

## **Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche**

**Zahia Smail Salhi, University of Manchester**

### **Abstract**

This article aims to discuss and analyse a wide array of stories produced in nineteenth century French Algeria and told by different actors about native Algerian women. While some of these stories were written as true-to-life war testimonies about Algerian women told from multifarious angles and perspectives, others were produced in the form of phantasmagorical image-stories about native women as told by Orientalist artists and colonialist photographers. Moving away from these colonial male narratives, the article discusses in juxtaposition the story of the women of Algeria as told by French feminist Hubertine Auclert in her book *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie*, and a counter story to hers written by Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche, as the story of her life, *Histoire de ma vie*. Bringing these two contrasting sets of stories into discussion and scrutiny will enable us to evaluate the extent to which native women were central to the French conquest and to the French feminists’ agenda of ‘saving them’ from their barbaric people and ways of life. The article aims to discuss the intricacies of such missions and assess the extent to which native Algerian women were saved by their colonisers.

---

To be without stories means to be without memories, which means something like being without a self.<sup>1</sup>

This article brings into discussion and analysis a wide array of stories told by different actors about native Algerian women. According to Walter Benjamin, a story “does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.”<sup>2</sup> The stories we discuss in this article were produced in the nineteenth century and are deployed herein as a portfolio of narratives that tell the same story from multifarious angles and perspectives. We begin by reading colonial images as phantasmagorical stories about native women as told by Orientalist artists and colonialist photographers. Set in imagined Orientalist decors these image-stories aimed to reproduce the world of the *Arabian Nights* rife with odalisques cloistered in harems for the pleasure of their lascivious masters. Every image invites you to weave your own story and to listen to the mute silhouettes of the represented women. Gazing on these image-stories one often wonders, what story would these women tell if they were able to write?

We then compare these mute image-stories with a selection of written stories recorded by war ethnographers and army officers as testimonies on colonial violence against these same native women. Theirs are horror stories, which allow present time readers to question the civilising mission of the French conquerors in contrast to the barbaric practices of the conquest. Moving away from these male

---

<sup>1</sup> Young, K., & Saver, J. L., “The Neurology of Narrative”. *SubStance: A review of theory and literary criticism*, 30 (1 & 2), 2001 (pp. 72-84), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller”. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations*, Trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana/Collins, 1973, (pp.83-109), p. 90.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

narratives, the article discusses in juxtaposition the story of the women of Algeria as told by French feminist Hubertine Auclert<sup>3</sup> in her book *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie*, and a counter story to hers written by Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche, as the story of her life, *Histoire de ma vie*. In these female her/stories the two respective authors speak from opposing positions; that of the coloniser and that of the colonised. Bringing these two contrasting sets of stories into discussion will enable us to evaluate the extent to which native women were central to French women’s agenda of ‘saving them,’ and assess the extent to which they were saved.

### **Orientalist Odalisques or War Booty?**

In his book *The Oriental Harem*<sup>4</sup> Malek Alloula collated a collection of colonial postcards, which tell volumes of stories about how native women were perceived and narrated by colonial photographers. He organised these photographs in a sequential manner, which starts with veiled women, who categorically defeated the voyeurism of the inquisitive onlooker, progresses to unveiled but dignified women in sumptuous oriental costumes, and ends with partly undressed and eroticised subjects. Feeling acutely affronted by such immoral exposure of his own colonised people, Alloula compiled these postcards as a huge document which he returned to its sender.

Being defeated by the impenetrability of the dwellings and the veils of native women, colonial photographers resorted to a fictional penetration through the deployment of

---

<sup>3</sup> Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914), French feminist, well known for militating for women’s rights in France from the mid-1870s. In 1876, she founded the Société le droit des femmes (The Rights of Women) through which she militated for French women’s suffrage. In 1883, the organization changed its name to reflect its mission better and became the Société pour le Suffrage des femmes (Women’s Suffrage Society). Auclert is also known for introducing the term *féminisme* in the 1880s in her journal, *La Citoyenne*, as a feminist platform to criticise male domination and to make claims for women’s rights and emancipation promised by the French Revolution. She lived in Algeria from 1888 to 1892 with her husband Antonin Lévrier. After his death, she returned to France.

<sup>4</sup> Malek Alloula, *The Oriental Harem*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.

hired models and fictitious studios. With these tools, they ingeniously carved their way into their imagined harems and entered beneath the women's veils to depict them in sumptuous oriental costumes and jewels, and beneath these costumes in order to photograph them in erotic semi-nude poses.

Consequently, photography is a double-edged technology deployed as an instrument of domination. As well as a tool of measuring colonial lands, it generated stories of the colonised people in the ways it preconceived them and not as they truly were. According to Anne McClintock, photography enabled Western knowledge and Western authority to become synonymous with the real.<sup>5</sup>

In this, photography surpassed Orientalist art in constructing the illusion of the Orient especially because while the latter was the privilege of a minority of art lovers and consumers, photography was accessible to all classes. Furthermore, while Orientalist art was mainly built on the artist's imagination photography functioned as a guarantee of the authenticity of the people and objects it represented since the lens of the camera could only replicate what it could see. Nevertheless, with the use of props and exotic arrangements, the created truth was different from the reality the photographs claim to represent.

According to Obergöker,

...la vérité dans l'Empire Colonial était différente de celle présentée sur les images. La photographie coloniale constitue, elle, la base de la carte postale coloniale, un moyen de propagande extrêmement efficace.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London: Routledge, 1995, p.122.

<sup>6</sup> Timo Obergöker, *Prise de possession: Storytelling, culture populaire et colonialism*, Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2016, p.173.

...the truth in the Colonial Empire was different from that presented in the images. Colonial photography is the basis of the colonial postcard, as an extremely effective means of propaganda.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, the represented women are the product of the photographer’s imagination in the same fashion as in Orientalist art, rather than a true to life image-story as it should to be. Obergöker insists that the colonial postcard represents a different reality as much as it must hide<sup>8</sup>, rendering it thus a most unreliable source of knowledge. Colonial photography is therefore a repository of fabricated image-stories that have more claim to reality than Orientalist art. This is especially accentuated when specific images fashioned by Orientalist art are replicated in photography as in the case of reproducing Delacroix’s *Femmes d’Alger dans leurs appartements* in so many photographic facsimiles.

Nevertheless, the production of these false stories, which were circulating as commercial postcards, turned into a very lucrative business. While they were often sent to friends and relatives in the metropolis as proof of the appropriation of the colony and its people, tourists who were less interested in landscapes and urban topography also procured them and posted them to friends and relatives as stories of their sexual exploits in their holiday location.<sup>9</sup> According to Safia Belmenouar and Marc Combier, such postcards had a specific audience as they were purchased by, “des potes qui s’intéressent moins aux paysages et à la topographie urbaine qu’à des questions plus basiques concernant les exploits sexuels de l’expéditeur...

---

<sup>7</sup> All translations are by the author.

<sup>8</sup> Obergöker, *Prise de possession*, p.174.

<sup>9</sup> See also, Christelle Taraud, *Mauresques: Femmes Orientales dans la photographie Occidentale*, Paris : Albin Michèle, 2003.

acquaintances who were not so much interested in landscapes and urban topography but had more rudimentary needs relating to their sexual exploits."<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the link between the exoticisation and the erotization of the Oriental woman was solidly embedded in the colonial mind-set to the point of becoming a major trait of colonial popular culture and story-telling much represented in the colonial postcard as the kernel of colonial propaganda central of which are native women. This obsession with the exoticised and eroticised Oriental female body not only symbolises the colonialists' insatiable quest for their illusory Orient, but also colonial control and penetration into the most intimate sites of the colonised subject's locations, rendering thus every intimate space a public domain that is open to everyone's view. This ardent act of penetration into the guarded private locations of the defeated population denotes a deep desire for taking possession of the conquered land and its people overcoming all obstacles and ramparts erected in their way. Accordingly, native women were seen as sexual outlets for the conquering soldiers,

La femme colonisée sert également à assouvir les besoins sexuels des hommes. Ce qui est représenté, c'est celle qui se mettra aux besoins du colonisateur pendant que tranquillement sa femme l'attendra en métropole. Il faut que la femme représentée soit à la fois accessible mais aussi docile, policée, rangée... or, nonobstant ces éléments de docilité et de tranquillité, elle n'en demeure pas moins un objet de fantasme sexualisé.<sup>11</sup>

The colonized woman is needed to satisfy the sexual desires of colonial men. What is represented is a woman who makes herself readily available for the needs of the colonizer during which time his wife awaits him quietly in metropolitan France. The woman represented must be accessible but also

---

<sup>10</sup> Safia Belmenouar and Marc Combier, *Bons baisers des colonies : Images de la femme dans la carte postale coloniale*, Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2007, p.94.

<sup>11</sup> Obergöker, *Prise de possession*, pp.174-175.

docile, polite, well-ordered... yet, these features of docility and tranquillity notwithstanding she remains an object of sexualized fantasy.

