This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

THE PRODUCTION OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN IN WESTERN GNOSIS FEMINIST THEORY AND MAGHREBIAN NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE

presented by

LAMIA BENYOUSSEF

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in ENGLISH

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Major professor

Date APRIL 22, 2002

THE PRODUCTION OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN IN WESTERN GNOSIS, FEMINIST THEORY, MAGHREBIAN NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

2002

ABSTRACT

THE PRODUCTION OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN IN WESTERN GNOSIS, FEMINIST THEORY, MAGHREBIAN NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE

By

Lamia Ben Youssef

There are four major arguments in this dissertation. The first is that as a single category, the "Muslim woman" is an invention, whether in the Western discourses of Orientalism and psychoanalytic feminism, or in the Maghrebian discourses of nationalism and Islamic feminism. The second claim is that "the Muslim woman" is a semiotic subject who is constantly being produced, transformed, or reinvented for various political ends. The third argument is that cultures are invented and maintained to express relations of power. Finally, against Edward W. Said's presentation of Orientalism as a homogeneous and unified discourse that aims at dominating the Orient, the present study argues that the discourses on the "Muslim woman" and the Orient are always ambivalent. This ambivalence is caused by the enunciator's location within an apparatus of power, as she/or he negotiates a position from which to speak.

This study is a hybrid work that combines Western and Islamic feminist theory as well as psychoanalytic and historicist approaches. Going beyond the ghetto of ethno-theory, this study tries to overcome the shortcomings and limits of any single one approach. There are five chapters in this dissertation. The first chapter focuses on Fatima Mernissi's feminist reinvention of the "Muslim woman" and questions her use of a Freudian paradigm to analyze the psyche of Muslim society. Examining the production of the "Muslim woman" in the discourse of female Orientalism, the second chapter

argues that Isabelle Eberhardt's ambivalence towards the "Muslim woman" and the French civilizing mission in the Maghreb depends on her position inside/outside the French imperial world. Chapter three discusses the viability of French feminist and psychoanalytic theory in the North African context and argues that these discourses derive sometimes from the same Orientalist impulse we find in the male Orientalism discussed by Said. The fourth chapter tries to reconceptualize the relations between gender, nation, home, and identity in the nationalist discourses of Tahar al Haddad and Habib Bourguiba in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia. A subject of the Islamic *umma* in the writings of al Haddad, the "Tunisian woman" came to occupy, under the paternalistic authority of Bourguiba, a double position as a subnational subject of the *Shari'a* law and a citizen of the modern state. The last chapter argues that the House of the Prophet has always been deployed as a technology of power. Because it is constantly being claimed by the hegemonic and marginal groups, the script of domesticity underlying this powerful Muslim symbolic has always been plural and unstable. Deployed as an instrument of political legitimacy by the Abbasid dynasty, this symbolic became a metaphor for corruption and political absolutism in Abul Alâ al Ma'arri's *The Epistle of Forgivness* (1032), a critique of social disparities in postcolonial Tunisia in Aroussia Naluti's *Al Tawba* (1992), a metaphor for Islam's sexual oppression of women in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and a means of self-empowerment in Assia Djebar's feminist novel *Loin de Médine* (1991).

To my parents, my children, and my husband

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and assistance of many people, and I would like to express here my heartfelt gratitude.

I wish to thank in particular the two directors of my dissertation Dr. Kenneth W. Harrow and Dr. Salah Dean Assaf Hassan for their guidance and encouragement during the wonderful yet hard process of writing this dissertation. I am grateful in particular to Dr. Harrow for introducing me to postcolonial literature and French psychoanalysis and feminism. My acquaintance with Dr. Harrow and his family rekindled my faith in humanism and in the need to cross the boundaries of race, religion, and nation at a time when right wing nationalist movements are dangerously gaining momentum worldwide. I am equally grateful to Dr. Hassan for deepening my knowledge of Arabic and Islamic studies and for pushing me to gain a critical perspective vis â vis my own cultural background. I am grateful as well to the other members of my Ph.D. committee, Dr. Dianne Brunner and Dr. Surjit Dulai, for their support and guidance.

