godard, *Les trois batailles d'Alger*, 342–43, 346).

Thus when nineteen-year-old Zakia Hammadi, described in a report by the gendarmerie as “the most evolved indigenous woman of Cap Aokas” (near Sétif in eastern Algeria), disappeared in December 1958, the idea that she might have chosen to join the FLN/ALN was nearly impossible for the authorities to envisage. In the subsequent report, the first possible explanation given for her disappearance was that she had run away from home for romantic reasons. The second hypothesis was that the “outlaws” (the ALN) had kidnapped her. It was only suggested as a third possibility that she might have joined these “outlaws” out of anger because a European woman had been chosen instead of her for an administrative post she had applied for. At no point was it proposed that Hammadi, who spoke excellent French and dressed “à la française,” might have harbored anything more than a fleeting and circumstantial resentment toward the colonial system. Yet her later capture by the army reveals that she had chosen to join the ALN after listening to political discussions between her cousins.<sup>19</sup> Such women were particularly dangerous for the French authorities, army, and settler society because their behavior seemed unpredictable—they did not conform to type.

The failure of the assimilationist project was perhaps inherent in those Republican universal principles that this project claimed to promote. In notes written in prison by seventeen-year-old Baya Hocine, condemned to death in December 1957 for a bomb attack, she declares that from a young age she had been taught at school the principles of the French Revolution of 1789, “liberty, equality, and fraternity”:

Moreover, the history I was taught in high school clearly showed me that nationalist and revolutionary movements were in no way considered subversive; to the contrary, all my textbooks spoke to me with admiration and respect of those who sought to cast off the yoke of foreign domination. France itself, which recognizes in its constitution the “right of peoples to dispose of themselves,” has always refused our people the right to liberate themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Hocine’s education, intended to make her a Francophile *évoluée*, instead gave her the tools to highlight the inherent contradiction of France’s colonial empire. To paraphrase the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine, how

<sup>19</sup> Vincennes, Service Historique de l’Armée de la Terre (hereafter SHAT, recently made Service Historique de la Défense), 1H2878/D1.

<sup>20</sup> “D’autre part l’enseignement d’Histoire reçu au lycée me montrait clairement que les mouvements nationalistes et révolutionnaires n’étaient nullement considérés comme subversifs, au contraire tous mes manuels me parlaient avec admiration et respect de ceux qui cherchaient à secouer le joug d’une domination étrangère. La France elle-même qui reconnaît dans sa Constitution le ‘droit des peuples à disposer d’eux-mêmes’ a toujours refusé à notre peuple de s’émanciper” (SHAT, 1H1246/D2).

Hocine appropriates French history snatches the gun from the hands of the paratrooper.<sup>21</sup>

The effectiveness of the FLN's strategic deployment of its female combatants and sympathizers was grounded in playing on two French stereotypes of the Muslim woman. On the one hand, the FLN used unveiled women dressed in the European style, whom for the French represented "emancipated" and therefore automatically pro-French women. On the other hand, the FLN also used veiled women to transport weapons and medicine. Even men sometimes disguised themselves in the *hayk*—a long piece of cloth draped around the head and body with a triangle of cloth covering the face below the eyes—to pass unnoticed. In doing so, the FLN was exploiting the French stereotype of the "traditional" Muslim woman: a passive and submissive woman who should under no circumstances be touched. The underestimation of the level of politicization and activism of the family's devoted "Fatma" also made Muslim women in domestic service with European families a vital source of information for the FLN, as Caroline Brac de La Perrière underlines in her study of the subject.<sup>22</sup>

There is a broad consensus among historians that the struggle for independence in Algeria was a war won as much diplomatically as militarily, through systematic attempts by the FLN and its sympathizers to discredit French colonialism and its "civilizing mission" and to legitimize the FLN on the international stage. Djamila Boupacha, tortured and raped in April 1959, became a cause célèbre, the subject of a book by her lawyer, Gisèle Halimi, and Simone de Beauvoir, and a portrait by Pablo Picasso. Her story significantly diminished support of the war in French public opinion.<sup>23</sup> British foreign office files reveal that FLN envoys as far away as India were distributing pamphlets calling on the population to join the campaign to save Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Bouazza, described as "two young girls," "two young patriots," on death row.<sup>24</sup> Bouhired was the subject of a film by Youssef Chahine (*Gamila el-gazaeria* [*Djamila the Algerian*]) in 1958 and was famously defended at her trial by the controversial lawyer Jacques Vergès, whom she would later marry.

<sup>21</sup> "Ecrire en français, c'est presque, sur un plan beaucoup plus élevé, arracher le fusil des mains d'un parachutiste" (To write in French is almost, in a far superior way, snatching the rifle from the hands of a paratrooper) (interview in 1962, reproduced in Kateb Yacine, *Le poète comme un boxer: Entretiens, 1958–1989* [Paris, 1994], 56).

<sup>22</sup> Caroline Brac de La Perrière, *Derrière les héros . . . les employées de maison musulmanes en service chez les Européens à Alger pendant la guerre d'Algérie (1954–1962)* (Paris, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> For more on the impact of the Boupacha case, see Lee Whitfield, "The French Military under Female Fire: The Public Opinion Campaign and Justice in the Case of Djamila Boupacha, 1960–62," *Contemporary French Civilization* 20 (1996): 76–90.

<sup>24</sup> Kew, National Archives of the United Kingdom, Foreign Office, 371/131697.

Yet women in the independence struggle were not only portrayed as innocent victims to arouse international indignation. As described in the introduction to this article, the figure of the feisty female combatant was a regular feature in *El Moudjahid*, which included photographs of women in military uniform bearing arms in the *maquis*. Such images accompanied newspaper reports by sympathetic foreign journalists. When Fanon wrote that “the liberty of the Algerian people can be identified with the emancipation of woman and her entry into history,” such statements reflected the thinking of some figures in the FLN but, as we shall see later, certainly not all.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this discourse on the Algerian woman was an important weapon in combating the French government’s depiction of the nationalist struggle as a minority movement led by religious fanatics and backed by Gamal Abdel Nasser, portrayed as “a ‘Muslim Mussolini’” with a pan-Arab imperialist agenda.<sup>26</sup> This new model of the “liberated Algerian woman” counteracted racial stereotypes of both the submissive Arab woman and the barbarous Arab man for the political purpose of gaining international sympathy, especially among the left-wing and liberals in Europe and North America.