In her novel *Pierre sang papier ou cendre*, Maïsa Bey denotes the centrality of native Oriental women to the phantasms and deliria of the conquering soldiers. She explains how the conquered land and particularly its women became immediately synonymous with lust and voluptuousness:

Mais l’attrait le plus irrésistible, la fascination la plus grande, ce sont les femmes. Le désir d’Orient les pare de mystère...Comment pénétrer l’Orient autrement qu’en dévoilant le mystère, en dévoilant ses femmes, surnommées les interdites parce que jalousement gardées, soustraites au regard de l’étranger ? Plus couramment on les appelle les moukhères. Ou bien fatmas. Ou encore des mauresques, a la peau d’ambre et aux yeux de biche effarouchée sont au centre de bien des fantasmes.<sup>12</sup>

The most irresistible attraction, and the greatest fascination, are women. The desire for the Orient shrouds them in mystery... How can we penetrate the Orient other than by revealing the mystery, by revealing its women, nicknamed ‘the forbidden’ because they were jealously hidden from the gaze of all strangers? More commonly, they were called Mukhères, Fatmas, and Moorish. These amber-skinned women with shy deer’s eyes are at the centre of countless fantasies.

In the same vein, Judith Surkis explains how the French conquest of Algeria was sexualised from the outset. Reflecting on a colonial caricature titled *Le Sérail en émoi* (The seraglio astir) she explains how caricatures satirised the 1830 military expedition to Algiers as an erotic adventure: “Playing on fantasies of Algerian women and captive

---

<sup>12</sup> Maïsa Bey, *Pierre sang papier ou cendre*, La Tour d’Algues: Editions de l’Aube, 2008, p. 97.

‘white slaves’, shut up in harems and desperate for male attention, it depicted the soldiers’ seizure in carnal as well as martial terms.”<sup>13</sup>

In her book *La Prostitution coloniale: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, 1830-1962*, Christelle Taraud explains how the colonial postcard in all three Maghrebi countries, essentially depicts women likely to satisfy a certain sexual imagination of the conquerors. Often endowed with horrifying legends, which emphasize their curious sexuality, the postcard has a preference for a type of women directly drawn from Orientalist imagination. Consequently, the Moorish woman is depicted in mid-way between the white odalisque and the black slave featured in Orientalist art. Photographed in most exotic settings, they are portrayed as a pleasant-to-see new hybrid category of women with amber skin, who possess certain features of European femininity specifically those of women of light morals. Taraud contends:

La carte postale coloniale met en scène essentiellement des femmes susceptibles de satisfaire un certain imaginaire sexuel. Souvent dotée de légendes scabreuses soulignant l’aspect sexualisant de la chose, elle privilégie un type de femmes issues directement de l’imaginaire orientaliste, la Mauresque, femme à mi-chemin entre “l’odalisque blanche et l’esclave noire” de la peinture orientaliste. Cette nouvelle catégorie met en scène des hybrides agréables à voir qui possèdent, dans un décor exotique, certaines caractéristiques européennes des femmes aux mœurs légères.<sup>14</sup>

The colonial postcard essentially depicts women likely to satisfy a certain sexual imagination. Often endowed with rudimentary legends emphasizing the sexualizing aspect of the photographed subject, it favours a type of women

---

<sup>13</sup> Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Christelle Taraud, *La prostitution coloniale : Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, 1830-1962*, Paris :Payot, 2003, p. 298.

drawn directly from Orientalist imagination. The Moorish, is a woman halfway between the "white odalisque and the black slave" of Orientalist painting. This new category of art features pleasant-to-see hybrids who, set in an exotic backdrop, they possess some European characteristics of women with loose manners.

Such contradictory depictions reach an even more histrionic dimension when positioning these phantasmagorical images in juxtaposition with colonial stories, which describe the conquest's extreme violence towards native women. It is often the case that these imagined voluptuous women impatient for the landing of their rescuers, are also referred to as war booty, as subjects whose bodies became a battlefield that bears the inscriptions of rape and mutilation.

The memories of the horrors of the conquest could never disappear from the minds of the natives. Generation upon generation mothers and grandmothers told and retold the story of fumigates when people and oxen were suffocated in the caves where they were hiding from the attacking armies, and the story of genocide when inhabitants of entire villages were massacred before they were appropriated by the settlers.<sup>15</sup>

It is therefore trying to comprehend how after exposing these women and their people to this level of violence, colonial discourse shifts to depictions of these same women as the passive victims of their own barbaric and misogynist people from whom they were eagerly trying to save.

### **Hubertine Auclert and her Mission to Save Native Women**

The concept of saving women from their own men, and saving people in general from their own ways of life, is a central feature of the 'civilizing mission' narrative, which is essentially a racist concept based on the idea of the superiority of one group over

---

<sup>15</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, Paris: La Découverte, 2001, p.85.

another. Henceforth, in order to mark out the defeated people in the wake of the French conquest the native were designated as barbaric and dangerous not only against the invaders whom they fought in the most ferocious manner but also against themselves. The conquerors who occupied the land and impoverished its original owners have thus converted into civilisers who came with the noble mission of saving the natives from their barbarity by means of assimilating them into mainstream French culture. The French colonial authorities believed that this 'assimilisationist' policy would liberate Algerians from their supposed social and cultural 'backwardness' and 'savagery', which *defacto* assumes the inferiority of the conquered race. It was commonly conceived that North Africa would only become definitively part of the French Empire once the natives are fully conciliated and, to a certain extent, Frenchified. This ideology, was nevertheless, not only resisted by native Algerians as a direct and open attack on their religious and cultural identity, but also by the European settlers who did not believe in elevating the natives to their social level lest they demanded the same rights. Their aim was to keep the natives as an exploitable mass of people at their own service. This position resulted in sabotaging all efforts at assimilating and 'civilising' the natives, especially through the medium of education.

Motivated by her mission to save Algerian women French Feminist Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914) addressed the French parliament in the following terms:

Messieurs the Deputies, Messieurs the Senators,

I beg you, Messieurs to replace barbarism with civilisation on our African soil by ordering the abolition of polygamy to which Arab women are subjected by force and which is offensive to the whole female sex. I also ask you to forbid the marriage of young prepubescent girls.

I hope, Messieurs that you will be inspired by civilisation’s interests and will abolish the inhuman laws that govern the majority of French Africa’s inhabitants.<sup>16</sup>

Auclert’s work is the kernel of the current rhetoric about saving brown / Muslim women from their own men. This condition stipulates that native men are misogynist and oppressive of their own women, which is a motif established from the early days of the colonisation of Algeria. As much as women were exoticised as beauties imprisoned in the harem, men were vilified as merciless oppressors and as polygamous people whose sexuality is insatiable. Therefore, both men and women were sexualised from the onset albeit in different ways in which one is the sexual villain “who does nothing but gaze at his navel”<sup>17</sup>, and the other is the victim of veiling, seclusion, polygamy, and child marriage, and therefore in need of being saved.

Nevertheless, Algerian women have demonstrated throughout the colonial period that they enjoyed agency and have contributed effectively to the popular resistance against French incursion, and effectually contributed to the Algerian war of independence, which resulted in the liberation of their country in 1962. It is thought provoking therefore to see that the image of the Oriental victim of her vile men continues to persist in twenty first century Western imagination and rhetoric. An important motif that needs highlighting here is the fact that the colonialist mind-set is inflicted with stagnation and fixity on ideas and images that with time become obsolete. In effect, the preconceived view of the Oriental victim became exceptionally fixed to the point that accusing the Orient of being static only mirrors the unchanging convictions of

---

<sup>16</sup> Hubertine Auclert, *Arab Women in Algeria*, edited and translated by Jacqueline Grenez Brovender, Warsaw-Berlin: De Gruyter Open Ltd, 2014, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 37.

the occident vis-à-vis its imagined Orient. Bhabha explains this phenomenon as follows,

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as a sign of cultural/historical difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradox mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and in an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.<sup>18</sup>

Upon landing in Algiers for the first time, Auclert, in a similar manner to other European authors, was mesmerised by the colours of the Orient. The city she describes is a site of dazzling light and flawless beauty, which she hails as an exhilarating paradise. She is enthralled by the colours of the sea and the azure blue sky which contrasted the extreme whiteness of the Moorish buildings that characterise Algiers known then as 'Alger la Blanche'. Nevertheless, this beautiful fresco of pure colours is quickly interrupted by the appearance of ugly images of veiled native women: "One is immediately struck to see shocking bundles of dirty linen"<sup>19</sup>, says Auclert, who in reality were impoverished women draped in worn-out and dirty veils. Clearly shaken by what she saw Auclert engages in telling her story of the destitute native women which she opens with an emotional depiction as in the following passage:

These bundles move toward you, and then you notice that they are held by dusty feet, topped by a head so wrinkled, worn, furrowed, and hewn that it no longer is a human face; they are statues of suffering embodying a race tortured by hunger... Wives of evicted landowners, famished mouths unwanted by their tribe, these poor females wander, driven away from everywhere, hunted down,

---

<sup>18</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London-New York: Routledge, 2008, p.95.

