

THE WORLDS OF FRANTZ FANON'S 'L'ALGÉRIE SE DÉVOILE'

DONALD REID

Abstract

Frantz Fanon's pioneering essay 'L'Algérie se dévoile' is enriched by examining the particular situation of a few exceptional Algerian and French women prominent in Algeria during the War of Independence who are not the focus of Fanon's analysis, individuals like the FLN militant Zohra Drif and General Jacques Massu's wife, Suzanne Massu. They were quite unrepresentative of Algerian or French women in Algeria, but crucial figures in representations of activists in each group. Drif, a gifted student from the social elite, had, like Fanon, been exposed in French cultural institutions to a liberation at once proffered and denied. If there is little place for her experience in Fanon's essay, he does show what we can learn about the contemporary French *mentalité* from assessment of characters inspired by women like Drif in novels about the war. Examination of Suzanne Massu in turn suggests how bourgeois French women empowered in maternalist projects could work to try to impede Algerian women's embrace of national liberation, but not through the putative liberation of women Fanon addresses. The war unveiled a yet more complicated world of imagination and practices than we see in Fanon's essay.

J'ai toujours pensé que si nous voulions solidement attacher l'Algérie à la France, il fallait d'abord libérer les femmes musulmanes (Roger Trinquier, paratrooper officer and member of the Comité du salut public of 13 May 1958¹).

Quel plaisir de pouvoir mettre la main sur l'épaule de n'importe quel passant et de lire l'effroi dans ses yeux quand on lui colle le canon de la mitraillette sur le ventre! Quel plaisir, mon vieux! Et quelle jouissance de fouiller des pieds à la tête en pleine rue une femme qui tremble! Et quel délire si elle est jeune, corps souple, et nue sous sa robe! Quelle joie d'humilier quand on est bas, quand on n'est qu'un minus qui, civil, ne serait pas digne de cirer les bottes de celui qu'on prend aujourd'hui au collet! (Pierre Leulliette, a paratrooper in Algeria²).

Cette femme musulmane . . . c'est un substitut touchant, pudique, bref inoffensif du prolétariat. Nommée, reconnue, l'existence d'un prolétariat algérien appellerait des projets de réforme, voire de révolution, en tout cas, pour le moins, une amélioration empirique de son statut réel. Avec la femme, aucun risque, on peut rester dans la morale, favoriser noblement une *évolution*, retrouver le rythme nonchalant d'un progrès de civilisation. Mais surtout, l'entreprise de dérivation porte sur la cause même du mal algérien: faire mine, en terre musulmane, de libérer la condition féminine, c'est, sans avoir l'air de rien, transformer la responsabilité coloniale en responsabilité islamique, c'est suggérer que la femme est ici arriérée parce que soumise à une

I would like to thank Alice Conklin and Alice Kaplan for their very helpful readings of earlier drafts of this essay.

¹Roger Trinquier, *Le Temps perdu* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1978), p. 263. Ryme Seferdjeli examines the steps taken by the French state during the war to extend rights to women and assesses their limited impact in 'French "Reforms" and Muslim Women's Emancipation During the Algerian War', *Journal of North African Studies* 9:4 (Winter 2004), 19–61.

²Pierre Leulliette, *Saint Michel et le dragon: souvenirs d'un parachutiste* (Paris, Minuit, 1961), p. 303.

religion dont il est bien connu qu'elle l'asservit; ainsi pense-t-on embarquer tout le colonialisme sur le vaisseau pourri de l'obscurantisme religieux, mettre implicitement en cause un dogme rétrograde sans pourtant renoncer à l'alibi d'une civilisation différente de la nôtre, dont le pittoresque substantial . . . est nécessaire à l'oecuménisme de la grande France. L'Islam fournit à la fois un motif d'émulation facile et un décor distrayant: on intègre les femmes sans les dévoiler (Roland Barthes³).

The resonance of Frantz Fanon's essay, 'L'Algérie se dévoile' (1959), as one of the Ur-texts of cultural studies, comes from its exploration of gender and national identity in narratives of repression and liberation. Fanon saw the French in Algeria speaking the republican language of fostering the individual emancipation of North African Algerian women — represented by their unveiling — as a way of promoting the benefits of French rule, and of penetrating Algerian society and creating allies among Algerian women. However, Fanon believed that no Algerian woman could be truly liberated until Algeria liberated itself from France. He presented Algerian women as turning French beliefs about gender among Algerians against the French, whether hiding freedom fighters or transporting and placing bombs. Through such participation in the liberation struggle, he explained, women engaged in emancipatory behaviours. In the context of the revolution, these were accepted and valued by Algerian men, who would have contested their acts of independence before.⁴

'L'Algérie se dévoile' remains such a disturbing and powerful essay because of the way it presents and apparently resolves the potential conflicts between national liberation struggles and projects of female emancipation. Yet, if Fanon's essay is of exceptional importance for posing the relation of emancipatory projects so starkly, he achieves this clarity by largely ignoring the situation of a few exceptional Algerian and French women prominent in Algeria during the War of Independence, individuals like the FLN militant

³'Tricots à domicile', *Les Lettres nouvelles*, no. 7 (April 1959), 52–53 (p. 53). 'Moslem women came to constitute, in the Soviet political imagination, a structural weak point in the traditional order: a potentially deviant and hence subversive stratum susceptible to militant appeal — in effect, a *surrogate proletariat* where no proletariat in the real Marxist sense existed. Through that weak point, it was thought, particularly intense conflicts could be engendered in society and leverage provided for its disintegration and subsequent reconstitution'. Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton University Press, 1974), p. xxiii.

⁴'L'Algérie se dévoile', in *Sociologie d'une révolution (L'an V de la révolution algérienne)* (Paris, Maspéro, 1968), pp. 16–50. In the extensive literature on Fanon, see T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Oxford University Press, 1998), especially pp. 53–78; and Eddy Souffrant, 'To Conquer the Veil: Woman as Critique of Liberalism', in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Renée T. White (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 170–78. In a footnote to 'L'Algérie se dévoile', Fanon recognizes that Kabyle (Berber) women in rural Algeria, unlike Algerian women of Arab origin, rarely wore veils (p. 17). Many French of European origin considered the physical traits of Kabyles as closer to those of Europeans than those of Algerians of Arab origin. In making the questionable supposition of the closer cultural affinity of Kabyles to Europeans than Arabs, they pointed to the absence of the veil, among other things. From Fanon's perspective, this was an ethnic variant of the French strategy of seeking to divide Algerian men and women. That unveiled Kabyle women might pass as Europeans contributed to a French fascination and fear that could accentuate elements of the pathology Fanon analysed in 'L'Algérie se dévoile'. In another essay in *Sociologie d'une révolution*, Fanon broached this issue of independence fighters who contested the normative ethnic/national division made by the French in Algeria in his discussion of Algerians of European origin who supported the FLN.