In an interview in 2005, Fadaela M., a nursing student at the outbreak of the war and one of the first female nurses to join the *maquis*, describes how the head of her unit took a whole film of photographs of her and two other female *maquisardes*, armed and in military fatigues. The aim of the snapshots, according to Fadaela, was to show a forthcoming meeting of the United Nations that the FLN was not just a group of outlaws, as the French claimed, but a whole people fighting for independence. In fact the photographs came to serve another purpose. Shortly after the photographs were taken, the women—and the film—were captured by the French army, and the photographs passed on to the French press for anti-FLN propaganda. On August 11, 1956, the magazine *Jours de France* published the images with the title “These Smiling Nurses Are ‘Killers’” (“Ces infirmières souriantes sont des ‘tueuses’”). We can see in this choice of language an attempt to provoke shock at the way in which these women had transgressed their nurturing role both as females and as nurses, as well as an unsettling contrast between their physical attractiveness and their violent acts. Fadaela states that some newspapers did not even believe that they were “Françaises musulmanes”: “The local press said that we were Egyptian women; they could not believe that Algerian women were taking to the

<sup>25</sup> “La liberté du peuple algérien s’identifie alors à la libération de la femme et son entrée dans l’histoire” (Fanon, *L’an V de la Révolution algérienne*, 93).

<sup>26</sup> Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven, CT, 2007), 60.

*maquis* [rural resistance].” According to Fadaela, this French attempt at negative publicity had an unplanned effect on the male French Muslim population: “There were many people [men] who took to the *maquis* when they saw these photos. They said, how can women fight while we, like ‘women,’ stay at home?”<sup>27</sup>

The capture of women such as Fadaela, Drif, Bouazza, and Hocine heightened concern among the French authorities about the danger of “European-looking” women, in particular about their ability to penetrate male, French, and settler civil and military spheres, accessing sensitive information or vital materials such as medical supplies. In her autobiography the FLN member Louisette Ighilahriz describes gathering information by going into *pied-noir* cafés, wearing a “pretty midseason dress” and starting up conversations with customers.<sup>28</sup> This kind of “honey trap” was something the French authorities feared. An internal document in May 1961 warned that “it is possible that FLN instructions that encourage the use of women to contact soldiers are being applied in town on a greater scale. These women might even contact FSE [French of European origin] soldiers of any rank, often without [their] realizing it, in exchange for certain favors and indulgences.”<sup>29</sup> The FLN/ALN similarly seems to have feared being compromised by female spies using their feminine charms, Muslim women captured and “turned” by the French. Aïcha Ammari, a fifteen-year-old from Algiers, was executed by an ALN military tribunal in September 1958. She had apparently been recruited by French intelligence in December 1956, under torture and in exchange for money and the release of her brother, an FLN combatant on death row. It is claimed that she was given the task of killing one of the key figures in the ALN and the commander of the Kabylia region at that time, Amirouche Aït Hamouda. In her confession she declared that the plan was to try “to gain his trust by any means”<sup>30</sup>—the suggestion that she might try and seduce him seems clear. Whether this “plot” was actually a harebrained idea by the French army or just a fantasy born of ALN purging paranoia (Ammari was, after all, just fifteen), it nevertheless underlines that women were seen as potentially dangerous sexual weapons.

<sup>27</sup> “La presse locale disait que nous étions Égyptiennes, ils ne pouvaient pas croire que des Algériennes montaient au maquis”; “Il y a beaucoup de personnes qui ont pris le maquis quand ils ont vu ces photos. Ils ont dit, comment les femmes peuvent combattre et nous on est comme ‘des femmes’ à rester à la maison?” (interview with Fadaela M., Algiers, Dec. 20, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Louisette Ighilahriz (with Anne Nivat), *Algérienne* (Paris, 2001), 65.

<sup>29</sup> “Il est possible que les consignes FLN qui tendent à l’emploi des femmes pour contacter les militaires soient appliquées en ville à une plus grande échelle. Ces femmes iraient même jusqu’à contacter les militaires FSE [Français de Souche Européenne] de tout grade, bien souvent sans qu’ils s’en rendent compte, en échange de certaines faveurs et complaisances” (SHAT, IH1532).

<sup>30</sup> “Par tous les moyens de lui inspirer confiance” (SHAT, IH1699/D1).

The innocent young girl who needs rescuing, the temptress, the veiled wife and mother, the tomboy who challenges male virility: these are all reductive images of women. But what did female combatants themselves think of them? Unsurprisingly, in the middle of a bloody war, this question seems to have been far from their immediate concerns. The key themes emerging from interviews with the women narrating the war are endurance and suffering. Yet some women seem to have been aware that their gender and French Muslim background meant that they were projected in a certain way. Fadaela joined the *maquis* without informing her parents as she knew that they, despite their pronationalist sentiments, would disapprove of their daughter living alongside men and transgressing the socioreligious principle of *infisal* (separation of the sexes). Indeed, Fadaela states that during the war “there were two battles to fight, one against colonialism, the other within our families.”<sup>31</sup> When she disappeared from nursing school, she broke both with colonial typologies about how she should behave as a young, educated, unveiled woman and with family expectations about how she should behave as a Muslim woman from a respectable family. Although during the interview Fadaela suggests that she has fought gender stereotypes at a number of points during her life, she tells the story about the *Jours de France* photographs and their impact on the male population with a certain pride. The incident could be used as evidence of the enduring appeal of macho values and the idea of the “weaker sex,” but Fadaela has appropriated the story and tells it in a way that underlines the indispensability of women in mobilizing the Algerian population. She interprets these photographs as empowering, not as a means of manipulating women.

While still in prison, Drif wrote *La mort de mes frères* (1961), a pamphlet in which she declared that women’s participation in the resistance was completely natural because “Algerian women have seen their brothers, their husbands, their sons tortured, massacred before their eyes. Young girls have been raped in the houses of the Casbah, and all across Algeria, in front of their brothers, their fathers, [who stand] powerless under the threat of machine guns.”<sup>32</sup> All the stereotypes are there from the title on: women’s engagement is linked to their status as wives, mothers, sisters; they are victims of death, violence, and rape; they are there to help restore a threatened masculinity. Yet during my

<sup>31</sup> “On avait deux combats à mener, le combat contre le colonialisme, et le combat dans nos familles” (interview with Fadaela M., Algiers, Dec. 20, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> “Des femmes algériennes ont vu leurs frères, leurs maris, ou leurs fils torturés, massacrés sous leurs yeux. Des jeunes filles ont été violées dans les maisons de la Casbah, et à travers toute l’Algérie, devant leurs frères, leurs pères, impuissants sous la menace des mitraillettes” (Zohra Drif, *La mort de mes frères* [Paris, 1961], 11–12).

interview with her in 2005, Drif suggested—albeit retrospectively—that she was conscious of writing a piece of propaganda for a specific audience:

There was a French fringe group that supported the Algerian struggle and that had asked me to write what I wanted to express for the journal *Temps modernes*. I wanted first to bear witness to the most awful aspect of prison . . . those executions of very young [male] patriots. Second, I wanted to present the experience and position of Algerians in this struggle in a journal that held sway over a certain section of the population.<sup>33</sup>

Drif knows her audience for having been imprisoned alongside some liberal activists of French and European origin, and she implies that they are more likely to be convinced by arguments against the death penalty and violence than by images of female warriors or indeed ideological condemnations of colonialism. She thus deliberately employs stereotypes for political purposes. In a similar way rural women evaded the questions of French army interrogations by playing the role of the “traditional,” submissive woman, bound by religion and custom, ignorant of what was going on in the outside world. Chérifa A., from the village of Ait Abderahmane in the Ouacifs in Kabylia, recounts: “They asked about my husband. I said that ‘you know among Kabyles, when the husband leaves the wife returns to her family. I went back to my family and I don’t know where he is.’”<sup>34</sup> These examples show urban and rural woman subverting, consciously or not, gendered and racial stereotypes by using them as their system of defense or attack, manipulating their supposed otherness.