<sup>19</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 1.

brutalized, insulted in all languages by all the races that have settled on their fathers’ lands.<sup>20</sup>

Although this emotive description is an expression of Auclert’s empathy towards these destitute women, she does not deprecate French colonialism or decry it as the direct cause of their suffering. Instead, she criticises the greed of the European settlers who while they have forcibly appropriated the natives’ land they did not contribute to France’s noble mission to civilise them. In other words, she saw Algeria as a legitimate part of France, and her denunciation of the settlers’ greed was by no means a rejection of colonialism. As a fervent believer in the *mission civilisatrice*, she saw its deployment in Algeria as an excellent opportunity for the emancipation of French women, but especially for the feminists of her likes to offer their services to Empire as active players in the mission to civilise the natives in return for their suffrage rights.

Deeply motivated by her feminist mission she criticised her government for deeming the Algerians uncivilised primarily for the way they treated their women while the condition of French women was not far better. France not only deprived its women from their citizenship rights, and excluded them from imperial politics, but also continued to oppress them and treat them with disdain. On this account, she published a statement in 1881 denouncing France’s double standards:

When the French cease to crush women with their despotism ... when the voters and the legislators cease to impose on women to which they have not

---

<sup>20</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 1.

consented; and finally, when the French treat women more humanly than the Arabs do, then they can speak of civilising the savages.<sup>21</sup>

As an imperialist feminist Auclert openly expressed her views in both her feminist journal *La Citoyenne* and her book *Les Femmes Arabes en Algérie* where she also questioned the validity of the French campaigns in Algeria and the strategizing of the conquest. For her, the colonisation of Algeria exposed the hypocritical ideologies that governed the political consciousness in France. In her account, she refutes the view that the natives were non-civilisable fanatics as was commonly established by the settlers. Instead she ascertains that it was not in the interest of the covetous settlers, whom she characterises as 'vultures' and 'locusts', to civilise the natives for they did not consider them worthy of civilisation, but a manpower to be ruthlessly exploited as daily labourers on what used to be their own land.

Auclert compares the vulnerability of the native population to French women, because they had no political voice or representation in their country's parliament to defend their rights. She argues that in this cycle of victimisation, while French women were the victims of their male counterparts who deprived them from their political rights, native women experience a double burden of victimisation as the victims of colonialism and of native men. Accordingly, in order to escape this condition of double victimhood native women would greatly benefit from the French assimilationist and civilizational project, as they would gain access to French education, which would enable them to become civilised and escape their fate of the victim's victim.

---

<sup>21</sup> "Protestation des femmes contre toutes guerres de conquête", *La Citoyenne*, May 1881. Cited in Carolyn J. Eichner, "La Citoyenne in the World: Hubertine Auclert and Feminist Imperialism". *French Historical Studies*, 32 (1), 2009, p. 75.

Auclert’s journal *La Citoyenne* expressed these views with more rigour. Articles examined the gendered conditions of Empire and contrasted the circumstances of French women with those of colonised women living under the wing of French Empire. Although, these articles often established that French women held a desirable position, Auclert and her fellow authors also underscored aspects of ‘uncivilized’ women’s lives and status that compared positively to those of French women. In some instances they also highlighted privileges enjoyed by Muslim women as for instance Algerian women received dowries and enjoyed their inheritance. They were also able to keep their family name upon marriage, and to file for divorce when they wished to end an abusive marriage, while French women could not.

*La Citoyenne* also questioned the assumptions of the époque such as ‘civilization’ versus ‘barbarity’, and critiqued issues of imperial domination and indigenous gender inequities and questioned France’s level of civilization under a code of laws that disenfranchised and subjugated its entire female population. Carolyn J. Eichner argues that under the direction of Auclert, *La Citoyenne* strove to disrupt the absolutes of ‘civilized’ France and ‘uncivilized’ colonies,

Embracing and amending the era’s anthropological hierarchies of civilization and race, Auclert and her contributors developed a feminist imperialism that challenged women’s oppression both in the metropole and in the colonies by subsuming cultural differences into a universalized French identity. Advocating a different sort of empire, she appropriated the imperial model and adapted it to her objectives.<sup>22</sup>

In *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie*, Auclert also notes that Algerian women have not always been passive victims secluded in harems. Based on her personal observations and a good knowledge of ethnographic books published on Algeria and its people,

---

<sup>22</sup> Eichner, “La Citoyenne in the World”, p. 63.

from which she draws substantially in her analysis, she became well cognisant about the roles Algerian women played in the military resistance against French occupation. She relates the stories about their heroic roles in battle and in encouraging their menfolk to fight the conquerors. She states, “These women have so very much helped their husbands defend their country against us every inch of the way.”<sup>23</sup>

Such stories abound in military accounts of the conquest. In 1844, Army General Eugène Daumas, reported in his book *La Femme Arabe*<sup>24</sup>, that when he asked Kabyle notables why they fought so ferociously against the French army, they responded that their wives threatened to reject them if they did not fight off the invaders. This story completely contradicts the circulating stories at the time of the conquest, which promoted preconceived widespread views that Algerian women were eagerly waiting the French conquerors’ arrival to free them from their seclusion.

As well as the valour of native women in their resistance to the occupants by inciting their husbands to fight the enemy, the conquering armies were astounded to see women fighters in the ranks of the Algerian armed resistance. Capitaine Carette testifies that Kabyle women enter the battlefield along with their brothers and husbands whom they encourage with their ululations. In addition to caring for the wounded and lifting the dead off the battlefield, they were also seen as combatants, right from the early years of the conquest. He reports,

In December 1834, a Kabyle woman served as a foot soldier in an attack against a cavalry charge; her body was discovered among the dead afterwards. In a military confrontation in 1835, fourteen women were killed or wounded. Finally in June 1836, I saw the widow of a Kabyle religious leader, who had

---

<sup>23</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> General Eugène Daumas, “La Femme Arabe”, *Revue Africaine : Journal des Travaux de la Société Historique Algérienne*, N.284 – 1<sup>er</sup> Trimestre, 1912, pp.101-102.

been killed the day before in combat, arrive at the head of a column of Berber warriors.<sup>25</sup>

Such scenes totally shattered the preconceived images of North African women held by French soldiers and the European public as the indolent beauties cloistered in harems. It was not easy for them to comprehend how such conservative communities allowed women to be part of military action. In his *Mémoires d'un officier d'état-major, Expédition d'Afrique* (1835),<sup>26</sup> Baron Barchou speaks of such women in a tone of horror and amazement.

Equally, Auclert while she deplores the horrific acts committed by French soldiers against native women as they cut their ears and wrists in order to snip their large solid gold or silver earrings and bangles, she notes that native women also used incredibly cruel methods to mutilate French soldiers.<sup>27</sup> On this same subject Perret, author of *Récits algériens 1848-1886*, describes a ghastly scene of a battle in the Zaatcha region south of Algeria as follows:

Zaatcha women were soon to join the male fighters exalting their courage by hideous cries [ululations]; only those who have seen these fiery girls of the desert at combat can understand this horror. These atrocious shrews did not just fill the air with their vociferous screams; they all carried daggers, which they used to finish off the injured French soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

In the same source, Perret also tells the story of the legendary Lalla Fatma Nsoumer (1830-1863), the war leader from the Zawiya al-Rahmaniya who rallied the Kabyle

---

<sup>25</sup> Capitaine Carette, “Algérie”, In *L'Univers Pittoresques, Histoire et Description de tous les Peuples, de leurs Religions, Mœurs, Coutumes, Industrie*, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1850, pp. 30-31.

<sup>26</sup> Baron Barchou De Penhoen, *Mémoires d'un officier d'état-major, Expédition d'Afrique*, Paris: Charpentier, 1935.

<sup>27</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> E. Perret, *Récits algériens 1848-1886*, Paris: Bloud et Barral, vol. 2, n.d., pp. 14-15.

region in an organised armed resistance against the French occupants. From 1851 until 1860, she organised and headed an army of men and women who resisted the French incursion into the Kabyle region and defeated General Randau’s armies in several battles, causing them the injury of 371 men and the death of 800, of whom 56 were high ranked officers.<sup>29</sup>

For this, and as suggested by Perret, native women have clearly not excitedly welcomed their French saviours but taught them a hard and hugely unexpected lesson in female bravery. In consequence, they have had to pay the price for combating along their menfolk against the occupants and most importantly for shattering their sexual myths about Oriental women. Referring to the women of the Zaatcha and the way they finished off the injured French soldiers, Perret explains how all native women were not to be regarded as women but were treated with a mix of disdain and suspicion.