Zohra Drif and the French activist Suzanne Massu. They were quite unrepresentative of Algerian or French women in Algeria, but crucial figures in contemporary representations of activists in each group. Fanon wrote 'L'Algérie se dévoile' after the Battle of Algiers in 1957 and events at the Forum in Algiers on 16 May 1958, a demonstration by Euro-Algerians and North African Algerians following the coup of 13 May 1958. In 1956–57, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) had engaged in a terrorist campaign against *pied noir* civilians in Algiers, including the bombings of the Milk Bar and the Cafeteria, re-enacted in Gillo Pontecorvo's film, *La Bataille d'Alger* .⁵ Women played an important role in this campaign and it is one of the events Fanon had in mind in presenting his model of women's emancipation coming through participation in the revolution, rather than as something conferred by the French.⁶ The Battle of Algiers began in January 1957 when the French brought in paratroopers under the leadership of General Jacques Massu to root the FLN out of the Casbah, the North African neighbourhood of Algiers. Following the arrest of Larbi Ben M'Hidi in February 1957, his adjunct Yacef Saâdi took command of FLN operations in Algiers. The Battle of Algiers ended after the paras captured Yacef in September 1957 and killed his adjunct Ali la Pointe the following month.

Having won the Battle of Algiers, General Massu turned his attention to what he called the 'le second front', the indecisive, contradictory Fourth Republic, and participated in a coup on 13 May 1958 that culminated in the overthrow of the republic. He saw the appearance of North African Algerians in the demonstrations of *pied noirs* at the Forum in Algiers three days later as fulfillment of the army's wresting of control of the Casbah from the FLN. The Battle of Algiers, wrote Massu, 'a atteint son dernier objectif, le plus exaltant et le plus envié; la fraternisation des communautés, image d'une Algérie nouvelle et française!'⁷ *Pied noir* crowds ransacked the Governor General's headquarters; French ethnologist Germaine Tillion wrote in disgust of *pieds noirs* 'embrassant les femmes de ménage de Bab-el-Oued [a European neighbourhood] et portant en triomphe les petits cireurs'.⁸ Press coverage included photographs of women burning their veils. If 13 May was gendered male — there were no women among the forty-odd members of the Comité du salut public of 13 May — women were prominent in representations of the 'fraternisation' of 16 May. After the coup, Jacques Massu explained, 'Nous nous sommes occupés ... des

⁵ See Donald Reid, 'Re-viewing *The Battle of Algiers* with Germaine Tillion', *History Workshop Journal* , 60:1 (Autumn 2005), 93–115.

⁶ However, as female FLN activist and later historian of women in the independence struggle, Djamilia Amrane, explains, Fanon has the project of female self-emancipation begin only after a decision by the FLN to solicit women's participation, when, in fact, women's participation in the struggle preceded any such decision; in *Les Femmes algériennes dans la guerre* (Paris, Plon, 1991), p. 247.

⁷ Jacques Massu, *Le Torrent et la digue* (Paris, Éditions Rocher, 1972), pp. 14, 95.

⁸ *Les Ennemis complémentaires: Guerre d'Algérie* (Paris, Tirésias, 2005), p. 88.

femmes musulmanes'.⁹ Fanon wrote 'L'Algérie se dévoile' following 'la fameuse cavalcade de 13 mai' to argue that the unveiling of poor Algerian women at the Forum to shouts of "Vive l'Algérie française!" was just French colonialism repeating 'sa classique campagne d'occidentalisation de la femme algérienne': 'il n'est pas vrai que la femme se libère sur l'invitation de la France et du général de Gaulle'. On the contrary, he wrote, Algerian women who had unveiled themselves in the revolutionary struggle would take back the veil, not to retreat to traditional ways, but as the choice of rebels against French efforts to defeat them.¹⁰

Fanon's primary agents of unveiling are French males, who derive libidinal satisfaction from the project: 'C'est ainsi que le viol de la femme algérienne dans un rêve d'Européen est toujours précédé de la déchirure du voile. On assiste là à une double défloration'.¹¹ This captures an important element of the French cultural imagination. Fanon's 'L'Algérie se dévoile' anticipates Edward Said's *Orientalism*; it is a critique of the European male gaze. Think of Jacques Massu's interpretation of the participation of Algerian women in the FLN. He depicted this not as liberation, but as a displacement of the frustrations generated by their traditional culture: they were 'heureuses de sortir d'une passivité traditionnelle et d'utiliser enfin pour une cause valable les qualités d'astuce, de rouerie employées depuis toujours à des enterloupettes de harem'.¹² Making a very different argument, Fanon presents Algerian women moving from a sheltered existence, veiled metaphorically or in practice, to participation in the struggle for national liberation. Once the FLN sounded the call, Fanon saw Algerian women, like the peasantry, as revealing a degree of revolutionary spontaneity.¹³

⁹ *Le Torrent*, p. 329. The French explained the war to Americans in terms of the liberation of women. In *The Falling Veil*, a French film made for distribution in the United States, the narrator describes de Gaulle appealing directly to women in his June 1958 visit to Algeria: 'His confidence in the women acted almost as an electric current to many of them, a kind of psychological shock which jolted them out of their old attitude of apathy into a new awareness of themselves'; see Matthew Connolly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origin of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 216.

¹⁰ 'L'Algérie se dévoile', p. 46.

¹¹ 'L'Algérie se dévoile', p. 28. Many French imagined the paras as the epitome of this affirmation of a virile male identity expressed in terms of aggression. Paratrooper Jean Pouget wrote that accusations of torture made them irresistible in France: 'A Paris les capitaines parachutistes en permission ne comptent plus les filles ravissantes, très "intellectuelles-de-gauche", libérées, dont le secret désir est de s'envoyer en l'air avec un de ces paras tortionnaires', in *Bataillon R.A.S. Algérie* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1981), p. 306.

¹² *La Vraie Bataille d'Algiers* (Paris, Plon, 1971), p. 179.

¹³ Fanon differentiates 'l'Algérienne engagée' [qui] apprend à la fois d'instinct son rôle de "femme seule dans la rue" et sa mission révolutionnaire', from European women who undertake revolutionary action (like French resisters during the Second World War). European women could envisage their actions in terms of models drawn from their culture; the Algerian Muslim woman could not: 'C'est sans apprentissage, sans récits, sans histoire qu'elle sort dans la rue, trois grenades dans son sac à main ou le rapport d'activité d'une zone dans le corsage. Il n'y a pas chez elle cette sensation de jouer un rôle lu maintes et maintes fois dans les romans, ou aperçu au cinéma. Il n'y a pas ce coefficient de jeu, d'imitation, présent presque toujours dans cette forme d'action, quand on l'étudie chez une Occidentale', in 'L'Algérie se dévoile', pp. 32–33. However, some female FLN activists were not so untainted by models drawn from history. They thought in terms of the French Resistance because they understood it to be a universal experience to which all oppressed could aspire. For Zohra Drif, 'La Résistance française avait été un apprentissage et un modèle pour les jeunes de ma génération'; see Florence Beaugé, *Algérie: une guerre sans gloire* (Paris, Calmann-Lévy,