During the Algerian War a number of contrasting constructions of French Algerian Muslim womanhood came to prominence. Supporters of *l’Algérie française* paraded the figures of the *évoluée* and the still-to-be-saved submissive “Fatma” as evidence of France’s *oeuvre de civilisation*, while such models were challenged by the FLN’s new images of the unveiled bomber and the mother hiding weapons under her *hayk*. The subversion of gendered, racial, religious, and cultural types left the French military and settlers faced with an unexpected and unfamiliar enemy. At the same time the FLN also found itself taking a leap into the unknown in terms of the impact such new gender roles might

<sup>33</sup> “Il y avait une frange française qui soutenait le combat des Algériens, et qui m’avait demandé d’écrire ce que je voulais dire pour la revue *Temps modernes*. Je voulais d’abord faire un témoignage de l’aspect le plus terrible de la prison . . . ces exécutions de très jeunes patriotes. Deuxièmement, je voulais faire part de l’expérience et des positions des Algériens dans ce combat dans une revue qui avait un impact dans une certaine partie de la population” (interview with Zohra Drif, Algiers, June 11, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Chérifa A., Algiers, June 21, 2005.

have on a future independent Algeria. Although female participants sometimes manipulated to their advantage the stereotypes attached to them, this does not mean that they themselves identified with any particular gendered and/or ethnic model. Such constructions did not reflect their lived experiences of day-to-day survival in often ambiguous circumstances, ones in which they might betray a brother-in-arms to save an actual brother (Ammari), in which they might be imbued with French culture while holding fervent anticolonialist convictions (Hocine), in which the veil was something they did or did not wear for socioeconomic or familial reasons rather than indicating colonial influence over the local population or a Fanonian cultural resistance. The following section emphasizes the contrast between binary gendered and racial constructions of acts and events, both at the time and subsequently, and women's more nuanced and complex ways of framing and articulating their daily experiences.

### **Violating Boundaries: Rape and Sexual Abuse**

If the French army and politicians tried to rally Algerian women to *l'Algérie française* by promising to “emancipate” them from religious and cultural traditions, they also used the violation of these “traditional values” as a way of punishing men and women suspected of supporting the nationalist cause. In a culture in which virginity before marriage was highly prized and women were often kept away from the eyes of all men outside their own family, rape and other sexual humiliations were particularly potent forms of torture and abuse. It appears that one of Boupacha's main concerns after her rape with a bottle was whether she would still be considered a virgin.<sup>35</sup> Another member of the Algiers bomb network, Malika K., described how men and women would be stripped naked and tortured together in the same room by the French army, knowing that this nakedness in front of a member of the opposite sex would cause them shame.<sup>36</sup> In rural areas where the majority of men had left their villages, women's genitals were inspected to see if they had been in contact with husbands suspected of joining the *maquis*, a shaved pubis interpreted by “culturally aware” soldiers as evidence of recent sexual intercourse. Statistics on the incidence of rape and sexual abuse are scarce, but eyewitness accounts suggest that both were widespread. The diary of the writer Mouloud Feraoun contains numerous examples of rape in Kabylia. On January 8, 1957, he describes the systematic rape of women in the Ouadhias. The

<sup>35</sup> Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha* (Paris, 1962), 24, 51, 78–79.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with Malika K., Algiers, Dec. 18, 21, and 22, 2005.

men were rounded up and locked up, and eighty of them were shot: “Women remained in the villages, at home. They were given orders to leave the doors open and to stay isolated in the different rooms of each house. The *douar* was thus transformed into a populous BMC [military brothel], into which the mountain infantry and other legionnaire companies were unleashed.”<sup>37</sup> Rape is undoubtedly a gendered form of violence, and it seems quite clear that the types of sexual humiliation to which women and men were exposed were culturally informed. Evaluating the impact of “race” on the incidence of rape and sexual abuse is far more complex. Rape is a common feature—and indeed arm—of war and civil and ethnic conflict, widely understood as an exertion of power, forcing a nation into submission through violating women, emasculating men, and threatening the line of descent (this interpretation of rape is foregrounded in Drif’s above description). However, we cannot say that rape was used as a weapon of ethnic cleansing in the Algerian context as in, say, the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda. In *Torture and the Twilight of Empire* Marnia Lazreg nevertheless argues that colonial stereotypes of the “natives,” such as those outlined in the first section of this article, are key in understanding the motivations for rape: “It is precisely the violation of Algerians’ social organization that the army sought to achieve above and beyond providing for the sexual gratification of the troops.” Lazreg suggests that the incidence of rape was the result of gendered ethnic stereotypes:

It is not so much routine rape presumably committed in violation of the army’s rules of engagement as rape under arrest that exposes the state’s view of women, who had been objectified as the most telling pieces of material evidence against the assumed backwardness of Islam—the tangible, palpable difference between French “civilization” and the “primitiveness” of the culture that informed *guerre révolutionnaire* [revolutionary war].<sup>38</sup>

We might well question, however, to what extent soldiers were aware—even subconsciously—of such historically informed orientalist thinking, or whether being faced with “enemy” women, peer pressure, and

<sup>37</sup> “Les femmes sont restées dans les villages, chez elles. Ordre leur fut donné de laisser les portes ouvertes et de séjourner isolément dans les différentes pièces de chaque maison. Le douar fut donc transformé en un peuplé BMC [bordel militaire/mobile de campagne] où furent lâchées les compagnies de chasseurs alpins ou autres légionnaires” (Mouloud Feraoun, *Journal, 1955–1962* [Paris, 1962], 184).

<sup>38</sup> Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 156, 159–60. Lazreg appears undecided on the extent to which torture was racialized, stating first that “race played an important role in the abuses of Algerians” and then that “torture as a tool of government transcends race or ethnicity” (177, 178). For a meticulously documented account of torture during the Algerian War, see Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l’armée pendant la guerre d’Algérie, 1954–1962* (Paris, 2001). See also Branche, “Des viols pendant la guerre d’Algérie,” *Vingtième siècle* 75 (2002–3): 123–32.

the knowledge that they could get away with it were more important factors in encouraging men to commit acts which for the majority of them would be unimaginable in peacetime. Indeed, complicating an understanding of rape during the Algerian War as racially or ethnically motivated is the fact that, among the women I have interviewed, it was implied at a number of points that the worst offenders for raping women were the *goumiers* or the *harkis*—Muslim auxiliaries in the French army, often from the same region in which they were fighting.<sup>39</sup> Fatima B. from the village of Agraradj, near Azazga in Kabylia, states: “It was a clean war as long as there were no *goumiers*. The *goumiers* did a lot of harm.” Elsewhere she reiterates: “When it was the French [soldiers], it was OK. But as soon as they brought in the *harkis*, they knew the population and the problems began.”<sup>40</sup> These “problems” are a veiled reference to sexual abuse. Another group often singled out in Algerian collective memory today—although not by any women I interviewed—as particularly “savage” in terms of physical and sexual violence were the *tirailleurs sénégalais* (soldiers from colonial sub-Saharan Africa) who took part in French army operations in Algeria. Whether this remembering accurately reflects what happened during the war or is the product of internalized racialized French representations of the ferocity of its black soldiers is open to question.