In Tunisia, I wish to acknowledge my debt to Dr. Nassima Tarchouna for planting in me the love of literature. I extend as well my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Hedi Sioud and the Tunisian Ministry of Education for sponsoring my M.A. program at Michigan State University, and to AMIDEAST for granting me a Fulbright scholarship during the first two years of my doctoral program at MSU.

A special mention is in order for my Tunisian friends and colleagues Omar Bouraoui, Selma Ben Abdallah, Slah Kefi, and Khalid Abid, who have been such an invaluable source of support and information. I also offer my humble thanks to the

personnel working in the Tunisian National Library, the National Center of Documentation, the RCD and the CREDIF Center for their support and help during my research on gender and Tunisian nationalism. At the University of 9 Avril, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Hachmi Trabelsi, Dr. Fethi Dali, and Dr. Ali Mahjoubi for encouraging me to resume my doctoral studies at MSU.

And last but not least, I wish to thank my parents who passed on to me their love of French literature and ancient Arabic poetry. Without their love and sacrifice, this dissertation would not have been possible. I am eternally grateful to my mother Aïsha Ben Youssef for staying up all night taking care of my newborn while I was working on the last revisions of my dissertation. I am equally grateful to my father Hichem Ben Youssef who had never doubted I would succeed, and who over the last seven years, kept sending me almost every pamphlet and book available in Tunisia about women's issues. I am also very thankful to my husband Majd Zayzafoon whose patience and computer skills were invaluable in the final process of printing and formatting this dissertation. Many thanks also go out to my sister Najla, my brother Zoubeir, my baby-sitter Amna, and my extended family in Béja and Tunis for their unquestioned support and encouragement. Lastly, I wish to express my love and affection for my two sons Alexander and Abraham whose laughter and cooing were refueling breaks amidst the difficult process of writing my dissertation.

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Introduction

The Production of the Muslim Woman in Western Gnosis, Feminist Theory, Maghrebian Nationalism and Literature investigates the configurations of power implicated in the production of the discourses on the "Muslim woman" in the West and North Africa. In contrast with the Western narrative of the victimized "Muslim woman," and in opposition to the Islamist narrative in which "the Muslim woman" has no claims because Islam elevated her position fifteen hundred years ago, this dissertation argues that as a single category, the "Muslim woman" is an invention, whether in the Western discourses of Orientalism and Western psychoanalytic feminism, or in the discourses of Arab nationalism and Islamic feminism in colonial and postcolonial North Africa. Against the term "representation," which posits a binary opposition between true and false representation, the word "invention" presents the "Muslim woman" as an unfixed yet situated signifier.

As a fixed category, the "Muslim woman" functions metaphorically[1] to produce the alterity and inferiority of Islam as in the discourse of Orientalism or to symbolize Tunisian identity as in the nationalist master-narratives of Tahar al Haddad and Habib Bourguiba. Whereas the metaphoric usage of the "Muslim woman" in the discourses of Orientalism and Maghrebian nationalism is sutured, the metonymic deployment of the "Muslim woman" in the writings of Assia Djebar resists closure and produces the "Muslim woman" as an unfixed and plural signifier. Resisting all claims to presence and identity, this dissertation constructs the "Muslim woman" in view of Jacques Derrida's notion of "excess" or "supplementarity" (*Of Grammatology* 145) (1976). As such, rather than being fixed, the "Muslim woman" occupies an "in-between" space (Bhabha, *The*

Location of Culture 55) (1994), one that cuts across the binary oppositions of self and other or "slave and master."

Besides taking into account the racial diversity of Muslim women in the Maghreb--Arabs, Berbers, and Blacks--and their differences of class and education, this study views the word "Muslim" as heterogeneous. Even though Islam is not the focus of this dissertation, this study is aware of the different Islamic groups and subgroups living in the Maghreb, namely, the Sunna with its Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, and Shafi'i schools and the Sufi brotherhoods like the Tijaniya and al Kadiriya. This heterogeneity, however, is to be viewed in terms of Derrida's concept of *différance*, rather than the "arrested" or "fixated" (*The Location of Culture* 75) differences that Bhabha describes in his discussion of colonial discourse.