Yet both the French and Fanon fetishize the veil and the carnal and historical innocence it was intended to evoke and sustain. Not all of the Algerian women most prominent in the Battle of Algiers, and who were very much on the minds of the French during and after the Battle, resembled Fanon's portrait of the veiled and secluded women liberated by participation in the revolution alone. Fanon presents leaving the Casbah for those women in terms of the metaphor of uncovering: 'Le manteau protecteur de la Kasbah, le rideau de sécurité presque organique que la ville arabe tisse autour de l'autochtone se retire, et l'Algérienne à découvert, est lancée dans la ville du conquérant'.¹⁴ Although Pontecorvo and his screenwriter Franco Solinas were influenced by Fanon's 'L'Algérie se dévoile' in preparing *La Bataille d'Alger*, they did not follow Fanon's presentation of unveiling as an act that transforms the identity of the woman bound by tradition into a revolutionary. In the film, some revolutionary women wear veils, like the one who tests Ali la Pointe by giving him an unloaded gun to use in an assault and then takes him to the cell leader after he passes the test. Among the unveiled in the film are both women who set bombs in the city and the bride at a marriage performed by FLN authorities. In *La Bataille d'Alger*, going unveiled is one of many tactics pursued by revolutionary women, not the step that makes it possible for women to become revolutionaries.¹⁵

'L'Algérie se dévoile' analyses a situation and is open to analysis in terms of that situation. Fanon's interpretation can be broadened to take account of the particular experiences of women like Zohra Drif. However, Fanon shows what we can learn about the French *mentalité* from examination of characters inspired by women like Drif in novels about the war. Yet Fanon pays little attention to another gender politics promoted in Algeria by women like Suzanne Massu. Going over these aspects of the worlds of 'L'Algérie se dévoile' reveals the strengths and boundaries of Fanon's analysis.¹⁶

Largely missing from Fanon's 'L'Algérie se dévoile' is an examination of North African Algerian women who came from the social elite, perhaps mistrusted by Fanon as potential agents of a future neo-colonialism, but who resembled him in having found in European culture both elements of a liberation always denied and critical tools to try to achieve that liberation.¹⁷ Fanon

2005), p. 204. When the torture given her by French officers became unbearable, Louise Ighilahriz thought of Jean Moulin (Beaugé, *Algérie*, p. 27).

¹⁴'L'Algérie se dévoile', p. 34.

¹⁵Norma Claire Moruzzi, 'Veiled Agent: Feminine Agency and Masquerade in *The Battle of Algiers*', in *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourse of Power and Resistance*, ed. by Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1993), pp. 266–67.

¹⁶Fanon's 'L'Algérie se dévoile' opposes two secular discourses of liberation: French republican and Algerian national liberation. However, their kinship — Freud's 'narcissism of minor difference' — is revealed by placing them in opposition to an interpretation of wearing the veil as a religious practice chosen by, not imposed upon, women, a concept for which there is place in neither of Fanon's contesting discourses.

¹⁷The relatively few educated women in the liberation struggle were among those whose acts have drawn the most attention. At the beginning of the French–Algerian War in 1954, only 4.5% of Algerian women of North African origin were literate (Amrane, *Les Femmes*, p. 27). The vast majority of women who engaged in

ironically applied to urban terrorism Mao Zedong's metaphor of rural guerilla armies among the peasantry as being like fish in water.¹⁸ 'Porteuse de revolvers, de grenades, de centaines de fausses cartes d'identité ou de bombes, la femme algérienne dévoilée évolue comme un poisson dans l'eau occidentale'.¹⁹ However, Mao did not say that fish pass unperceived in water. His point was that guerillas need the peasantry in order to survive. Is Fanon victim of a Freudian slip, suggesting that, like rural guerillas among the peasantry, some unveiled Algerian female freedom fighters also drew sustenance, if only in the form of frustrated desire, from the Western waters in which they moved?

Fanon is correct that Algerian males, including FLN leaders like Yacef, were initially hesitant to recruit women. Yacef turned down Djamilia Bouhired's request to follow her brother into the FLN because, in her words, he 'did not want mice in the movement'.²⁰ However, the arrests of numerous male militants in Algiers encouraged Yacef to give women an important role. An equality developed in the direction of the FLN in the Casbah not found in the countryside. After the arrest of Ben M'Hidi, Yacef reconstituted the *état-major* of the FLN in Algiers. For this seven-person 'brain-trust',²¹ he chose three young women: Djamilia Bouhired, Hassiba Ben Bouali and Zohra Drif, all of whom had laid bombs in Algiers. Djamilia Bouhired was born in the Casbah. 'Elle sortait du même moule que les enfants des quartiers pauvres', Yacef wrote. 'A sa naissance il était écrit qu'elle n'irait pas à l'Université'.²² However, the other two had different life experiences.

Hassiba Ben Bouali was the educated daughter of a former *caïd*, an official appointed by the French whose position the French were undercutting, and she worked in a welfare office. 'Elle est kabyle, blonde et jolie. Rien dans son langage ni dans sa mise ne la différencie d'une jeune Européenne de famille bourgeoise', recalled Yves Godard, a French paratrooper officer.²³ Yacef paired Hassiba Ben Bouali with Ali la Pointe and she would die with him and with Yacef's nephew, Petit Omar.

Zohra Drif came from a well-off family as well. Her parents had explained the German defeat of France to her as divine punishment for French treatment

the war for national liberation fed and sheltered insurgents. While only 65 of the 10,949 women recorded as war veterans by the Algerian Ministère des Moudjahidine were *fidayante*, women engaged in military acts, 88% of the *fidayante* whom Amrane interviewed could read and write at the time of their engagement. (Amrane, *Les Femmes*, p. 91).

¹⁸ *On Guerilla Warfare*, trans. by Samuel Griffith II (Urbana, IL, University of Illinois Press, 2000), ch. 6.

¹⁹ 'L'Algérie se dévoile', p. 41. Fanon's choice of 'évolue' is suggestive as well. 'Évolué' was the term the French used to describe the colonized in North Africa and elsewhere whom they considered 'civilized', that is to say those who accepted European values and institutions. Fanon uses the term in this way several times (pp. 21n, 26n). However, Fanon's use of 'évolue' in this passage captures the relationship of the FLN mobilization of women to the French policy of promoting 'évoluées' to counter Algerian resistance to their rule.

²⁰ Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence* (New York, Routledge, 1994), p. 121.

²¹ Serge Bromberger, *Les Rebelles algériens* (Paris, Plon, 1958), p. 168.

²² Yacef Saâdi, *La Bataille d'Alger*, 2 vols (Paris, Publisud, 2002), 1, 283.