In addition to the physical and psychological trauma of rape and sexual abuse, how did women deal with the transgression of such a social and cultural taboo? Outside the context of war, these victims would be considered by their communities as the perpetrators of the crime, and ostracized accordingly. However, when Feraoun wonders in his wartime diary what will happen to the raped women in the Ouadhias, he says that the men will not cut the throats of their “filles déshonorées” (dishonored daughters)—there are, after all, simply too many of them.<sup>41</sup> In a case study of villages in the Kabyle commune of Iflissen in 1969, the ethnographer Camille Lacoste-Dujardin confirms Feraoun’s hypothesis: “They have chosen to forget. Not only did husbands not divorce, not only were young girls quickly married, but they [villagers] tried hard to make the victims abort, so no child would be born of these rapes.”<sup>42</sup> Yet when the women themselves speak about these subjects,

<sup>39</sup> *Goumier*: a general and rather vague term used to describe Muslim auxiliaries in the French army during the whole colonial period, particularly from World War II on. *Harki*: a category of Muslim auxiliaries in the French army. The term *harki* has largely replaced *goumier* in spoken language today. *Harki* was considered at the time a more negative term, and its negative connotations have been reinforced in independent Algeria, becoming almost a synonym for *traïtor*.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Fatima B., Agraradj, Kabylia, June 16, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Feraoun, *Journal, 1955–1962*, 185.

<sup>42</sup> “On a choisi l’oubli. Non seulement les maris n’ont pas divorcé et les jeunes filles ont été rapidement mariées, mais encore l’on s’efforça de faire avorter les victimes, de sorte qu’aucun

they avoid such blunt vocabulary. Euphemisms used to refer to rape include, “There were some young girls who were offended” or, even more obliquely, “We didn’t stay in the house.” Fatima B. M. describes one particular incident in the village of Agraradj:

I can remember what happened in this village, I don’t know about other places. One time the village was bombed by France, they burned the whole village. My mother had sent me to get something. I came back with another woman, and when we got back, we started running in all directions so we wouldn’t be taken by the French. In the end they didn’t catch us. The other women were taken, and they took them into the ravine, they did a monstrosity to them.<sup>43</sup>

At a number of points during this account, Fatima, partly preempting and partly responding to the interpreter’s question of whether she was among these women in the ravine, takes Allah as her witness and repeats that she will not make the account worse than it was. The reintegration into society of urban women who suffered rape also depended on them keeping similar silences. Ighilahriz, one of the very few women to speak recently in public about her repeated rape at the hands of the French army, says she could do so only after the death of her father and when her mother was no longer mentally able to understand. She says she does not even know whether her father knew what happened to her: “Mom knew. Did she tell Dad? That’s the big question.”<sup>44</sup>

In the village of Agraradj “less serious” sexual humiliation is dealt with in a rather different way—through comic explicitness. In a small group interview, Fatma Y. and Fatima B. recounted an incident in which the French army, having caught a group of women, including Fatima’s sister, and one man bringing supplies for the mujahideen to a nearby forest, stripped all nine and forced them to walk back naked. This punishment was particularly cruel given that the French soldiers would have been well aware of the modesty of women in Kabylia—even making them take off the belt that they traditionally wear was humiliating. Yet when Fatma and Fatima tell this story, they do so laughing, inciting the hilarity of the gathering audience. The account even has a “punch line,” when the male neighbor takes a branch from a tree and tells the women, “My sisters, you can go in front or you can follow on, we’re not going back together [to the village].”<sup>45</sup> As the two women tell

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enfant ne naisse de ces viols” (Camille Lacoste-Dujardin, *Opération Oiseau Bleu: Des Kabyles, des ethnologues et la guerre d’Algérie* [Paris, 1997], 158).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Fatima B. M., Agraradj, Kabylia, June 17, 2005. “Monstrosity” is a euphemism implying rape. The narrator uses a Kabylized Arabic phrase, *darou fihoum laāhjeb*.

<sup>44</sup> “Maman savait. Est-ce qu’elle a dit à papa? C’est le grand point d’interrogation” (interview with Louisette Ighilahriz, Algiers, June 8, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Fatma Y. and Fatima B., Agraradj, Kabylia, June 16, 2005.

this story, another is recounted in the background by another woman about a woman who had hidden a ten-franc note in her vagina and, when stripped, was forced to kneel, so it fell out. Apparently from then on the soldiers always searched vaginas—a fact that again provokes laughter. These degrading episodes have been “made safe” or neutralized by the women in the village through a degree of fictionalization. They have almost become comic sketches for a female audience, far removed from the terror these women felt when they stood naked in front of a menacing group of French army soldiers.

These women have dealt with the violation of social norms by forgetting them or retelling them in their own way. Through either silence or laughter the women avoid presenting themselves as victims, instead employing the most psychologically and socially acceptable versions of their experiences. If and how these women will discuss such events depends on their audience. The experiences are shared with females from the village, while strangers and men will only hear silence in response to any of their questions on the subject—these women have established their own boundaries to protect themselves.

### **The “Return” of the “Algérienne Musulmane”: The FLN, Gender, and Identity**

During the Algerian War gendered ethnoreligious stereotypes were manipulated and subverted, and the balance of power in relations between men and women, Europeans and Muslims, and European men and Muslim women was in a state of flux. While Fanon preached Algerian and African revolution, subsequent historians have seriously doubted the FLN’s commitment to, or desire for, lasting change in gender relations in Algeria. Mohamed Harbi, a former member of the FLN and today an eminent historian of Algeria, is highly skeptical of the FLN’s real commitment to its progressive wartime discourse: “This theme [of women’s participation] was above all aimed at foreign audiences rather than Algerians. In it one saw the proof of the progressive character of the Algerian revolution, but behavior did not square with this talk. No woman ever participated in the various governing bodies of the FLN.”<sup>46</sup> Gilbert Meynier emphasizes the importance of social and cultural influences rooted in Islam on the development of the nationalist movement. In particular, Meynier underscores the influ-

46 “Ce thème a surtout été exploité à l’intention de l’étranger et non des Algériens. On y voyait la preuve du caractère progressiste de la révolution algérienne, mais les comportements ne correspondaient pas à ce discours. Il n’y a jamais eu aucune femme dans les différentes instances du FLN” (Mohamed Harbi, interview with Christiane Dufrancatel, “Les révoltes logiques,” *Cahier du Centre de Recherches sur les idéologies de la révolte* 11 [1979–80]: 80).