---

<sup>29</sup> Lalla Fatma Nsoumer (1830-1863): Known in Algeria as Lalla Fatma Nsoumer, she was born on 10 July 1830 in the village of Werja in Kabylia. She is the daughter of Sidi Ahmed Mohammed, a notable Marabout who headed the Zawiya of Sidi Ahmed ou Mezyan in the nearby village of Soumer. Fatma studied the Qur’an and memorized the Qur’an and taught it to children, notably after the death of her father whom she succeeded along with her brother Si Mohand Tayeb in the running of the Zawiya as a centre of religious learning and a spiritual Sufi sanctuary. As a devoted person to such activities, Fatma soon earned her title of Lalla, meaning a marabout woman who possessed spiritual powers. Choosing to dedicate her life to learning and religious piety, she ended her marriage relationship with her maternal cousin Yahia nath Iboukhoullef, whom she married at age sixteen. This was happening at a time when the French armies organised an offensive to pacify the Kabyles who fought relentlessly to oppose the occupation. Taken by the urgency of the moment Fatma decided to launch the call for jihad from her religious position. She rallied to her cause all the mosques and Zawayas of the region and led an army of men and women in a well-structured rebellion against the occupants causing the French armies under General Randon several defeats. For more details see: Boukhalfa Bitam, *Fadhma N’Soumer: Une autre lecture du combat de l’illustre fille de Werja*, Tizi-ouzou: Aurassi, 2000, and Zahia Smail Salhi, ‘The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism,’ *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 33, No. 2, March-April 2010, pp. 113-124.

In his book *Histoire de l'Algérie 1830-1878*, Dieuzaide<sup>30</sup> describes the devastation of entire villages and the indiscriminate decimation of their inhabitants. He refers to acts of vandalism, which included killings, pillaging and burning down of the natives' homes and crops. Similarly, Army General Canrobert bears witness to the disastrous effects of a brutal attack during which French soldiers slit the villagers' throats, looted their possessions and raped the women. Likewise, Captain Lafaye reports that his troops ransacked a village and did not spare the lives of the elderly, the women or the children. He states that the most hideous thing is that they killed the women after they had raped them. Those women whose lives they had spared, they retained them as part of war booty and they exchanged them for horses or sold them as sex slaves.

Referring to these same women Auclert testifies, “Arab women kept as hostages were exchanged for horses or auctioned off like beasts of burden.”<sup>31</sup> Most damaging to these women, however, were the acts of rape, which were disseminated as acts of violence and dominance to humiliate the defeated population. The women who were damaged by the rape, those who lost their resources, and had no relatives to provide for them roamed the streets as beggars, whom Auclert dubbed ‘bundles of dirty linen’, while some of the younger ones were turned into prostitutes in the brothels set up in the service of French army soldiers.

Under these circumstances, it is clear that colonial France did not come to civilise women or to rescue them from their own people. Because their suffering was a direct consequence of French colonial incursion, it was hardly possible to reconcile the natives, men and women, with their aggressors who claim to have come to civilise them after conquering them in the most barbaric manner. Furthermore, civilisers of the likes of Auclert failed to understand that the Muslim woman did not exist as a

---

<sup>30</sup> V. A. Dieuzaide, *Histoire de l'Algérie 1830-1878*, Tome I, Oran: Imprimerie de l'association ouvrière -Heintz, Chazeau et Cie, 1880. p. 387.

<sup>31</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p.14.

separate entity from her menfolk and that like any other society Algerian people could not be divided on the basis of their genders. It is logically difficult to understand how it would be possible to rescue native women from native men who happen to be their very own people.

Nonetheless, as a republican woman who deeply believed that France came to Africa to civilise its people and to free them from their barbarity, Auclert did not question the civilizing mission’s political ideology. She argues that the only way to bestow the bounties of civilisation onto the natives is through their total assimilation, in other words their total surrender, and because the atrocities of the conquest were committed by French men, French women were better positioned to gain the trust of native women. She alleged that unlike native men whom she vilifies in every aspect, native women would be in favour of French assimilation: “How delighted they would be to express their support for assimilation!”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, speaking from her position of the superior civilised woman, she believed native women yearned to be similar to European women:

The dream of Muslim women whose lives are lived in inner courts and windowless houses is to be assimilated to French women and thereby escape the life of a recluse. They envy the European women’s lot as caged birds envy the life of birds free to fly in the sky.<sup>33</sup>

This statement not only betrays Auclert’s paternalistic position which assumes that European women were superior to native women simply because they were not ‘secluded’, but also demonstrates that she was not cognisant of native women’s needs and that vis-a-vis the French occupants their position did not differ from that of their male counterparts. What seems to have escaped Auclert’s understanding of native

---

<sup>32</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p.8.

<sup>33</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p.8.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

women is that their ‘needs’ and ‘dreams’ were far removed from hers and most importantly, that veiling and seclusion were not observed as a burden or a hindrance from which they needed to be liberated. Furthermore, the dreams of any colonised person could not be similar to those of their coloniser; ironically, while native women were steadfastly safeguarding national culture and identity in their homes from French acculturation, Auclert writes about their dream to become assimilated to French ways, which strips them from their agency as guardians of national culture and memory.

While we note Auclert’s attention to native women as having dreams and needs, her claims are fraught with an imperialist rhetoric and superior overtones. What is more, she dangerously slips into the perilous suggestion of deploying French women to reach those areas denied to French men. She argues that because French soldiers have subjected native women to disdain and extreme violence during the wars of ‘pacification’, the only way to reach these women and earn their trust is through French women. Not only so, but she openly offers to consolidate France’s project of assimilating the natives to French ways in return for French women’s suffrage rights. Often times, she highlighted the urgency for France to lead a sincere campaign of assimilation if it genuinely wanted to keep a stronghold in its colonies and asked the authorities to include French women in the colonial project of acculturation through penetration into the very intimate places where native women were actively preserving national culture. She explains how the benefits of assimilating Arab women are many folds greater than those of assimilating Arab men for obvious socio-political reasons. She also expounds that educating girls is more fundamental to the assimilation of the whole society. Girls assimilate right away whereas boys take much longer and therefore, their assimilation comes at a much higher cost.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

These views were first introduced by Madame Allix-Luce<sup>34</sup> through her colossal efforts to promote girls’ education in Algeria as a service to the French Empire. Having escaped an abusive relationship in France, she was one of the first French women to perceive Algeria as a land of opportunities and looked forward to a new beginning there. By the middle of the nineteenth century, she became a central figure in debates around educational policies concerning native Algerian girls. In July 1845, she founded the first school for Muslim girls in Algiers with personal funds. Practically single-handedly, she placed girls’ education on the colonial agenda as an effective means to change native morals, prejudices and habits, as quickly and as surely as possible. She convinced the authorities that any project for the assimilation of the natives into French culture would prove futile without involving native women whom she saw as central in the French civilising mission.

Madame Allix-Luce’s School offered French elementary education in reading, writing and mathematics and lessons in Arabic language and religion. It also had the mission to teach the young girls various other tasks to prepare them for housewifery including needlework, household chores, habits of cleanliness, and moral well-being. In the following statement, she harassed the authorities to provide her with funding to support her project:

As you well know, Mr. Minister, in Africa as well as in Europe, women are the most powerful force. If you convert [sic] to our civilisation 100,000 native girls of all classes and races in the regency [that is Algeria], they will, given the circumstances, have the privilege of becoming the wives of the most notable men of their class, thereby guaranteeing for ever *the subjection of this country*

---

<sup>34</sup> Eugénie Allix-Luce (1804-1882) a French schoolteacher who was born in Touraine in 1804 as Veronique Eugénie Berlau. In order to escape her abusive and violent husband Alexandre Allix, she entrusted her daughter to the care of her parents and fled to Algeria in 1832.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

to ours, and setting into motion the irreversible process of its future assimilation.<sup>35</sup>

Madame Allix-Luce’s argument was concurred by many colonial leaders who agreed that the condition of Muslim women was abject and morally inferior to their European counterparts and about the advantages, which the Government would derive from girls’ education and therefore its importance for the future of the colony. She insisted that only through an education that stressed values like work ethics, domesticity and female virtue would the native population aspire to leave backwardness and barbarity behind and embrace civilisation and progress.

In its early years, Madame Allix-Luce’s school held noble ideals and great ambitions for native girls, however by the 1870s civil authority replaced military rule in Algeria, inheriting a highly masculinist and deeply patriarchal culture that had no interest in girls’ education and did not believe in improving their conditions. This resulted in the shifting of French public opinion and the cutting of all sources of funding for girls’ schools. The authorities argued that too much education pulled young women from their social milieu, and preferred to have them taught crafts and subjects in housewifery. As a result, Madame Allix-Luce’s school having lost all sources of funding transformed into an *ouvroir*, which is a handcrafts and embroidery workshop.