²³ *Les Paras dans la ville* (Paris, Fayard, 1972), p. 343.

of Muslims. However, Drif also contested an Algerian culture that she saw, in contradiction to the Koran, as keeping women dependent on men and excluded from public life. She had been one of only a dozen or so Muslim girls in an elite 3000 student lycée in Algiers, where her classmates included Hélène Cixous. Drif rebelled against the discrimination she experienced there as well as against the expectation that she return to her family after graduation and marry. She enrolled in the law faculty at the university in Algiers in 1954–55. The three female law students of North African origin in her class all aspired to join the independence movement. Drif withdrew from school in response to the FLN call for a strike to shut down the university in 1956. When the bourgeois Drif sought out an active role in the urban struggle, she hesitated to make her first contact because it was in the Casbah: ‘Pour nous, la Casbah était un lieu malfamé’. In turn, when she approached the FLN to join the struggle, she was met with suspicion, she explained, because of her family and her reputation as pro-French in the student world. Drif proved herself and came to play a variety of roles in the Casbah in addition to placement of bombs. Yacef’s account of the army’s manhunt in December 1956 took note of the courageous role of women, including Djamilia Bouhired and Zohra Drif. They were not being sought at the time and invited French soldiers, who were on search missions, to have tea and cake and sit with them, even as their comrades hid in adjoining nooks. During the January–February 1957 strike Drif moved from terrace to terrace with Djamilia Bouhired and Hassiba Ben Bouali to garner women’s support in the face of military repression.²⁴ Until her arrest with Yacef in September 1957, she worked closely with him to manage and keep track of operations.²⁵

Zohra Drif and Hassiba Ben Bouali were educated women from the upper class working closely with Yacef, a baker and child of the Casbah, and Ali la Pointe, an illiterate mason and criminal. After Yacef assumed political leadership, the assistance of educated women proved all the more important. Drif prepared a form letter for inhabitants of Algiers to fill out and send to the attorney general to tell of torture (with a copy to be forwarded to France for delivery to *Le Monde*). When the army’s success diminished the public presence of the FLN in the Casbah, Drif wrote tracts

²⁴Fatma, a university student-turned-FLN militant in Pouget’s *Bataillon*, describes *la terrasse* as a space belonging to women only, their *gynécée inviolable*: ‘Quand nous passions dans les ruelles de la Casbah, les hommes nous lançaient des injures et à l’occasion des pierres. Pour eux, étudiantes dévoilées, nous étions des filles deux fois perdues. Nous réunissons les femmes sur les terrasses, hors de portée des hommes, et nous leurs expliquions le sens du mot “Istiqlal” et du combat pour l’indépendance, la libération du pays et de la femme. Le soir au lit elles répétaient la leçon à leurs maris. C’est ainsi que nous avons conquis la Casbah!’ (p. 350).

²⁵Danièle Djamilia Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes dans la guerre d’Algérie: entretiens* (Paris, Karthala, 1994), pp. 137–38 (interview with Zohra Drif); Patrick Kessel and Giovanni Pirelli, *Le Peuple algérien et la guerre* (Paris, Maspéro, 1962), pp. 80–81; Massu, *La Vraie Bataille*, pp. 184, 201; Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN: 1954–1962* (Paris, Fayard, 2002), p. 223; William B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1969), pp. 118–19.

to reaffirm the FLN's existence and mission in Algiers; if 'le premier tract de Yacef fit l'effet d'une bombe', we need to recognize the contribution of women like Drif.²⁶ Yacef's 'égérie',²⁷ she remembers that he encouraged wide-ranging discussion of objectives and how to attain them. He especially solicited the opinion of the women since they could go out in the city after he no longer could. The participation of women like Drif in the direction of the Battle of Algiers made for its originality and importance in the context of the French–Algerian War.²⁸

A woman like Drif, largely absent from 'L'Algérie se dévoile', fascinated and terrified the French. When she was being sought in Algiers in May 1957, her photograph appeared on the front page of *La Dépêche quotidienne d'Alger*, with a caption explaining that 'la poseuse de bombes fut une brillante élève' in lycée and in law school. She had won first prize in philosophy in lycée, 'recompense pour laquelle il est requis une certain rigueur de pensée'.²⁹ For Godard, the French officer who interrogated her, she was alluring: Drif was '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'. Godard explained her activism as the result 'd'un orgueil blessé': 'enfant gâtée d'une famille aisée que les rebuffades de quelques étudiants européens suffisent à lancer, elle qui n'est pas une fofolle'.³⁰ Like other officers, he could imagine the effects of discrimination in a colonial society on a woman, but not the militant commitment to a movement dedicated to eradication of this society.³¹

'L'Algérie se dévoile' was published in France a year before Jean Lartéguy's best-selling novel, *Les Centurions* (1960), a story of officers in the tenth

²⁶ Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, p. 141 (interview with Drif). Yves Courrière, *Le Temps des léopards* (Paris, Fayard, 1969), p. 507 (the passage here quoted).

²⁷ Paul-Alain Léger, *Aux carrefours de la guerre* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1983), p. 258.

²⁸ Amrane, *Les Femmes*, pp. 106, 110.

²⁹ Amrane, *Les Femmes*, p. 224.

³⁰ *Les Paras*, pp. 340–43. Many French assumed that exposure to and acceptance of elements of European culture would lead to new gender roles, but ones consonant with the actions found in French women with these cultural attributes. Of Djamilia Bouazza, who set the bomb at the Coq Hardi *brasserie*, Pierre Pellissier wrote 'qu'elle aime les surprises-parties, la musique de jazz, les films de James Dean. . . Rien qui la porte donc franchement vers le terrorisme' (*La Bataille d'Alger* (Paris, Perrin, 1995), p. 224). The issue here is not the common differentiation made between combattants' very different tactics, orthodox military and terrorist, but the expectation that Bouazza's embrace of Western mass culture would be accompanied by other normative forms of behaviour of young French women of the times, including non-participation in military violence.

³¹ The counterparts to a figure like Zohra Drif in French accounts are the two young women named Ouria who helped the French track down the FLN leaders in Algiers. Victims of gender inequality and FLN violence, they turned to the French. Ouria la brune was a well-educated Francophone woman whose best friends at lycée were Euro-Algerian girls. Her father had imposed an arranged marriage. Her husband, a FLN militant, had her imprisoned in order to save his mistress. Ouria la blonde was a green-eyed Francophone Kabyle whose husband had been murdered by the FLN because he was a militant in a rival nationalist group (Léger, *Aux carrefours*, pp. 219–600).

paratroopers' division, the unit Massu commanded.³² Ali la Pointe appears as Youssef le Couteau, whose entry in the FLN has not changed the behaviour toward women he learned as a pimp. A character based on Ben M'Hidi and Yacef (he is called 'Grand Frère', Yacef's soubriquet) is caught by the paratroopers in his French mistress's apartment and commits suicide (neither of which were actions of Ben M'Hidi or Yacef). Another captured FLN leader's militance is explained by his frustration at being denied the right to court European women. Yet most revealing in *Les Centurions* is the Zohra Drif figure, Aïcha, a third-year medical student and FLN bomber from an upper class Algerian family who works closely with 'le Grand Frère'. 'Aïcha sait que le Front, quand il aura vaincu les colonialistes, fera se dévoiler toutes les femmes, interdira la polygamie, rendra, comme en Occident, la femme égale de l'homme'.³³ Aïcha began a flirtatious relationship with a French military officer and used it to help smuggle bomb elements past the soldiers in the Casbah. Aïcha lives on the fortuitously named rue de la Bombe in the Casbah (a reference to the impasse de la Grenade where paratroopers had found a bomb factory during the Battle of Algiers). She is arrested and the officer whom she has been seeing is assigned to question her. He rapes her and she falls head over heels in love with him, immediately revealing to him all she knows about the FLN. They become lovers and she insists on going further in collaborating than he wants, attending line-ups with a hood over her head to identify former comrades: 'Pour la première fois, Aïcha se sentait traitée en égale par un homme qui était à la fois son amant et son ennemi'.³⁴ In Lartéguy's next novel, *Les Prétoriens* (1961),