ence of the *ulama*, the Muslim theologians' movement that began in the 1930s, and their socially conservative *salafi* version of Islam. As the size and strength of the FLN grew and the ALN attained more recruits and wider and deeper control over local populations, it became necessary to develop a framework for organizing civil life and personal aspects of army life. Meynier argues that a strict moral code applied within the ALN. Marriage was controlled by the military hierarchy and was expected to take place according to Muslim rites. There were instances of young female recruits being subjected to virginity tests, women accused of adultery risked the death penalty, and official tracts appealed for women to play their role in constructing the future independent Algeria by being good wives, mothers, and homemakers: "The ALN thus replaced the father in controlling the fair sex."<sup>47</sup>

Aside from the personal convictions of its leaders, religion was crucial to the FLN as a key element of Algerian national identity. The failure of the last armed uprisings against French colonialism in 1870 had given way to forms of cultural resistance. This involved maintaining Arabic and Islam against attempts to impose the French language, Christianization, or secularization and keeping the family sphere, including its women, as a refuge from colonial influence. Rather than reject "French Muslim" as a category outright, such forms of cultural resistance seized on the fact that the majority of the indigenous population was Muslim as the ultimate proof that they were definitely not French—personal status thus became evidence of a distinct national identity. To use the famous phrase of leading *ulama* Abdelhamid Ben Badis in the 1930s: "Islam is our religion, Arabic is our language, Algeria is our country." When Ben Badis made this statement, Algiers, Oran, and Constantine were three departments of France; Arabic was not the whole autochthonous population's mother tongue, although it was the language of the Qu'ran. This underlines the importance of Islam as a common denominator across Berberophone and Arabophone regions, undermining potentially divisive colonial racial categories of "Kabyles" and "Arabs."

The language used by the FLN in its tracts and publications during

<sup>47</sup> "L'ALN remplace donc le père dans la gestion du bon sexe" (Gilbert Meynier, "Le FLN et les femmes," in *Histoire intérieure du FLN, 1954–1962* [Paris, 2002], 227). See also Meynier, "Les femmes dans le FLN/ALN," in Jauffret, *Des hommes et des femmes en guerre d'Algérie*, 307–19. When discussing the "Islamic influence" within the FLN, it is of course important to recognize the complex relationship between scripture and culture in definitions of "Islamic values." Many attitudes about the family and the place of women within it, for example, can be seen as features of Mediterranean—Christian and Muslim—rather than exclusively Muslim culture. In *L'Algérie des origines* Meynier argues that Islam was easily implanted in Algeria because it corresponded with existing societal models. In the context of this article, what is important is that such attitudes toward gender relations were presented as religious precepts, whether or not this was a question of interpretation or of misrepresentation.

the war reflected the importance of this national religion in mobilizing the population. This is certainly not to argue that the War of Independence was a religious war with the aim of establishing a theocratic state. The driving motivation was anticolonialism, the FLN's *déclaration du 1er novembre 1954* (declaration of November 1, 1954) offered a mishmash of ideologies, public statements by the FLN insisted that there would be a place in independent Algeria for all confessions, and in any case, power factions within the FLN were always more important than ideas. Yet Muslim identity was clearly used as a mobilizing tool in local populations. The war was often referred to as a jihad, combatants were called mujahideen, and those killed in the struggle were *shuhadā* (martyrs). Men and women fighting together commonly referred to each other as *khouya* (brother) and *oukh't* (sister), a reference to the Muslim *umma* (community). This fraternal language helped combatants create a safe, familiar environment—a pseudo-family sphere—in radically changed conditions. This is underlined by Farida B., who joined the *maquis* as a young teenager:

I felt safe right away. I wasn't scared that I would be sold out or that anything at all would be done to me. I did have trouble getting used to sleeping. There was a man who told me, "Here, you have no mother, you have no father, you have nothing. You have the brother, and the father is the one wearing the uniform. You take a piece of cork, you put it under your head, and you lie down near the fire. That's all there is."<sup>48</sup>

The man who speaks to Farida begins by telling her that the existing social order has been destroyed—before informing her that the family unit has been reconstituted in a new form within the *maquis*, with socially and culturally recognizable boundaries and a hierarchy. Chérifa A. in Ait Abderahmane in Kabylia provides a similar example when she cared for the feet of the mujahideen, at a time when washing someone's feet was considered a mark of respect that a wife reserved for her husband: "When they stayed for a long time in the mountains they used to come with their feet in a bad state, dirty and with sores. I'd look after them without any complexes, and I considered them my brothers. I wasn't alone. There were eleven, twelve women who did it together." We see here the use of the familiar and familial language of brothers, and Chérifa says of the men: "The older women, they called

<sup>48</sup> "Je me suis sentie en sécurité tout de suite. Je n'avais pas peur qu'on me donne, ou qu'on me fasse quoi que ce soit. J'avais du mal à m'habituer pour dormir, il y avait un monsieur qui m'a dit, 'Ici, tu n'as pas de mère, tu n'as pas de père, tu n'as rien. Tu as le frère, et le père c'est celui qui porte l'uniforme. Tu prends un morceau de liège, tu mets sous la tête et tu t'allonges près du feu. C'est tout ce qu'il y a'" (interview with Farida B., Algiers, June 14, 2005).

them ‘my mother,’ and the women who were the same age they called them ‘my sister.’”<sup>49</sup> Women such as Chérifa and Farida do not present such vocabulary in negative terms as being managed or controlled, but as evidence of the fraternity of the war, as part of their retrospective, sometimes idealized, narrative of the struggle for independence, told in more disappointing times.

The need to insist on such language perhaps also indicates that such chaste fraternity was not always maintained. In an FLN document dating from mid-1957, the officer cadet Ben Ali wrote that men and women were courageously battling alongside each other, but he worried that “les lois de la nature” (the laws of nature) could get in the way: “The result is that the presence of young girls in the struggle (*maquis*) can create serious problems.” For Ben Ali, letting *mujahid* and *mujahida* get married was one solution, and he suggests that another was to evacuate the sisters to a base outside Algeria, where “they would be settled [casées], trained and married to Algerians in the Revolution. In order to then assign them a responsibility; corresponding to each woman’s talent and competence, in the different ministries (branches) of the Revolution.”<sup>50</sup> Ben Ali’s choice of the colloquial *caser* (establish or place an individual in, e.g., employment or marriage) here is significant, with its connotations of putting women in a category, reordering women to reestablish social order and hierarchy. How to deal with gender mixing, which went against the socioreligious principle of *infisal*, and sexuality in the *maquis* was a difficulty that the FLN had to think about. As Ben Ali’s different propositions indicate, and as captured FLN documents in French army archives also suggest, responses varied depending on the time, the region, and the attitude of individual officers. Moreover, what was agreed in a meeting was not necessarily what was put into practice.

To give some sense of the more restrictive orders contained in FLN internal documents: in the *wilaya* (administrative region) I, Aurès and Nementchas, the order was issued in January 1957 that “[female] nurses are forbidden to join and sleep among the [male] combatants. They must keep company only with civilians and only with women.”<sup>51</sup> In another document: “[Male] nurses are reminded that they are strictly forbidden from tending women unless the women are wounded.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Chérifa A., Algiers, June 21, 2005.