Fascinated by Madame Allix-Luce’s ideas and trajectory Auclert echoed her views and developed them with more depth and vision. Deeply believing in the transformative power of French civilization to integrate the colonized populations of Algeria into a greater France she warned the authorities about the shortfalls of their efforts to educate and assimilate native men while their women worked unremittingly in the comfort of their homes to safeguard national culture rendering thus all assimilationist

---

<sup>35</sup> Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 64.

efforts inconsequential. It is the women, before the men, that should be targeted; By assimilating the women one would not only halt them in the first instance from interposing with the acculturation process but also, once assimilated, they would contribute efficiently to bring up a new generation of conformed male and female individuals.

For this, Auclert repeatedly hailed the work of Madame Allix-Luce, and exalted her courage and dexterity. She explains, how thanks to her clairvoyance, she managed to carve an original method to instil French culture in the minds of her female pupils through French language:

opening her pupils’ mind as well as directing their hands. While exposing them to the refinements of artistic embroidery and teaching them to follow or trace a drawing, a figure, or a cabalistic sign, she secretly teaches them to speak and write in French...This teaching gave so much to art and the French motherland. Foreign winter residents pay good money for this embroidery, which they carry away as souvenirs of African industry.<sup>36</sup>

It is surprising that Auclert, as a prominent feminist did not see any harm in the exploitation of the young girls who attended the *ouvroirs* without benefiting from the profits made from their own labour. On the contrary, she writes: “Arab thick-pile carpets...are so much in demand that a native vocational school was created in Algiers by Mme Delfau to manufacture them.”<sup>37</sup> In the same vein, having understood the market value of ‘Oriental goods’ within an imperial economy that extended well beyond France, Mme Allix-Luce “used her workshop and the embroideries produced by her pupils to attract foreign visitors and to seek foreign sales.”<sup>38</sup> She especially

---

<sup>36</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 39.

<sup>37</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, p. 39.

<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Rogers, *A Frenchwoman’s Imperial Story: Madame Luce in Nineteenth-Century Algeria*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 145.

targeted British tourists wintering in Algiers, and particularly sought out the company of British feminists famous among whom is Barbara Smith-Leigh Bodichon (1827-1891), and succeeded to carve for herself the image of the feminist benefactor who devoted her life and resources to help native women out of poverty and prostitution. Which of course did not make sense, as the girls in her school were not destitute orphans but had parents who cared for them and who criticised her workshops for their purely vocational nature and for ceasing to educate the girls in academic subjects. Furthermore, according to Marnia Lazreg concerned parents complained about exposing their young daughters to long hours at the loom, which made many among them withdraw them "for fear that the emphasis on weaving, which required the use of relatively heavy metal tools, and long hours spent sitting in the same position, might stunt their growth."<sup>39</sup>

In the same vein, Lazreg discusses the general lack of interest in native girls' education on the part of the colonial administration: "While they were concerned about the creation of a group of French-educated Algerian men to serve as their links with the native population, colonial leaders evinced no such interest in women."<sup>40</sup> She explains that this was expected as they had yet to recognise the principle of equality between men and women in their own society, let alone in the country, they had just colonised.

As a result, Algerian women became victims of France's anti-feminist positions and the denigration of women in France during the nineteenth century was replicated with even many more overtones of disdain and denigration in its colonies. Native women, as testified by Auclert herself, were not respected but were insulted by European men in the streets. They were homogenised as Moorish and were all given

---

<sup>39</sup> Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, p. 63.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

the sobriquet ‘Fatma’. Every native woman regardless of her status was perceived as a prostitute or as a servant in a settler’s house. It is interesting to note that this same sobriquet continues to be used even today in some racist French circles.

The women head teachers of the likes of Mme Allix-Luce and Mme Malaval<sup>41</sup> were not respected either. For many years, they battled against a stiff patriarchal colonialist culture, which often caused them personal harm leading them to give up their missions to ‘save native girls’. Likewise, after the death of her husband in 1892, Auclert gave up her project of saving Algerian women and returned to France, having saved no native girls or women. Her book *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie* contains no account of direct encounter with native women or any testimonies about their need to be saved.

Auclert’s *Arab Women in Algeria*, is an important document which contributes to the understanding of the workings of imperial feminism and perceptions of native women as needing saving from their own oppressive people and culture. Her greatest merit lays in being the first French woman to theorize the gendered nature of imperialism, and engage questions of empire from a feminist perspective. Her years in Algeria made her one of the first French thinkers to engage theoretically with empire from a feminist perspective resulting thus in a strong sense of feminist imperialism. As a far-sighted person, she was aware that by assimilating Algerian women France could assimilate the whole nation. On this basis, she laid the foundations for interwar French feminists, both through her use of her metropolitan-based Journal *La Citoyenne*, which she launched in 1888, and through her book *Arab Women in Algeria* where she told her story of trying to save native women. Furthermore, she succinctly spoke to Empire and passed the message to colonial administration that unless it earnestly adhered to its republican values and its assimilationist ideals it risked losing its African Eldorado. In her article ‘La citoyenne in the World: Hubertine Auclert and

---

<sup>41</sup> Mme Malaval is the head teacher in Amrouche’s school.

Feminist Imperialism’, Carolyn J. Eichner explains how *La citoyenne* emerged not only as France’s first suffragist newspaper but also as its first feminist periodical to address imperialism. She elucidates:

Shaped by her understandings of civilization, history, and race, Auclert’s republican universalism and Franco-assimilationism ultimately undervalued Arab women’s experiences, voices, and culture. Although she strove to ameliorate their conditions, she nonetheless appropriated their oppression to further her primary goal of French women’s full citizenship.<sup>42</sup>

Eichner contends that Auclert constructed a distinctive feminist imperialism with the intention of undermining existing colonial gender, race, and class hierarchies while simultaneously advancing the cause of metropolitan women’s suffrage.<sup>43</sup> This self-serving goal of suffrage in return for serving the Empire and not questioning the ethics of the latter’s colonial endeavours, compromised the feminist and humanistic missions of French feminism via-a-vis colonised women in general, and native Algerian women in particular.

Furthermore, portraying native women as needing saving and as the victims of their male folk strips them from all forms of agency, and condemns them to the status of the helpless passive victims who are incapable to defend themselves. Auclert’s republican universalism and Franco-assimilationism ultimately undervalued Arab women’s experiences, voices, and culture. She, along with her contemporary French feminists and educators, as well as French feminists in the first half of the twentieth century who also embraced the view of rescuing native women from their own people, were under the influence of the colonialist rhetoric of civilising the uncivilised natives and were therefore, speaking from a patronising position of superiority.

---

<sup>42</sup> Eichner, “La Citoyenne in the World”, p.72.

<sup>43</sup> Eichner, “*La Citoyenne* in the World”, p.65.

This trend continued well into the end of the colonial period. In 1933 French suffrage-seeker Jeanne Bottini-Houot indicated: “in our Algerian colonial domain, another sphere of activity is opening up to our feminist groups. This activity can be carried out in indigenous homes, where women have not yet lived in contact with European civilisation.”<sup>44</sup>

This activity of reaching into the natives’ homes intensified in the 1940s-1950s period, to which Frantz Fanon reacted by saying:

Beneath the patrilineal pattern of Algerian society, the specialists described a structure of matrilineal essence, Arab society has often been presented by Westerners as a formal society in which outside appearances are paramount. The Algerian woman, an intermediary between obscure forces and the group, appeared in this perspective to assume a primordial importance. Behind the visible, manifest patriarchy, the more significant existence of a basic matriarchy was affirmed. The role of the Algerian mother, that of the grandmother, the aunt and the ‘old woman’, were inventoried and defined. This enabled the colonial administration to define a precise political doctrine: ‘If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hid themselves and in eth houses where the men keep them out of sight.’<sup>45</sup>

Based on the centrality of women to the assimilation of any society, Fanon explains that to convert the woman, to win her to foreign values, to rescue her from her status, is both a means to have full control on the man and to have the practical and efficient

---

<sup>44</sup> Jeanne Bottini-Houot, “Le Féminisme en Algérie”, *La Française*, 15 July 1933, p.137.