The second major claim in this study is that the "Muslim woman" is a semiotic subject who is produced according to the law of supply and demand to serve various political and ideological ends. Building on Teresa De Lauretis's three claims--1) that the human subject is always "gendered" and "produced through language" (*Technologies of Gender* 19) (1987); 2) that gender is "the representation of a relation"; 3) and that it is "the product and the process of both representation and self-representation" (9)--this dissertation argues that "the Muslim woman" is essentially a semiotic subject that is produced and reproduced by Orientalist, Islamic, feminist, and nationalistic discourses. A major focus shall be placed on the situatedness of these discourses produced on the North African "Muslim woman": Where do writers like Isabelle Eberhardt, Jacques Lacan, Hélène Cixous, Tahar al Haddad, Habib Bourguiba, Fatima Mernissi, Assia

Djebar, and Abul Alâ al Ma'arri come from when they receive/manufacture/transform images of the "Muslim woman"?[2]

The third argument of this dissertation is that cultures are invented and maintained to express relations of power. Just as the "Muslim woman" is invented to negotiate European identity or national identity in the discourse of Orientalism or Arab nationalism, cultural differences are also invented to negotiate one's place and identity in the world. Dismissing the conventional anthropological notion of culture as a set of social practices common to a special locale, nation, or tribe, and the assumptions of Muslim feminists like Mernissi about the territorialized oppressive Islamic culture of the Maghreb, this dissertation argues not only that there is no homogeneous or unifying Islamic culture in the Maghreb, but more importantly, that the so-called "Islamic culture" that Mernissi denounces is in fact nothing but a current ideological or political invention that masquerades as an authentic Islamic tradition (Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo Logics* 3) (1998). It is the objective of this study to demonstrate that cultural identity, as Kenneth W. Harrow puts it, emerges from "contestation," from setting oneself against another; hence, it cannot be "confined within established borders."[3] Rather than focusing on the cultural differences between the Maghreb and the West, this dissertation investigates the hegemonic positions from which a discourse articulating cultural and gender difference is enunciated, and the processes through which cultures are imposed, invented, and transformed.

The fourth and final claim of this dissertation is that Orientalist, feminist, or nationalist discourses on the "Muslim woman" are always ambivalent. In contrast with Edward W. Said's monolithic presentation of Orientalism as a homogeneous Western

discourse that aims at dominating and subduing an immoral and effeminate Orient, the present study argues that the Orientalist discourses on the "Muslim woman" are always ambivalent. This ambivalence is caused by the enunciator's location within an apparatus of power (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 1), as she/he negotiates a position from which to speak. This study takes upon itself the task of investigating the racial, social, educational, and gender privileges which allow Western female travelers in the Maghreb, Western and Muslim feminists, and North African nationalist revolutionaries to speak on behalf of the "Muslim woman." The following section explains more fully in what way this dissertation departs from Said's study of gender and colonialism in *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

Many feminists criticized Said for his gender politics. For instance, in "Presences and Absences in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*," Harriet D. Lyons points to the omission in Said's work of African women's struggle against colonialism: "The Igbo Women's War of 1929 is nowhere mentioned, though it was prominently reported and brought the dysphoria of colonized women to the attention of the British public" (102). To the aforesaid criticism, I shall add that nowhere in his work does Said cite Arab women writers and feminists, let alone mention Arab women's struggle against French and British imperialism. In an interview with Jacqueline Rose, Said provides an excuse for the conspicuous absence of women from his work, which he explains by the phallocentrism underlying his British education:

> And I always went to all-male schools, and the ethos--I think you have to blame this on the British a little bit--the ethos was terribly masculine. In my higher education, there were no women as students, none as professors, neither at Princeton when I was an undergraduate nor at Harvard [...] Then I've tried to educate

> myself, but too late probably, in the history and writing by women about women of the last few years [i.e., after *Orientalism*]. (87)

This explanation is unconvincing, for if Said had been able to denounce the racism in the British and American academy and attack an ethnocentric book like Allan D. Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*,[4] he should have been able to escape the sexism of his British education.