<sup>50</sup> “Il en résulte que cette présence au combat (*maquis*) de jeunes filles, peut créer des soucis bien problématiques”; “elles seront casées, formées et mariées à des Algériens au sein de la Révolution. Afin de leur assigner ensuite une responsabilité; répondant à l’aptitude et compétence de chacune, dans les différentes ministères (branches) de la Révolution” (SHAT, 1H1623/1).

<sup>51</sup> “Il est interdit aux infirmières de s’introduire et de coucher au milieu des combattants. Elles ne doivent fréquenter que les civils et seulement les femmes” (SHAT, 1H1631).

[Female] nurses are strictly forbidden from tending [male] combatants except in an emergency.”<sup>52</sup> This was, however, less exclusionary than the order issued by the *wilaya* II, the Constantine region, on December 17, 1958: “We remind you once again that women are forbidden from joining our ranks; if they do so, they must be returned to their point of origin, even if the enemy captures them. Accompanying these women [to join the *maquis*] is punishable by death.”<sup>53</sup> This order was echoed by the commander Si Allal in *wilaya* V, the Oran region, on November 2, 1960: “I remind you a final time that it is forbidden to recruit *djoundiates* [female soldiers] and [female] nurses without the zone’s authorization. In independent Algeria, the Muslim woman’s freedom stops at the door to her home. Woman will never be equal to man.”<sup>54</sup> Orders given in the *wilaya* I in late 1960 declare that, to avoid growing “debauchery,” every effort would be made and all “‘fair’ means” employed to encourage young women to marry—especially those suspected of *débauche*. The *wilaya* also decided to take an unsympathetic view of women who accused a *mujahid* of rape: “We must refuse to hear any appeal from women who complain, without furnishing proof, of being raped or forced to engage in debauchery, and we must call a halt to slander.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, on November 15, 1959, the *wilaya* V resolved to dispense with rape claims as follows: “If it is rape by an unmarried *djounoud* [soldier]: severe sanction and an obligation to marry; if the accused is married: demotion.”<sup>56</sup> It is unclear whether this means an obligatory marriage between the unmarried soldier and the rape victim, but in any event, whoever the future wife was, she had little choice in the matter.

Yet what evidence exists of how the FLN/ALN dealt with sexual transgressions often shows that away from the orders of certain leaders, more progressive attitudes toward women existed both on the ground and farther up the hierarchy. One example of this is the scandal pro-

<sup>52</sup> “Il est rappelé aux infirmiers qu’il leur est formellement interdit de soigner les femmes sauf quand elles sont blessées. En ce qui concerne les infirmières il leur est absolument interdit de soigner les combattants sauf en cas d’urgence” (SHAT, 1H1631).

<sup>53</sup> “Nous rappelons encore une fois qu’il est interdit à toutes femmes de rejoindre nos rangs; si elles rejoignent nos rangs, elles doivent être refoulées à leur destination d’origine même si l’ennemi les appréhende. Ceux qui accompagnent ces femmes doivent être punis par la peine capitale” (SHAT, 1H1636).

<sup>54</sup> “Je vous rappelle une dernière fois qu’il est interdit de recruter des Djoundiates [female soldiers] et des Infirmières sans autorisation de la Zone. Dans l’Algérie indépendante, la liberté de la Femme musulmane s’arrête au seuil de la porte. La femme ne sera jamais l’égal de l’homme” (SHAT, 1H1564).

<sup>55</sup> “Il fallait refuser d’accepter toute requête émanant de femmes qui se plaindraient d’avoir été violée ou d’avoir été contraintes par la force à la débauche, et qui n’en apporteraient pas la preuve, et qu’il fallait mettre un frein à la calomnie” (SHAT, 1H1582).

<sup>56</sup> “S’il y a un viol par djounoud [soldier] célibataire: sanction sévère et l’obliger à se marier; si l’intéressé est marié: dégradation” (SHAT, 1H1564).

voked by a lieutenant known as H'Mimi and the "affaire Zakia." Zakia Hammadi, whom we met above, arrived in the *maquis* in March 1959. H'Mimi, despite already being married with two children, took a liking to Zakia and forced her to marry him. Yet this did not mean he trusted his new wife. Before joining the FLN, Hammadi had been part of a women's movement created by settlers in Sétif in May 1958 to encourage support for French Algeria. According to what she told the French authorities after her capture in October 1959, "He [H'Mimi] did not trust 'a woman who had been active on behalf of the French and who joined the *maquis* only to avoid the punishment that awaited her.'"<sup>57</sup> She thus found herself under constant surveillance from an aged chaperone. If certain ALN officers tried to desexualize the war by removing women from the *maquis*, H'Mimi clearly tried to depoliticize his sexual relations. The story of Hammadi is confirmed in the memoirs of Mohamed Benyahia, a *maquisard* who knew—and disliked—H'Mimi. According to Benyahia, the other *maquisards* were disgusted by H'Mimi's behavior; the "Zakia affair" became a major topic of conversation and was condemned as rape.<sup>58</sup> Archival documents show that H'Mimi was summoned to an extraordinary meeting on September 13, 1959, where he was accused of "deserting his family and marrying a little girl of thirteen, actions contrary to Qu'ranic law." Hammadi was nineteen years old, so the thirteen-year-old girl seems to have been another victim of H'Mimi's sexual urges.<sup>59</sup>

We also see that the figure of Hammadi, a young *évoluée* turned rebel, proves a problematic one not just for the French authorities but also for the FLN because of her ability to move between different social groups and "sides" in colonial Algeria, avoiding straightforward categorization. In her memoirs, Ighilahriz describes how her whole family was imbued with nationalist ideas, while her father was a gendarme and she and her siblings were educated in French. As the only woman in her *maquis* unit, Ighilahriz states that she was subject to suspicion: "To them, I remained a city woman who, horror of horrors, even knew how to handle a pen."<sup>60</sup> She said that she had to quadruple her efforts to avoid being considered a member of the "weaker sex." Anti-intellectualism, sexism, and class difference combine here to make Ighilahriz an out-

<sup>57</sup> "Il n'a pas confiance 'en une femme qui a milité pour les Français et qui n'est venue au *maquis* que pour éviter le châtimeut qui l'attendait'" (SHAT, 1H2878/D1).

<sup>58</sup> Mohamed Benyahia, *La conjuration au pouvoir: Récit d'un maquisard de l'ALN* (Algiers, 1999), 169.

<sup>59</sup> "Abandon de famille, mariage avec une fillette de 13 ans, actes contraires aux lois coraniques" (SHAT, 1H1564). None of these scandals seems to have affected H'Mimi's postwar career: he occupied various posts in the FLN and was a deputy in the National Assembly. He died in 2003.