³² Lartéguy was a favourite of the paras. For paratrooper officer Léger, Lartéguy 'est le seul, jusqu'à présent, à avoir su comprendre et dépeindre les jeunes officiers parachutistes'. Léger, *Aux carrefours*, p. 406. Mark Robson directed a film of *Les Centurions* with an American and French cast. Released in 1966, the same year as Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, it became a hit in France. *Lost Command* (*Les Centurions* in France) presented torture, bombings and seductive militants on bombing missions. Pontecorvo's film on the Battle of Algiers was denied permission to be screened in France in 1966, but the Battle was an important element of another popular film of that year.

³³ *Les Centurions* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1960), p. 328.

³⁴ *Les Centurions*, p. 408. After her capture, Djamilia Bouhired was tortured, but she refused to reveal Yacef's location. She was then handed over to one of Massu's officers, Jean Graziani, who, it is said, undertook a charm offensive, visiting her every day and taking her to dine at the officer's mess hall. (Graziani had himself once been the subject of an effort at conversion. He was held for four years at 'camp numéro un' by the Vietnamese Communists, where, after being broken down physically, prisoners were subjected to an unceasing effort to get them to renounce the war and to embrace Communism; see Marie-Monique Robin, *Escadrons de la mort: l'école française* (Paris, La Découverte, 2004), p. 31). Whatever Graziani's tactics and goals, Yves Courrière reports that Bouhired fell in love with Graziani, as evidenced by love letters she wrote, and that he fell in love with her. However, she never revealed where Yacef was. She was condemned to death (and later released); Graziani died in combat; see Courrière, *Le Temps des léopards*, pp. 520–22. Jean Pouget, whom Pellissier says is one of the few to have read the (now vanished) letters from Djamilia Bouhired to Graziani (Pellissier, *La Bataille d'Alger*, p. 308, n.3), wrote that 'la cache d'Ali la Pointe fut "donnée" par une fille amoureuse d'un para' (Pouget, *Bataillon*, p. 139) — presumably a reference to Bouhired, and an example of a French pillow talk fantasy. However, Pellissier says Bouhired spoke only after giving comrades time to disperse. Pierre Pellissier, *Massu* (Paris, Perrin, 2003), p. 236. In any case, Graziani's biographer, Marie Daures, convincingly dismisses the story of a romance between the nationalist Bouhired and the *pied-noir* Graziani, in 'Le capitaine Jean Graziani 1926–1959' (unpublished dissertation, Institut d'études politiques de Toulouse, 1998), pp. 56–58. Yet such stories continue to fascinate French men. In his recent memoir of military service in Algeria, Ted Morgan repeats the story of Bouhired and Graziani, and the only Muslim Algerian Morgan tells of getting to know is the seductive FLN militant he

Aïcha's para amour says of their affair that, after 13 May, 'Tout recommence, non plus au milieu des éclatements de bombes, dans la folie et les déchirements, mais dans la joie et la réconciliation'. Aïcha exults, 'Moi j'ai trahi ma cause, j'ai vendu mes frères... Mais aujourd'hui je sais que je n'ai pas trahi: je vais les réunir tous'. She announces that 'les femmes de ma race arracheront leurs voiles et viendront elles aussi sur le Forum'. Aïcha herself goes to the Forum to tell women to take off their veils; she rips the veil off of a woman who hesitates.³⁵

A French officer in *Les Centurions*, 'comprendait à travers Aïcha quelle puissance représentait toute cette révolte accumulée depuis des siècles par des millions de femmes'; he came to believe that 'il y avait là suffisamment d'explosifs pour faire sauter tout le Maghreb'. He devised an unorthodox plan to lead these women to feel that their emancipation would come from the French. Scorning the idea of feminist meetings, he rounded up three truckloads of women in the Casbah and brought them to the washhouse where he made them clean the paratroopers' underwear. Because their fathers and husbands had been unable to prevent their roundup, they lost their prestige and power over the women. 'Courbées pendant toute une matinée sur ce linge, elles avaient l'impression d'être soumises au viol infiniment répété des soldats dont elles purifiaient les vêtements'. However, 'lorsqu'elles revinrent à la Kasbah sans avoir été molestées, quand ces hommes jeunes et forts les eurent aidés à descendre des camions avec une politesse qu'ils avaient tendance à exagérer (alors que souvent leurs fiancés ou leurs maris étaient vieux, débiles et grossiers) quelques-unes d'entre elles pensèrent à quitter le voile et d'autres qu'elles pourraient avoir des amants qui ne seraient pas des musulmans'.³⁶ Fanon would have recognized this sado-masochistic variant of the liberation narrative, but not its origin in the French fantasy of an educated elite Algerian woman who cannot but fall prey to French male attentions.

Cécile Saint-Laurent's popular novel *Agités d'Alger* (1961), set in the year after the end of the Battle of Algiers, could not ignore female FLN activists either. Ali coerces another Aïcha, an apolitical nurse, to join a new female insurgent network in the city: 'Je veux que, dans ce réseau, les responsabilités incombent aux femmes'.³⁷ For another male combatant, 'Ce n'est pas un

dates, in *My Battle of Algiers* (New York, Smithsonian Books, 2005), pp. 235–52. In *Les Passagers pour Alger* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1960), p. 466, Cécile Saint-Laurent puts a twist on this narrative, having the *piéd-noir* FLN militant Marie-Louise become the mistress of her interrogator the day after she is subjected to torture.

³⁵ *Les Prétoriens* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1961), pp. 174, 177, 176, 200. However, the idyll does not last long: when we next hear of Aïcha, her officer is leaving her. Aïcha's family is bringing her to Switzerland to abort the fruit of their liaison. (p. 218).

³⁶ *Les Centurions*, p. 408.