<sup>45</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Trans. Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press, 1965, pp.37-38.

means to demolish Algerian culture and identity. In his book *A Dying Colonialism*, he elucidates how colonial administration deployed colossal funds to carry out this mission under the guise of philanthropic organisations:

Mutual aid societies and societies to promote solidarity with Algerian women sprang up in great number... This was a period of effervescence of putting into application a whole technique of infiltration, in the course of which droves of social workers and women directing charitable works descended on the Arab quarters. The indigent and famished women were the first to be besieged. Every kilo of semolina distributed was accompanied by a dose of indignation against the veil and the cloister.<sup>46</sup>

It is interesting to note that this same notion of saving Muslim women from their own people continues to manifest itself in the very same manner it emerged in the nineteenth century all through to the twenty first century. On 17 November 2001, First Lady Laura Bush addressed the nation, in a radio interview to justify US intervention in Afghanistan under the pretext of saving Afghan women. In her reaction to these claims Abu-Lughod explains that before one can speak about saving Muslim women, one needs to develop a serious appreciation of the differences that exist between women across the globe, as products of different histories, expressions of different circumstances, and manifestations of differently structured desires.<sup>47</sup>

Conversely, Fadhma's testimony through her life story is a true to life account about the shortcomings of the French assimilationist project, and the failure of the various missions to save the natives through French education or conversion into Christianity. What these missions have achieved is the disorientation and hybridisation of those

---

<sup>46</sup> Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p.38

<sup>47</sup> Lila Abu Lughod, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3, September 2002, pp. 783-790.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

natives whom they tried to save while their true objective was to serve the empire and French colonialism. Maïsa Bey testifies on the back cover of her novel;

Algérie 1830-1962 : pendant 132 ans, madame Lafrance s'est installée sur ‘ses’ terres pour y dispenser ses lumières et y répandre la civilisation, au nom du droit et du devoir des ‘races supérieures’. Face à elle, l'enfant, sentinelle de la mémoire, va traverser le siècle, témoin à la fois innocent et lucide des exactions, des spoliations et des entreprises délibérées de déculturation, jusqu'à la comédie de la fraternisation.<sup>48</sup>

Algeria 1830-1962: for 132 years, Madame Lafrance settled on ‘her’ lands to bestow her lights and spread civilization, in the name of the right and the duty of ‘superior races’. In front of her, the child, sentinel of memory, will cross the century, witness both innocent and lucid of the exactions, the spoliations and the deliberate undertakings of acculturation, all the way to the comedy of fraternization.

### ***Histoire de ma vie: the Story of a Native Woman’s Odyssey for Salvation***

According to Adriana Cavarero each one of us “without even wanting to know it, is aware of being a narratable self, immersed in the spontaneous auto-narration of memory”.<sup>49</sup> When Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche (1882-1968)<sup>50</sup> started narrating the story of her life, she unconsciously engaged in a process of conducting narrative research, which resulted in first-hand knowledge about an epoch and a topic that remain to this very day hugely understudied. No other North African female author had done a work similar to hers beforehand. Through the writing of her life story, she

---

<sup>48</sup> Maïsa Bey, *Pierre sang papier ou cendre*, p. back cover.

<sup>49</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Fadhma is the Kabyle equivalent of Fatma.

engaged in a process of meaning making. As a result, she delivered a wealth of first-hand data about nineteenth century girls' education, ethnographic data about the day-to-day life and the livelihoods of the native people, the work of Christian missionaries in the Kabyle region, as well as the truth behind conversion to Christianity and the eternal suffering of the converts. Additionally, she also engaged in giving voice to the many girls and women of her generation, some of whom she mentioned in her book. This manner of giving and retrieving the voices of the voiceless is according to Petra Hendry one of the driving forces in narrative research. She explains how narrative "provided a way to add stories that had traditionally been excluded from educational research"<sup>51</sup>; not only so, but storytelling and literature in general supplement historical records with the human side of the recorded events by describing feelings and emotions. Furthermore, while the focus of history is 'important' people or historical actors and heroes, storytelling is more inclusive since it records the lives and voices of all people and attempts to provide some corrective to the 'grand' narrative. Hence, the act of giving voice to the voiceless through narrative research is a means of "providing a method for 'telling stories', giving voice to those traditionally marginalized, and providing a less exploitative research method than other modes"<sup>52</sup> Hendry elaborates:

Narrative research has held out the promise of providing a more complex and complete picture of social life. Furthermore, it highlights the ways in which culture and society shape and are shaped by individual lives. It also provides what seems like a more egalitarian research relationship that honors the intersubjective modes of knowledge production.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Petra Munro Hendry, "The Future of Narrative", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 2007 (pp.487-498), p. 491.

<sup>52</sup> Hendry, p. 489.

<sup>53</sup> Hendry, p. 489.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

The primary occupation of Narrative research has been the project of ‘capturing experience’, and in the case of life writing, the writer strives for truth and not fiction, and deeply engages in the act of meaning making.

As it were, Fadhma Amrouche did not keep a regular diary where she recorded her life happenings as a day to day account but resorted to memory to extract the events that marked her life after she was encouraged by her son, the poet Jean Amrouche to bear witness to a remarkable and unique life trajectory worth recording and sharing. In a letter he sent to her on 16 April 1945, he begged her to begin the writing and to pay great attention to all the details of her life: “I appeal to you once more. You must write down every single thing that you can remember about your life, not just as the mood takes you, or according to the inspiration of the moment, but everything...I beg you, little mother, think seriously about my request.”<sup>54</sup>

Fadhma started the writing process in 1946 while she and her family lived in exile in Tunis. She dedicated the work to two very important women in her life, the first is her beloved mother whom she hailed as a symbol of steadfastness and wisdom, and the second is Mme Malaval, the head teacher of her school to whom she is indebted for her education and her spiritual life.<sup>55</sup>

The life story that Fadhma narrates is not just a personal account but also the story of a whole region whose women, being illiterate in their vast majority, were unable to record their own stories. Therefore, Fadhma’s life story is also a native woman’s account about girls’ education, the truth about the missionaries and their rapport to the natives, as well as the French civilising mission and its influence on herself and her contemporaries.

---

<sup>54</sup> Fadhma Ait Mansour Amrouche, *Histoire de ma vie*, first published by Librairie François Maspero, Paris, 1968. Translated into English by Dorothy Blair as *My Life Story*, London: The Women’s Press Limited, 1988, p.192.

<sup>55</sup> *My Life Story*, p.193.

This rare account not only intersects with Auclert’s book on the women of Algeria by citing names of people and places she also referred to, but offers a counter narrative to some events, which is explained by the fact the two women were writing their stories from two opposing angles. It is most interesting to read how these two authors narrate the same events and speak about the same topics while one is writing from the position of the coloniser and the other from that of the colonised.

Born in 1882 as the illegitimate child of a young widow who lost her husband at the age of twenty-two, Fadhma was rejected by her co-villagers as the child of sin. Although the narrative exposes the reader from the onset to the harsh and restrictive Kabyle customs it also very quickly shatters the image of the passive native woman, or “the bundles of dirty linen” described by Auclert. Fadhma’s mother, like most women in rural Kabylia, was not a prisoner of the harem but a woman who worked in the fields and therefore did not wear a *haik*. This image reverses the stereotype of native women being all exactly alike, and the tendency to homogenise them as being veiled and needing to be freed from their veils and their seclusion. In effect, those women whom Europeans called the prisoners of the harem were the category of privileged women who were not required to work in the fields or travel distances to fetch water from the fountain, or collect firewood from the forest. In the Kabyle region, the only women who were spared such chores were the wives and daughters of wealthy notables.

Furthermore, although Kabyle customs are unforgiving: “when a woman transgresses she must disappear,”<sup>56</sup> which dispels the myth of Kabyle women enjoying more freedom than their Arab sisters do, this does not mean that these women helplessly give in to such customs but they ferociously resist them. Fadhma’s mother, Aïni is portrayed as a resilient and powerful woman who defied traditions and withstood the threats of her brothers and her in-laws on equal measure. As a young widow with two sons from her late husband and a daughter born out of wedlock, she stood her ground

---

<sup>56</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 5.

and refused the protection of any male relative. Instead of bowing to the commands of her in-laws to hand over her sons to them and return to her parents' home to live under the protection of her brothers, she decided to stay put in her deceased husband's house, farm her land, and provide for her family from her own labour.

Likewise, when Aïni entered a relationship with her neighbour whose family did not allow him to marry her despite impregnating her, she lodged a complaint with the public prosecutor asking him to acknowledge Fadhma as his daughter. She harassed the colonial magistrates for three years but since the law at that time did not allow the establishment of paternity, Fadhma was condemned to live as the child of sin. Instead, Fadhma's father was sentenced to pay the sum of 300 francs as damages to her mother, but proud and defiant, Aïni turned down the money. Fadhma describes her mother as a brave-hearted woman whom she remembers saying in all boldness, "The tattooing on my chin is worth more than a man's beard!"<sup>57</sup>

Aïni worked indoors and outdoors, day and night to provide for her three children singlehandedly. All along, she also battled against those who wanted to cause harm to her daughter. Fearing for her safety, she entrusted her to the Catholic nuns at the Ouadhias village, known as the White Sisters, at the age of three and she stayed with them for one year (1885-1986). Fadhma's memories of this phase are mostly unhappy and only include episodes of ill-treatment and severe chastisement such as when the nuns had bathed her in icy water for having wet her bed, and when they flogged her until she bled. Angry and disenchanted Aïni decided to take her daughter home. She told the nuns: "Was it for this that I entrusted my daughter to you? Give her back to me!" Fadhma narrates:

The nun undressed me, even stripping me of my chemise. My mother took off her headscarf, knotted two corners together over my shoulder, pinned the

---

<sup>57</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 9.

material together on the other shoulder with a large thorn, by way of a clasp, untied her wide woollen girdle...and lifted me on her back.<sup>58</sup>