<sup>60</sup> "Pour eux je restais une femme de ville qui, comble de l'horreur, savait par surcroît manier le stylo" (Ighilahriz, *Algérienne*, 88).

sider to this group of mostly rural, illiterate men. French-educated *évolués* such as Ighilahriz and Hammadi were subject to enduring stereotypes, which they could use effectively in the service of the nationalist movement but which also denied them unconditional acceptance by their brothers-in-arms.

None of the women whom I have interviewed who joined the *maquis* seem to have had knowledge of the different orders and directives concerning women. Their individual itineraries furthermore show that internal directives excluding women were often not put into practice, and a number of my interviewees remained in armed units until the end of the war. In French army files of ALN members captured or killed, we find Malika Hamdani, who was killed in action on December 15, 1961, having moved to the *wilaya* II in October 1961, and Fatima Naimi (“Rachida”) killed on October 9, 1961, having entered the ALN in the *wilaya* II on March 18, 1961—a long time after the ban on women in this *wilaya* in December 1958. All the women I have interviewed declared that the men alongside whom they fought treated them with total respect. For Fadaela M. in the *wilaya* IV (the region surrounding Algiers), being a young woman in a *maquis* unit “wasn’t a problem. No problem, that’s what’s surprising. When you want to assert yourself [*s’imposer*] . . . it gave the [male] combatant a new lease on life to see a woman there.”<sup>61</sup> Fadaela’s choice of words, *s’imposer*, is nevertheless significant: women had to force their acceptance into the group; their integration was not automatic. Fadaela describes how the colonel in charge of her unit displayed little enthusiasm when he first saw her arrive in the *maquis*, but she says she had the opportunity to prove herself:

I was young, and I looked even younger. The colonel of the *wilaya* [Slimane Dehiles, known as “Saddek”] was told that he would get a competent nurse, and what must his disappointment have been when he saw this kid before him! I had little bangs, braids, and he said, “This is the nurse? She’s still being bottle-fed; we’re sending her back to her mother.” But there was a skirmish; he saw me at work, and he was reassured.<sup>62</sup>

Issues of sexuality seemed to have bothered male combatants more than their female counterparts, although sexual relationships did take place. When the former female combatants talk about the war now,

<sup>61</sup> “N’a posé aucun problème. Aucun problème, c’est ça qui est surprenant. Quand on veut s’imposer . . . ça donnait du punch au combattant à voir que la femme était là” (interview with Fadaela M., Algiers, Dec. 20, 2005).

<sup>62</sup> “J’étais jeune et je faisais beaucoup plus jeune que mon âge. On a dit au colonel de la *wilaya* qu’il allait avoir une infirmière compétente, et puis quelle fut sa déception quand il voit devant lui une gamine! J’avais une petite frange, des couettes, il a dit, ‘C’est ça l’infirmière? Elle est encore au biberon, on la renvoie à sa maman.’ Mais il y a eu un accrochage, il m’a vu à l’oeuvre et il était rassuré” (interview with Fadaela M., Algiers, Dec. 20, 2005).

many of them describe it as a completely desexualized period, one in which they lost all sense of their femininity. Ighilahriz claims, "I was no longer really a woman. War had changed me; I had become numb and had forgotten my femininity, so to speak."<sup>63</sup> Some combatants did not experience this change as a trauma. Zhor Z. declared that she had already been brought up "like a boy," and during the war her action was in an entirely male environment: "I lived with girls for the first time in prison, I was twenty."<sup>64</sup> For Farida, this loss of femininity made her feel out of place and uncomfortable after the end of the war:

I saw the young girls in town with stylishly cut hair, fashionably dressed. Me, I was wearing a filthy uniform, shoes one size too big that hurt me. . . . When I started traveling, the first thing I bought: lots of panties, bras, shoes! The things I was deprived of in the *maquis*. I buy more than I need, as if there were no tomorrow!<sup>65</sup>

That many women who were young and single when the war broke out quickly married and had children after the war suggests a desire to catch up on a period of life they had missed out on. When I asked Boupacha if the war had changed her perspectives, she replied from a personal point of view: "If there hadn't been the war, I would have married, I would have had children . . . but I was able to participate a little in the liberation of my country."<sup>66</sup> Boupacha is now a happily married mother and a grandmother; the suggestion is that war was not a period of transformation but a momentary deviation from the itinerary that her gender had laid out for her. That other female combatants who had married divorced shortly afterward hints that their life expectations had nevertheless been redefined.

The possibility of pregnancy and motherhood clearly separated female combatants from their male counterparts. Hamdani joined the *maquis* on November 1, 1957, and continued fighting until her death in December 1961. During the war she got married twice and had two children. Her first husband was killed soon after the birth of their child; her second husband died before the birth of his son. Hamdani left

<sup>63</sup> "Je n'étais plus vraiment une femme. La guerre m'avait transformée, j'étais devenue insensible et avais pour ainsi dire oublié de ma féminité" (Ighilahriz, *Algérienne*, 72).

<sup>64</sup> "J'ai vécu avec les filles pour la première fois en prison, j'avais vingt ans" (interview with Zhor Z., Algiers, Dec. 21, 2005).

<sup>65</sup> "Je voyais les jeunes filles dans la ville avec les cheveux bien coupés, habillées à la mode, moi je portais un uniforme dégueulasse, une chaussure une taille au-dessus qui me faisait mal. . . . Quand j'ai commencé à voyager, la première chose que j'achetais: beaucoup de culottes, soutiens-gorge, chaussures! Les choses dont lesquelles j'étais privée dans le maquis. J'achète plus qu'il en faut comme j'ai l'impression qu'il n'y aura pas de demain!" (interview with Farida B., Algiers, June 14, 2005).

<sup>66</sup> "S'il n'y avait pas eu la guerre, je me serais mariée, j'aurais eu des enfants . . . mais j'ai pu participer un peu à la libération de mon pays" (interview with Djamilia Boupacha, Algiers, June 11, 2005).

her first child in an ALN logistical base to rejoin the *maquis*, and her second child was born in a prison camp; Hamdani was at least three months pregnant when she was arrested. Soon after her child's birth, she rejoined the *maquis*. Fulfilling the role of mother clearly was not her top priority. Some of the women I interviewed, however, describe the separation from their children as among their most painful experiences. For Lucette L., "One thing that completely undid me was the absence of my children."<sup>67</sup> Yet for other women motherhood constituted another burden. Fatima B. begins her account by describing how her husband was in France and the French army had burned her house down. "I left with the clothes I was wearing; I had two children. The youngest was a year old, and I was dragging him along; I nearly wished he didn't exist."<sup>68</sup>