³⁷ *Agités d'Alger* (Paris, Presses de la Cité, 1961), p. 299. When Pierre Vidal-Naquet referred to Cécile Saint-Laurent as 'un spécialiste de l'érotisme à bon marché' (*La Torture dans la république* (Paris, La Découverte — Maspero, 1983), pp. 156–57), did he know that Cécile Saint-Laurent was the pseudonym of the Hussard Jacques Laurent?

réseau, c'est un bassoum!³⁸ However, Aïcha does not want to devote her life to the cause. She contacts the French army and enables it to identify members of her network and their contacts, but when Ali is arrested, he turns out to be Samia, a woman 'travestie en garçon', with a wooden penis under her pants: 'une fille assez formidable mais complètement siphonnée', in the words of Wasseau, the officer who takes charge of her case (and who goes on to use her as his agent, without her knowledge).³⁹ Samia is an ardent nationalist, but a 'féministe enragée' as well, whose hostility to the place of women in her culture was heightened by sexual harassment in the maquis.⁴⁰ Once incarcerated, she tells her uncle, a French soldier, 'J'ai fait de moi un garçon pour tourner les préjugés de mon peuple par rapport à mon sexe'. 'Ce qu'elle voulait avec son réseau-bombes monté avec des filles', explained Wasseau, 'c'était prouver qu'elles avaient réussi là où les mâles avaient échoué'.⁴¹ For Saint-Laurent, North African women's emancipation will challenge the national liberation movement, not be born of it.

In para officer Jean Pouget's novelized memoir, *Bataillon R.A.S. Algérie*, Jean-Marie, the stand-in for the author, is introduced by fellow officer Jean Graziani to Fatia, a university student-turned-FLN militant ('100% algérienne par son sang et 100% française par sa culture'⁴²) at the Forum on 17 May 1958. Inspired by events the day before, Graziani has brought Fatia there to show her evidence of *intégration* at work. When Jacques Soustelle said this magic word, 'des femmes de la Casbah avaient arraché leur voiles et lançaient des yousyous frénétiques'. Fatia initially did not believe that *l'Algérie fraternelle* was possible and Jean-Marie tells none other than the journalist (and novelist) Lartéguy that she is correct. Yet Fatia and Jean-Marie fall in love: 'Ils firent l'amour, sans échanger un mot d'amour, avec l'agressivité qu'ils avaient mis à faire la guerre. ... Dans le combat, insensiblement, elle laissa tomber son armure pièce par pièce: logique, raison, orgueil, ses idées et sa pudeur'. Fatia comes to believe in *l'Algérie fraternelle*, bringing young militants to Jean-Marie to talk about how to achieve it. However, ultras on both sides resist them. General Salan punishes Jean-Marie for his romance by transferring him out of Algiers, but he returns to spend one last night

³⁸ *Agités d'Alger*, p. 208.

³⁹ *Agités d'Alger*, p. 408. Political activism could, in fact, affect sexual identity in ways Fanon does not address. Louise Ighilahriz, active during the Battle of Algiers, describes how she flirted with the French guards to smuggle weapons past them, but then explains that 'La guerre m'avait complètement transformée, j'étais devenue insensible et avais pour ainsi dire oublié ma féminité. Comme pour mieux m'adapter à mon environnement, tout en moi s'était masculinisé. ... Un rideau était tombé sur ma féminité', in *L'Algérienne* (Paris, Fayard — Calmann-Lévy, 2001), p. 72.

⁴⁰ *Agités d'Alger*, p. 409. In Saint-Laurent's first novel on Algeria, *Les Passagers pour Alger*, pp. 188, 345, Samia considers herself 'bien plus Occidentale qu'Orientale', fighting for an Algeria which will be 'une nation de style européen'. However, on her first night with the *maquis*, she is raped and develops a hatred of men.

⁴¹ *Agités d'Alger*, pp. 418; 410.

⁴² *Bataillon*, p. 351.

with Fatia. 'Ce qu'il y a entre la France et l'Algérie', she tells him, 'c'est une histoire d'amour manqué'.⁴³

Like Jean-Paul Sartre in *Réflexions sur la question juive*, which Fanon cites in discussing French fantasies about North African Algerian women,⁴⁴ Fanon is at his best analysing how the oppressor, the French male, first playing a role like that of the anti-semitic, creates disparaging and threatening representations of North African Algerian males, and then, playing the role of the democrat in *Réflexions*, stakes out a position in the defence of Algerian women as women and their annihilation as Algerians. The *ped noir* as racist and the *para* as the marauding eroticized and eroticizing democrat roam the French cultural imagination in works like those of Lartéguy, Saint-Laurent and Pouget. However, Fanon's Algerian women activists do not, like Sartre's inauthentic Jew or the female Algerian activists in French novels, seek to make their behaviour a refutation of the racists' ideas. They turn both the racists' and the democrats' preconceptions against them, in the interest of forwarding affirmation of the collective national identity that has been denied them.

Zohra Drif is not the only woman at the centre of events in the French–Algerian War, but on the margins of Fanon's analysis in 'L'Algérie se dévoile'. Important French women engaged with the situation of North African Algerian women are largely absent as well.⁴⁵ Fanon makes French men the primary agents of North African Algerian women's false liberation. He mentions 'toute une technique d'infiltration au cours de laquelle des meutes d'assistantes sociales et d'animatrices d'œuvres de bienfaisance se ruent sur les quartiers arabes', but he has little to say about who these women are or what motivates them. Otherwise, he presents French women as threatened by unveiled Algerian women and as finding themselves having no choice 'que de rejoindre l'Algérien qui avait avec férocité' condemned unveiled women.⁴⁶ Yet French women were the core of the complement to the Battle of Algiers pursued by individuals like General Jacques Massu's wife, Suzanne Massu. A wartime heroine, Suzanne Massu had led the Rochambeau ambulance division as a lieutenant in the Free French army in 1944–45.⁴⁷ After Liberation, she served as an innovative fundraiser for the dispossessed in post-war France (in the famed annual Kermesse aux Étoiles, held in the Jardins des Tuileries). In Algiers, Suzanne Massu operated a social service centre,

⁴³ *Bataillon*, pp. 349, 357, 363.

⁴⁴ 'L'Algérie se dévoile', p. 28.

⁴⁵ There were Algerian women of European origin who carried out military missions and were active in the *réseaux de soutien* for independence fighters. In a sexualization of the normative boundaries — French and Algerian; Catholic and Muslim — broken by Europeans who aided Algerians, Pellissier presents the *assistantes sociales* of European origin active in the *réseaux* as manifesting 'des variances homosexuelles intéressantes. Lesdites dames s'écrivaient beaucoup, passionnément et pas très prudemment', in *La Bataille d'Alger*, p. 169.

⁴⁶ 'L'Algérie se dévoile', pp. 19–20, 26, n.1.