The whipping episode was so traumatic that Fadhma associates her mind image of her first encounter with the nuns to a whip being part of their attire, “I have very little memory of this period of my life. Pictures, nothing but pictures. First, that of a very tall woman, dressed all in white, with black beads. Another object made of knotted rope hung next to the rosary-probably a whip.”<sup>59</sup>

The next station in Fadhma’s life story is the orphanage at the Tadder-ou-Fella village, which also operated as a girls’ school. It was founded between 1882 and 1884, a period when the first French schools for boys were opened in the Kabyle region. Fadhma went to this school from 1887 to 1897, which coincides with the time when Auclert sojourned in Algeria from 1888-1892. Her autobiography provides significant first-hand knowledge and vital eyewitness discernments into the workings of such schools from the perspective of one of their native pupils. She speaks about the circumstances that surrounded the launch of the village school. Her description of the recruitment of the pupils resonates with Auclert’s advice on how to recruit pupils for French colonial schools, a method also applied by the British in Egypt and Sudan as described by Tayeb Salih in his seminal novel *Season of Migration to the North*.<sup>60</sup> Disappointed about the low numbers of native children who attended French schools Auclert advised that: “...the French ...would do well to imitate Egypt’s viceroy Mahomed Ali who had children picked up in the streets and public squares to take them to school.”<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to see that this same method was used to recruit children for the newly opened school in Taddert-ou-Fella in Kabylia. According to Fadhma:

---

<sup>58</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, London: Heinemann, 1969.

<sup>61</sup> *Arab Women in Algeria*, pp. 41-42.

He (M. Sabatier) summoned all the *kaïds* (Caïds), cavalrymen and rural police in his area and asked them to ride through the *douars* (villages) and collect as many girls as possible. The *kaïds* and the horsemen set off, with the rural police, who set the example by bringing their own daughters.<sup>62</sup>

The result of this launch is a mixed bag of destitute orphans, children whose impoverished parents could not provide for them, and the well-off daughters of the Caïds. There were also some European girls but they had a separate dining room and a separate dormitory, which shows the segregation in the living conditions of the European and the native pupils. Fadhma describes the pitiable sleeping conditions in the ice-cold dormitory as well as the poor quality of the food they ate: “black coffee for breakfast, with a piece of bread; for our midday meal, lentils full of grit, haricot beans, rice or split peas.”<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the poverty of the school and the harsh living conditions, Fadhma kept fond memories about the ten years she spent there. Unlike the infamous *ouvroirs*, where girls were exploited for their handcrafts, Fadhma’s school taught a good array of academic subjects such as French language, history, geography and biology in addition to the handcrafts as a supplementary subject once a week. She recounts with pride how she fully engaged with some topics while she did not like some others, which is quite revealing. For example, while she could never remember all the Departments and Districts in France, which were both unknown to her and far removed from her Kabyle environment, she loved the French language dearly. However, even then she failed to understand French proverbs and maxims, because they were not accessible to her culturally. Enormous efforts were deployed to frenchify all the pupils, not solely through teaching them subjects that did not take their own native cultural environment into account, but also by Gallicising their first names: “We had all been given French names, as there were too many Fadhmas,

---

<sup>62</sup> *My Life Story*, pp.10-11.

<sup>63</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 12

Tassadits and Dahbias.”<sup>64</sup> While Fadhma, who was given the name Marguerite at school, did not think much of this practice and saw it more as part of the school’s protocol, Marnia Lazreg argues that this practice was part of France’s method to assimilate native women and a means to Frenchify/Gallicise Algeria. Lazreg refers to the work of Camille Sabatier, a former judge in the city of Tizi Ouzou in Kabylia who in 1882 prohibited Kabyle women from tattooing their faces, because tattoos were repugnant to Frenchmen. Furthermore, “To make Kabyle women more attractive to his compatriots, Sabatier proposed that the governor of Algeria issue a decree permitting the gallicization of Kabyle women’s first names,”<sup>65</sup> which would facilitate the unions between these ‘elite’ women and young Frenchmen in Algeria. This said, and as much as such unions were sought after by the advocates of assimilation, marriages between Kabyle women and European men in the nineteenth century were unheard of while marriages between Kabyle men and French women began to take place in the twentieth century following their economic migration to France from 1910 onward. A first literary mention of such unions is to be found in Mouloud Feraoun’s *La Terre et le Sang*,<sup>66</sup> where Amer who returns to his homeland after spending many years as an immigrant worker in France, brings home a French wife named Marie whom the villagers adopted as ‘Madame’. It is worth mentioning that Marie had no impact on the life of the villagers. Instead, she conformed to Kabyle culture and looks.

Despite the Kabyle myth theory that promoted the view that Kabyle people were similar to Europeans and more accepting of assimilation, facts on the ground prove that they were much attached to their customs and very reluctant to accept French ways. For that, they resisted French education and schooling in the same way as did all Algerians, be they Arab or Berber. Although Fadhma’s school was seen as a success

---

<sup>64</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 12

<sup>65</sup> Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence*, p.49.

<sup>66</sup> Mouloud Feraoun’s *La Terre et le Sang*, Paris : Le Seuil, 1953.

story and therefore a show place visited by tourists, and a succession of members of the French government, including Jules Ferry, this success was down to the devotion and hard work of its head teacher, Mme Malaval who having recently lost her husband and son devoted herself wholeheartedly to native girls’ education. Despite numerous difficulties, her school succeeded to motivate the girls to study for their *certificat d’études* to become schoolteachers although success rates were extremely low among the native girls. She testifies: “in 1895 four or five of us took the examination for the elementary diploma. Although at least one of us was very well prepared, we all failed.”<sup>67</sup> The exam took place in Algiers, and the girls were asked to dress in regional costumes, looking thus rather conspicuous. Fadhma explains how this exoticisation of the candidates caused a roar among the natives, which led to a temporary closure of the school. Mme Malaval’s realisation was therefore short-lived as the authorities quickly turned against her and decided to close her school.

Deeply disillusioned Fadhma reports that while people across the Muslim world started to demand the emancipation of Muslim women, girls’ schools in French Algeria were very scarce and were not taken seriously. Although she had hoped that the colonial administrator, Meur Masselot, who came to visit her school, could intervene in favour of the hardworking girls, she was flabbergasted to learn that he supported its imminent closure: “He had us stand in rows and said: ‘I can’t help you. If you were men I’d issue you with a burnouse and give you a job in the police or the horse regiment, but you are girls...’ And he added nonchalantly: ‘*they’re pretty, they’ll get married...!*’”<sup>68</sup> Masselot’s statement resonates with the motivation behind the vocational workshops for native girls, according to which the only role girls’ education should play is to prepare them to become good homemakers. The girls at the school rebelled and were deeply angered by Masselot’s verdict. Fadhma describes their vain attempts to seek help by writing to various authorities and organisations

---

<sup>67</sup> *My Life Story*, p.19.

<sup>68</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 18

including “the English women to ask if they would take them, but they got no reply.”<sup>69</sup> While it is not clear who these English women were they may be the women of the Methodist mission who was at that time operating in the Kabyle region.

Out of her own savings, Mme Malaval kept the school going for another six months. In a tone of admiration, Fadhma describes her genuine dedication to native girls’ education and her battle to keep the school running. She says, “Mme Malaval ...moved heaven and earth, writing to members of the government and any influential persons who might help her. Eventually she got her way in 1893. It was decided that the Orphanage should be taken over by the state and renamed a ‘Normal School’.”<sup>70</sup> This however, did not give it stability for too long as two years later the girls were yet again sent home. Mme Malaval understood that she had fallen out of favour with the authorities because she believed in training native girls academically to become schoolteachers, while the norm was to train them in crafts and housewifery. After much pressure Mme Malaval had to step down from her position and a more conforming headmistress named Mme Sahuc, took her place. With much sadness, Fadhma concludes, “...we were not to be educated in the same way any longer: we were not to be trained to become primary school teachers.”<sup>71</sup> Instead, Mme Sahuc brought in bales of wool so that the girls learn to spin and weave. Fadhma who disliked weaving felt very disillusioned, especially so when at the end of the year, the school had to close permanently and the girls were sent home for good. The fate of Fadhma’s school is similar to that of Mme Allix-Luce’s, which having lost all financial support from the authorities transformed into a lucrative *Ouvroir*.

Feeling rejected by her ‘civilisers’ Fadhma decided to rid herself of the veneer of civilisation she had acquired at school. She concluded: “Since the *Roumis* (the French)

---

<sup>69</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 18

<sup>71</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 28.

had rejected us, I resolved to become a Kabyle again.”<sup>72</sup> Her time back home was a learning process to become a true Kabyle woman. She asked her mother to teach her everything she knew in order to second her in every task she performed. Through this process, she not only delved into Kabyle heritage, crafts and culture, but most importantly, she reconnected with her mother and strengthened her bond with her. Not only did Fadhma learn about her native culture which she describes in minute detail, providing thus valuable ethnographic knowledge about nineteenth century Kabyle life, but she also was told the truth about why she was the only girl in the village to have been sent to the ‘Christians’, gaining therefore awareness about her social status as an outcast. It became clear to her that being the child of sin and having been sent to the White Sisters and subsequently to French school compromised her prospects to find a suitable Kabyle husband as advised by Meur Masselot. Fadhma narrates: “The inspector who has said, ‘They’re not bad-looking, they’ll get married,’ did not know that the Kabyle man instinctively mistrusted an educated woman.”<sup>73</sup> This was so because they were not educated in their vast majority and while they generally mistrusted French education, it did not befit an illiterate man to marry an educated woman.