Finally, one group of women who provided a valuable source of information for the FLN by using their "femininity" were prostitutes. This is reflected in an account that "Mimi M." provides for an FLN publication promoting the nationalist cause in 1961. After her arrest in March 1957, Mimi was taken to a *camp de tri* (sorting camp), where she says she mixed with activists from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages, including "those who were victims from an early age and whom colonialism had afflicted morally as well as physically: two dancers, four prostitutes."<sup>69</sup> The title of the publication in which this account appears, *L'aliénation colonialiste et la résistance de la famille algérienne* (*Colonial Alienation and the Algerian Family's Resistance*), emphasizes that the aim here is to depict colonialism not simply as political subjugation but also as an attempt to distort and destroy the foundations of Algerian society by attacking the family unit. The social and cultural taboo of prostitution is depicted as an imposition of the invading other. Mimi states that the prostitutes and dancers she meets demonstrated courage and patriotism and that they saw their participation in the struggle as a morally purifying experience. She quotes one prisoner as telling her that "I am free from this dirty work, thanks to the Jihad and to the confidence our brothers had in us."<sup>70</sup> Mimi's account suggests that prostitutes could be accepted into the nationalist struggle but were expected

<sup>67</sup> "Un truc qui m'a complètement chaviré c'était l'absence de mes enfants" (interview with Lucette L., Algiers, Dec. 18, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Fatima B., Agraradj, Kabylia, June 15, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> "Celles qui furent victimes depuis leur plus jeune âge dont le colonialisme avait atteint aussi bien le moral que le physique: deux danseurs, quatre prostituées" (Saadia-et-Lakhdar, *L'aliénation colonialiste et la résistance de la famille algérienne* [Lausanne, 1961], 139). For an exploration of prostitution during the colonial period, see Christelle Taraud, *La prostitution coloniale: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc (1830–1962)* (Paris, 2003).

<sup>70</sup> "Je suis libre de ce sale travail, grâce au Djihad et à la confiance que nous ont faite nos frères" (Saadia-et-Lakhdar, *L'aliénation colonialiste*, 140).

to aspire to exemplary lives of respectability afterward, even though the reason they proved so useful to the FLN was that they regularly entered into contact with drunk, naked soldiers in the French army.

The reluctance of the French establishment and settler society to accept that “indigène” women who were “Europeanized”—and thus, in the eyes of that society, “emancipated” through French education and culture—did not necessarily share the ideological project of French Algeria in some ways found its counterpart in the often moralizing discourse of the FLN. Figures such as Boupacha and Bouhired could be embraced wholeheartedly: innocent young girls, spirited teenagers whose bodies had often been brutally and scandalously martyred. More morally dubious individuals such as Ali La Pointe, a petty crook turned independence hero, could also be accepted as lovable rogues (indeed, *The Battle of Algiers* is in many ways the story of his redemption through struggle). The figure of the prostitute was more problematic and had to be rewritten as a self-sacrificing victim to a more noble cause, one whose honor and dignity would be restored by risking her life, by extracting information via her trade, for the ultimate goal of an Algeria for Algerians. In both cases a vision for society is linked to a model of expected female behavior.

Faced with these models, we see once again that women themselves evade easy categorization based on gender or ethnicity. For some, the reconfiguration of gendered roles during the Algerian War offered an exciting opportunity to reinvent themselves; for others, it was a temporary and circumstantial change. Many rural women had the new roles they carried out thrust on them as the result of the death, disappearance, or military engagement of male members of their families. When I asked Ferroudja A. what life was like in the absence of her husband, imprisoned between 1958 and 1962, she replied: “There was my mother-in-law, who was a courageous woman; she encouraged me. There was my father; there were my brothers who encouraged me. I had two brothers in France and two who participated in the revolution. I worked in the fields to feed my children.”<sup>71</sup> Ferroudja then talks about drought and famine, the fact that during one Ramadan they were reduced to eating grass. For Ferroudja, her husband’s absence meant not that the authority of the “head of the household” had been transferred to her but that the breadwinner, in the most literal sense of the term, was no longer there to provide for her and her children. Her brothers in France no doubt encouraged her not with words of comfort but with the money they sent her. Working in the fields was an exhausting alternative to starvation. Ferroudja frames this period of

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Ferroudja A., Algiers, Dec. 10, 2005.

her life not in the gendered terms that my question perhaps presupposed but in terms of the remaining family network that provided her with material and moral support.

### Conclusion

The focus of this article has been not just to analyze constructions of identity at intersections of gender, race, and religion but also to explore how “French Muslim” women responded to these constructions and how they corresponded—or did not correspond—with their own subjective forms of self-identification. While the FLN challenged colonial stereotypes of the “Française musulmane” and created its own versions of Algerian womanhood, the lived experiences of female participants in the independence struggle suggest the complexities of all attempts at defining a model. Women’s narratives of the war blur and subvert colonial and anticolonial categorization in gendered, racial, and religious terms. This article has thus considered gender as a useful category of analysis while avoiding an unquestioning acceptance of gender as a universally relevant form of self-identification. A central concern has been to situate gender as one of a number of determining factors in female veterans’ lives and to do so without adopting exclusively gendered perspectives that these women would not adopt themselves.

In terms of identity politics, Todd Shepard highlights in *The Invention of Decolonization* that the end of French Algeria “in no way exhausted the potency of intersecting ideologies of sexuality, gender, race and imperialism.”<sup>72</sup> This article began with a discussion of the gendered ethnoreligious stereotypes attached to the colonial legal category and the concept of the “Française musulmane.” Despite the challenging of gendered, racial, religious, and cultural types during the war, independent Algeria found itself in 1962 with a model of womanhood that in many ways was not radically different: the “Algérienne musulmane.” During the colonial period, “Française musulmane” was an expression of exclusion from citizenship; after 1962, “Algérienne musulmane” was a signifier of citizenship, or at least of belonging to the nation. This shift to a religiously defined nationality was by no means predetermined, and we have seen a number of examples of debates during the war about what it meant to be an Algerian (woman), debates that continue today. Global politics since the 1980s have perhaps strengthened the association between “Algerian” and “Muslim.”

In France, the figure of the French and Muslim woman as a way

<sup>72</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), 186.

into “civilizing” the French and Muslim man remains potent. The incorporation into the government of Rachida Dati as minister for justice (whose brothers have had very visible run-ins with the French justice system) and the feminist Fadela Amara (who established the association *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* after seventeen-year-old Sohane Benziane was burned to death by her boyfriend in 2002) are highly symbolic. The 2004 law on religious symbols in schools (often referred to as the “loi sur le voile” [law of the veil]), the recent refusal of French citizenship to a woman who wore the *niqab*, and the explosive controversy surrounding the annulment of the marriage of a Muslim couple in Lille because the bride had lied about her virginity underline that gender continues to be a key location at which debates about citizenship, religion, and belonging take place.<sup>73</sup>

In both contemporary France and Algeria, visible and invisible boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, and confession continue to be challenged, transgressed, and redefined. I hope that the case study in this article has highlighted the pertinence of taking into account the perspectives of those whose identities are constructed and deconstructed, foregrounding the subjectivity of the actors concerned.

<sup>73</sup> See John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton, NJ, 2007); Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, “The Other French Exception: Virtuous Racism and the War of the Sexes in Postcolonial France,” *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 24, no. 3 (2006): 23–41; Anna Kemp, “Marianne d’Aujourd’hui? The Figure of the *Beurette* in Contemporary French Feminist Discourses,” *Modern and Contemporary France* 17 (2009): 19–33; and Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ, 2007).