⁴⁷ See Ellen Hampton, *Women of Valor: The Rochambelles on the WWII Front* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Association jeunesse, which provided literacy education and job training for uprooted male teens.⁴⁸ General Massu and his wife adopted and raised two North African Algerian children, an act he termed the ‘symbole de l’intégration telle que nous la concevons’.⁴⁹ He saw the adoptions as ‘la preuve que l’intégration — celle pour laquelle je me suis toujours battu — était possible et que ce n’était pas une chimère’.⁵⁰

Suzanne Massu contended that the French would counter the Algerian independence movement not through women’s liberation, but through female solidarity. As French troops rounded up Algerian men during and after the Battle of Algiers, their wives were left with no source of income. Suzanne Massu responded to the Algerian Muslim women who flocked to her centre for assistance with home knitting and sewing.⁵¹ Muslim women were given balls of yarn they could use to knit sweaters to sell. General Massu opened a successful exposition of *Tricot à domicile* goods for sale at the Grands Magasins du Louvre in Paris.⁵² The Knitting Campaign, wrote Roland Barthes, was to occupy Frenchmen so they did not think of ending the war, as well as to undermine support among Algerian women for the struggle. ‘La Générale rêve d’une grande France silencieuse où l’on ne parlerait plus que tricots’. And in Algeria, ‘en tant qu’homme, le Général fait la guerre, il réduit le fellagha; en tant que femme, la Générale, reconstruit, rallie les populations féminines en les faisant tricoter’.⁵³ Women in metropolitan France were encouraged to go through their attics to find manual sewing machines, no longer of use, wrote Jacques Massu, ‘depuis la modernisation des campagnes, mais qui feront le bonheur de centaines de femmes dans le bled non électrifié. Un bateau, spécialement affrété pour la circonstance, apportera à Alger ces précieuses machines dont ma femme, passionnée de pacification, dira que chacune d’elle est plus efficace que dix fusils!’⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Marc Desaphy, the man who managed the Association jeunesse for Suzanne Massu, was a para who had been severely injured in the FLN bombing of the Milk Bar (see Pellissier, *Massu*, p. 235).

⁴⁹ *Le Torrent*, p. 114. Massu first encountered the daughter he would adopt when, in an act reminiscent of Petit Omar in Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger*, she grabbed the microphone which had been denied her by an army officer and cried out that she loved the French and hoped with all her heart that Algeria would remain French (p. 107).

⁵⁰ Florence Beaugé, ‘“Si la France reconnaissait et condamnait ces pratiques, je prendrais cela pour une avancée”’, *Le Monde*, 23 November 2000, p. 10 (an interview with Massu). Differentiating what he termed the paras’ fascism from racist fascism, paratrooper Gilles Perrault asked, ‘Imagine-t-on Himmler se faisant le père de deux enfants israélites?’, in *Les Parachutistes* (Paris, Seuil, 1961), p. 183. Massu’s fellow officer Yves Godard also adopted an Algerian boy and lavished love on him; see Massu, *La Vraie bataille*, p. 107.

⁵¹ Massu, *La Vraie bataille*, pp. 192–198, 315–320; Alain-Gilles Minella, *Le Soldat méconnu: entretiens avec le Général Massu* (Paris, Mame, 1993), p. 232.

⁵² *La Vraie bataille*, p. 197.

⁵³ ‘Tricots à domicile’, pp. 52–53. Others were blunter. Speaking of Suzanne Massu’s work with Algerian youth, some said General Massu made orphans and his wife took care of them; see Boulem Khalfá, Henri Alleg and Abdelhamid Benzine, *La Grande Aventure d’Alger républicain* (Paris, Messidor, 1987), p. 20.

⁵⁴ *Le Torrent*, pp. 105–06. Germaine Tillion pointed to the deceptive nature of hand-me-down modernization in characterizing ‘cette crasse gangrèneuse qui devient notre civilisation lorsqu’elle leur parvient. La puissante locomotive qui a inspiré Honegger? C’est cette vieille machine à coudre rouillée qui ruine leurs brodeurs’, in *L’Afrique bascule vers l’avenir* (Paris, Minuit, 1960), p. 67.

As Fanon wrote 'L'Algérie se dévoile', Suzanne Massu launched a new campaign. She barged into the army's radio station and gave a woman-to-woman call to continue the solidarity of 16 May 'du Forum au Foyer':

A moi les femmes, toutes les femmes de bonne volonté. Le feu de joie qui flambe sur le Forum ne doit pas s'étendre. Pour l'alimenter, il faut toutes les petites brindilles d'amour que nous portons en nous. 'Du Forum au foyer', ce sera notre devise pour que la grande réconciliation pénètre au plus intime de ces populations. C'est là notre affaire, mes sœurs. Aidez-moi, venez à moi. Je suis Suzanne Massu, à Alger, et je vous appelle à l'aide.⁵⁵

Radio stations throughout Algeria rebroadcast her call. On Mothers' Day, 1 June 1958, a Mouvement de solidarité féminine was launched in 'une réplique féminine du 16 mai sur le Forum'.⁵⁶ Wives of military officers played the leading role in this explicitly feminine contribution to the French pacification project:

The wife of five-star Gen. Raoul Salan, top representative of Paris in ... Algeria, directs the centre for matronly aid and encouragement of the emancipation drive. Under her — each of them commanding one of Algeria's four great geographical divisions, including the Sahara — are the spouses of appropriately distributed generals with lesser clusters of stars. At operational level in any large town, the local president of the *Solidarité* is likely to be the consort of a major; a captain's wife is the vice-president, a lieutenant's wife the secretary and a *sous-lieutenant's* lady the treasurer.⁵⁷

In 'L'Algérie se dévoile', Fanon was thinking not of women like Drif, but primarily of the Algerian women the officers' wives sought to attract. What Fanon characterized in 'L'Algérie se dévoile' as the French effort to change gender norms in Algeria in order to stymie revolution mobilized French women who drew on feminine gender norms at the heart of bourgeois French society. Suzanne Massu claimed that the Mouvement's goal was not emancipation or unveiling, but 'la plus grande connaissance mutuelle'.⁵⁸ Meetings ranged from visits to museums to presentations on infant care. They typically ended with translation from the French: 'Vous et nous, *kif-kif* ... vous et nous égales, identiques ... rien que des femmes!' General Massu reported that Algerian women responded by screaming "'*kif-kif* "sur un rythme de plus en plus survolté, coupé de "you-you" stridents'. This is an *Algérie française* alternative to the final scene of Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, complete with the vision of an Algeria

⁵⁵ Pellissier, *Massu*, p. 273.

⁵⁶ Massu, *La Vraie bataille*, p. 315; Massu, *Le Torrent*, pp. 100, 104 (the passage here quoted).

⁵⁷ Hal Lehrman, 'Battle of the Veil in Algeria', *New York Times Magazine*, 13 July 1958, 14–18 (p. 14). These organizations enabled a few Algerian Muslim women to assume positions in the French republic. Three were elected to the Chamber of Deputies in November 1958. One of them, Rebiha Kebtani, had been active in a woman's group organized by Suzanne Massu. She unveiled herself at the 16 May 1958 demonstration at the request of a general. Another deputy, Nafissa Sid Cara, became president of the Mouvement de Solidarité Féminine. Seferdjeli (see 'French "Reforms"', pp. 48–51).