Seeing Fadhma’s vulnerability as an ‘orphan’ with little prospects of success in her village, the nuns had sent for her to join their mission in the Aït Mengueleth hospital where they employed her in the linen room. Having studied at a secular school, she found the religious aura that reigned in her new environment rather overwhelming: “Everyone kept talking about God, everything had to be done for the love of God, but you felt you were spied upon, everything you said was judged and reported to the Mother Superior.”<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 30.

<sup>73</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> *My Life Story*, p. 46.

Ending up as the linen girl in a missionary hospital living in a gruesome environment and in dreadful conditions was anything but being an enviable position for a girl whose French education could have destined her for a better future. What ensued was her conversion to Christianity in order to marry Belkacem Amrouche, a fellow educated Kabyle young man who was converted to Christianity at the missionary school without the consent of his family. Having fallen out with his parents the Christian fathers arranged for him to marry Fadhma. Together they lived as outcasts in the midst of their own Muslim people. Despite their French education, they spent their life struggling to make ends meet which led them to exile enduring a life of hardship and alienation.

At the end of her autobiography Fadhma writes, "I have always remained 'the Kabyle woman'; never, in spite of my basically French education, never have I been able to become a close friend of any French people...I remain for ever the eternal exile, the woman who has never felt at home anywhere."<sup>75</sup> In contrast, her illiterate mother is portrayed as a much happier woman. She is strong and a full agent who said no to customs and patriarchal rule. With much pride, she took charge of herself as a young widow with young children whom she raised singlehandedly. She never suffered from hunger but reaped the fruit of her labour and looked after her home as well as her fields. In her old age, she turned to religion, as is the way among the Kabyles, and led a pious life. From Fadhma's account, Aïni was never in need to be saved from anything or by anyone; she defended herself against her in-laws and brothers, and went to the authorities when she needed to sue her daughter's biological father. She reproached the nuns for ill-treating her daughter and decided to remove her from their care when they ill-treated her. She also made the decision to send her to school and gave her the choice on whether to go and work in the hospital or accept a marriage proposal and settle in her village. What is most important in all this is that Aïni is depicted as being always content and self-sufficient.

---

<sup>75</sup> *My Life Story*, p. xii.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

Fadhma’s story demonstrates that although she was put right in the midst of missions that were supposedly destined to save native women, she was not saved in any way. More than the girls who were not exposed to French acculturation she suffered endlessly from a plethora of setbacks in addition to the pains of exclusion, alienation, and exile.

### **Conclusion**

In this essay, I have used stories told by various narrators as a means to capture the truth about the colonial missions to save native women. Auclert’s book narrates her story of saving the Muslim women of Algeria. Her views on saving native women from their own barbaric men became a deeply anchored Orientalist motif in the Occidental mind-set to the point that images of native women, as victims of their vile men became a reasoning for colonialist intervention, and a major impetus behind the French civilising mission. Such views became a leitmotif, which persists in twenty first century Western imaginings.

As a counter narrative, Amrouche’s testimony through the telling of her life story is the earliest recorded account of a North African woman’s encounter with French colonialism between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is an account of ‘redemption’ through French education, assimilation of French language and culture, followed by conversion to Catholicism, while continuing to live in the midst of her own Muslim people. All along her biographical story, Fadhma testifies to the anguish and estrangement of the people of her category who while they were exposed to campaigns of ‘civilising’ and ‘saving’, their suffering was many folds deeper than that of those who were not directly exposed to such saving campaigns.

The data we found in these stories as testimonies of a bygone epoch, which remains severely understudied, has revealed that as argued by Lewis “we come to know our selves through the world and its stories [and] we come to know the world through



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

our experiences and our stories” (Lewis, 2007, p. 11). Fadhma’s life story is not solely a narrative about one woman’s life but an invaluable document for research as it provides a very complex and wholesome picture of social life in Algeria under French colonial rule. Reading it in juxtaposition with colonial stories, it demystifies myths and misconceptions about the people but especially the women it represents with unfaultable detail. Here, I would like to endorse Hendry’s view that “Through telling our lives we engage in the act of meaning making. This is a sacred act. Stories are what make us human. Our narratives, be they life stories, autobiographies, histories, sciences, or literature are the tales through which we constitute our identities. We are our narratives”<sup>76</sup>.

Arguing for storytelling as a medium for research we have seen that the stories we have discussed in this essay aside of the records of formal history allowed us to look into accounts and images of Algerian women in the nineteenth century which are nowhere to be found in the pages of official history.

---

<sup>76</sup> Hendry, p. 495.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

## References

Abu Lughod, Lila, ‘Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others’, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3, September 2002, pp. 783-790.

Alloula, Malek, *The Oriental Harem*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.

Amrouche, Fadhma Aït Mansour, *Histoire de ma vie*, first published by Librairie François Maspero, Paris, 1968.

Amrouche, Fadhma, *My Life Story*, Trans. Dorothy Blair, London: The Women’s Press Limited, 1988.

Auclert, Hubertine, *Arab Women in Algeria*, edited and translated by Jacqueline Grenez Brovender, Warsaw-Berlin: De Gruyter Open Ltd, 2014.

Belmenouar, Safia and Marc Combier, *Bons baisers des colonies : Images de la femme dans la carte postale coloniale*, Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2007.

Benjamin, Walter, “The Storyteller”. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations*, Trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana/Collins, 1973, pp.83-109.

Bey, Maïsa, *Pierre sang papier ou cendre*, La Tour d’Algues: Editions de l’Aube, 2008.

Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London-New York: Routledge, 2008.

Bitam, Boukhalfa, *Fadhma N’Soumer: Une autre lecture du combat de l’illustre fille de Werja*, Tizi-ouzou: Aurassi, 2000.

Bottini-Houot, Jeanne, “Le Féminisme en Algérie”, *La Française*, 15 July 1933.

Carette, Capitaine, “Algérie ”, In *L’Univers Pittoresques, Histoire et Description de tous les Peuples, de leurs Religions, Mœurs, Coutumes, Industrie*, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1850.

Cavarero, Adriana, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

Daumas, General Eugène, “La Femme Arabe”, *Revue Africaine : Journal des Travaux de la Société Historique Algérienne*, N.284 – 1<sup>er</sup> Trimestre, 1912.

De Penhoen, Baron Barchou, *Mémoires d’un officier d’état-major, Expédition d’Afrique*, Paris : Charpentier, 1935.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

Dieuzaide, V. A., *Histoire de l'Algérie 1830-1878*, Tome I, Oran: Imprimerie de l'association ouvrière -Heintz, Chazeau et Cie, 1880.

Eichner, Carolyn J., “La Citoyenne in the World: Hubertine Auclert and Feminist Imperialism”. *French Historical Studies*, 32 (1), 2009.

Fanon, Frantz, *A Dying Colonialism*, Trans. Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press, 1965.

Fanon, Frantz, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, Paris: La Découverte, 2001.

Feraoun, Mouloud, *La Terre et le Sang*, Paris : Le Seuil, 1953.

Hendry, Petra Munro, “The Future of Narrative”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 2007, pp.487-498.

Lazreg, Marnia, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*, New York: Routledge, 1994.

McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Obergöker, Timo, *Prise de possession : Storytelling, culture populaire et colonialism*, Würzburg : Verlag Königshausen &Neumann GmbH, 2016.

Perret, E., *Récits algériens 1848-1886*, Paris: Bloud et Barral, vol. 2, n.d.

Roggers, Rebecca, *A Frenchwoman's Imperial Story: Madame Luce in Nineteenth-Century Algeria*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Salih, Tayeb, *Season of Migration to the North*, London: Heinemann, 1969.

Smail Salhi, Zahia, ‘The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism,’ *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 33, No. 2, March-April 2010, pp. 113-124.

Surkis, Judith, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019.

Taraud, Christelle, *La prostitution coloniale : Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, 1830-1962*, Paris, Payot, 2003.



Zahia Smail Salhi, “Stories at War: Images of Algerian Women From Colonial Accounts to the Life Story of Fadhma Amrouche”, *New Area Studies* 2:1 (2021), 139-184.

Taraud, Christelle, *Mauresques: Femmes Orientales dans la photographie Occidentale*, Paris : Albin Michèle, 2003.

Young, K., & Saver, J. L., “The Neurology of Narrative”. *SubStance: A review of theory and literary criticism*, 30, (1 & 2), 2001, pp. 72-84.