⁵⁸ Suzanne Massu expressed doubts about the unveilings at the Forum: 'Qu'on leur laisse leurs voiles. Découvre-t-on un bas-relief avant qu'il soit achevé? Ces femmes, il faut d'abord ouvrir leurs fenêtres, les aider à s'instruire, à modeler leur personnalité, leur donner confiance en elles. Après seulement, elles découvriront leur visage, pas maintenant', in Pellissier, *Massu*, p. 272.

beyond warring males embodied by ululating North African Algerian women.⁵⁹

Yet any organization like the Association Jeunesse that brought together French and North Africans, even under the matronizing auspices of a commanding officer's wife, was open to suspicion from General Massu's colleagues in the army. He recognized that only his popularity among *pieds noirs* protected his wife. Pierre Vidal-Naquet tells us that families of Algerians who 'disappeared' in French custody went to Suzanne Massu's centre first — and General Massu recounts that this led his wife and her staff to hassle his soldiers for answers.⁶⁰ General Massu's colleague, General Paul Aussaresses, reports that Suzanne Massu sought to 'protéger les femmes du FLN ... Elle estimait que la clémence à l'égard de certaines poseuses de bombes servirait peut-être à gagner la sympathie des femmes algériennes'. At the height of the Battle of Algiers pursued by her husband, Aussaresses believes Suzanne Massu intervened in the case of Djamila Bouhired, depriving him of the chance to question her in the way he would have liked. 'Grâce à l'intervention de Suzanne Massu', a disgruntled Aussaresses concluded, 'les femmes du FLN furent presque systématiquement livrées à la justice régulière'.⁶¹ Given the chance, Aussaresses averred in 2003, he probably would have executed Bouhired.⁶²

If French actions with respect to Algerian women constituted one strategy to fight the war, whether through the unveiling evoked by Fanon or the female solidarity of Suzanne Massu, another aspect of French treatment of Algerian woman played an important part in destroying the support needed in France to pursue the conflict. FLN leader and historian Mohammed Harbi recognized that 'le sort de cette jeune femme [Djamila Bouhired] a fait davantage pour populariser la question algérienne que des centaines de communiqués de guerre, et nous en étions conscients'.⁶³ Although Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger* shows only

⁵⁹ Massu, *Le Torrent*, pp. 104–05. Lehrman translates 'Kif kif la française!' as 'Let us be like the French lady', in 'Battle of the Veil', p. 14. If the veil was a sign of female secrecy and submission for Europeans, ululation was its complement: a fear-inducing female collective public affirmation. Pellissier captured the apprehension ululating women could instill in the French: 'les femmes voilées entonnent ces youyous stridents qui peuvent donner la chair de poule aux moins émotifs des guerriers', in *La Bataille d'Alger*, p. 143. Cécile Saint-Laurent suggests that ululation had a transgressive quality evident to all when he has the FLN enforce a moral code in the Casbah that includes 'défense aux femmes de pousser des "youyou" lors de l'accouchement de l'une d'elles', in *Les Passagers pour Alger*, p. 90.

⁶⁰ 'Le Cahier vert expliqué,' in *Les Disparus. Le Cahier vert*, ed. by Jacques Vergès, Michel Zavian and Maurice Corrége (Lausanne, La Cité, 1959), pp. 89–117 (p. 90); Massu, *La Vraie Bataille*, pp. 196–97.

⁶¹ Aussaresses saw Suzanne Massu behind the efforts of the officer Graziani to use gifts and sweet treatment to win over the arrested Djamila Bouhired; see *Services spéciaux: Algérie 1955–1957* (Paris, Perrin, 2001), pp. 182–83 (see n. 34 above). Aussaresses reports that FLN lawyer Gisèle Halimi met with Suzanne Massu in Algiers during the war. He tried unsuccessfully to interrupt Halimi's 'insupportable provocation' and appears to have put her on a list of French FLN supporters to be assassinated ('personnes à neutraliser') in Paris (*Services spéciaux*, p. 187). However, Halimi survived to cast doubt on Aussaresses's account of Suzanne Massu's actions in favour of the arrested, in *Avocate irrespectueuse* (Paris, Plon, 2002), p. 110.

⁶² Brigitte Vital-Durand, 'Aussaresses invoque "des maladrresses"', *Libération*, 23 (February 2003), 15.

⁶³ *Une vie debout* (Paris, La Découverte, 2001), p. 198. Condemnation of the war was often presented with reference to atrocities done to women. For the para Pierre Leulliette the war in Algeria is the shameful memory of the 'poitrine ronde pleine de sang comme de raisins écrasés' of a female FLN fighter he did not protect when a humiliated French officer ordered her shot, in *Saint Michel*, p. 342.

the torture of men, the army's torture of Algerian women galvanized the French public during the war, and continues to do so today, as the case of Louissette Ighilahriz has recently shown.⁶⁴ Female militants like Bouhired appeared in court as the embodiment of the politically and the erotically charged liberation of women that Fanon played off against one another in 'L'Algérie se dévoile'.⁶⁵ After the trial, Bouhired's French attorney Jacques Vergès married her.

Fanon's 'L'Algérie se dévoile' can rightly be criticized for making women's liberation conditional on national liberation, with no evidence that achievement of one liberation brings another.⁶⁶ However, reading Fanon's essay within the historical context in which it was written opens up his argument by suggesting that exposure to French cultural institutions could function for a woman like Zohra Drif as it had functioned for the male Fanon — not as an impediment to seeking liberation, but as a catalyst for engagement. Analysis of French novels written about the paratroopers in Algeria reveals that Fanon had a perceptive understanding of the allure of figures like Drif, who, after contact with French officers, become subjects of a congeries of liberation narrative fantasies. In turn, examination of Suzanne Massu and other officers' wives suggests how bourgeois French women empowered in maternalist projects could work to try to impede Algerian women's embrace of national liberation, a role Fanon attributed primarily to French men. These women aimed at achieving what Fanon feared, but not through a putative liberation of women. To use Karl Marx's preferred metaphor, the Algerian War of Independence unveiled a yet more complicated world of imagination and practices than we see in Fanon's pioneering essay.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

⁶⁴ See the debate triggered in 2000 by articles in *Le Monde* on the treatment of Louissette Ighilahriz in captivity. She claims to have been beaten and raped by Graziani, the very officer who was hero of the romantic tale told by Courrière; Ighilahriz, *L'Algérienne*, pp. 109–17; and Beaugé, *Algérie*, pp. 26–27, 45, 55, 71, 130–31, 291. Beaugé asks that Djamilia Bouhired speak about Courrière's story, presumably in the expectation that it will put to rest the image of a chivalrous Graziani, and reinforce Ighilahriz's account, in *Algérie*, p. 248.

⁶⁵ The French surgeon who cared for Djamilia Bouhired, after she was shot during her arrest, found she had 'une poitrine égalant celle de la Vénus de Milo, "encore plus belle", ajoute-il après réflexion'; see Pellissier, *La Bataille d'Alger*, pp. 213–14.

⁶⁶ For Fanon, the liberation of women would come through participation in the struggle for national liberation. However, for this very reason, after independence a female martyr of national liberation could be called upon by women to demand their liberation. In 1985, women opposed to the Family Code, which deprived women of a number of rights, rallied at the site of Hassiba Ben Bouali's death in the Casbah in Algiers. In January 1992, women in Algeria protesting Islamist attacks on women's rights rallied with signs reading 'Hassiba Ben Bouali, Si tu voyais notre Algérie' and 'Hassiba Ben Bouali, Nous ne te trahirons pas'; see Susan Slyomovics, 'Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria', *Middle East Report* (January–February 1995), 8, 11.