In *Orientalism* (1979), Said's study of the image of the "Muslim woman" in the works of the nineteenth century French writers (Gustave Flaubert, Gérard de Nerval, François Renée Chateaubriand, and Charles Baudelaire) reveals two sets of imagery. In the first set, the "Muslim woman" appears as a licentious sexual creature. She is often working as a prostitute or a courtesan like Flaubert's Kuchuk Hanem:

> Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuckuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental." (*Orientalism* 6)

Because of her excessive sexuality, the "Oriental woman" becomes a femme fatale, similar to the legendary type of Isis, Cleopatra, and Salome (180).

In the second type, the "Muslim woman" epitomizes the exotic essence of the Orient, which the European male traveler covets and tries to possess. Commenting on the function of the "Oriental woman" in Nerval's *Vaisseau d'Orient*, Said writes:

> The Orient symbolizes Nerval's dream quest and the fugitive woman central to it, both as desire and as loss. Vaisseau d'Orient--vessel of the Orient--refers enigmatically either to the woman as

> the vessel carrying the Orient, or possibly, to Nerval's own vessel for the Orient, his prose voyage. (184)

Whether a prostitute or the symbol of a mysterious Orient, these two sets of imagery associated with the "Muslim woman" are constitutive of the discourse of Orientalism, which constructs/uses the degeneracy and effeminacy of the Oriental as an excuse to invade/penetrate the Middle East under the cloak of the French civilizing mission. Showing the deep complicity between literary knowledge and the institutions of power, Said demonstrates how the image of the "Oriental woman" as a prostitute or a barren woman (187) is complicit with the European imperialist project of conquering and civilizing a lifeless, feminine, and immoral East. As Said puts it: "My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled" (6).

Said's discussion of male Orientalism seems to derive from the Freudian distinction between the surface and latent meaning of a text. As a prostitute or a barren "femme fatale," the "Oriental woman" functions on the surface level as a metaphor for the Orient's need for Europe's civilizing mission. On a deeper level, she is a "sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3) for Europe. The excessive sexuality of Flaubert's Kuchuk Hanem as well as his obsession with harems and dancing women illustrate the "escapism of sexual fantasy." The sexual indulgence of the Orientals compensates for Flaubert's sexual frustration under Europe's bourgeois morality:

> Emma Bovary and Frederic Moreau pine for what in their drab (or harried) bourgeois lives they do not have, packed inside Oriental cliches: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys, sherbets, ointments, and so on. The repertoire is familiar, not

> so much because it reminds us of Flaubert's own voyages in and obsession with Orient, but because, once again, the association is clearly made between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex. We may as well recognize that for nineteenth century Europe, with its increasing embourgeoisement, sex had been institutionalized to a very considerable degree. On the one hand, there was no such thing as "free" sex, and on the other, sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort. (190)

The excessive sexuality of the Oriental (the surface meaning of Flaubert's text) could be, as Said says, a trope to compensate for Flaubert's sexual repression under bourgeois morality (latent meaning), but what appears here to be a latent meaning (the sexual repression following the embourgeoisement of European society), could also be a displacement for an earlier act of repression; the repression of Flaubert's homoerotic desire.

In "Vacation Cruises: or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism," Joseph Boone rightly criticizes Said for his silence over the homoerotic in his discussion of Orientalism. Boone writes that Flaubert was in fact fascinated with "Hassan el Belbeissi," an Egyptian male dancer, not "Kuchuk Hanem" (Boone 92). Even though Jean-Léon Gérome's painting "The Snake Charmer"--a voyeuristic spectacle where eleven Oriental men gaze at the penis of a young Arab boy--appears on the cover of *Orientalism*, nowhere in his book does Said discuss this painting's voyeuristic economy of desire. In this tableau, only the Arab men can see the young boy's penis, which seems to be deliberately hidden from the painting's viewers. This veiling or artistic prohibition is instrumental in kindling the spectator's desire. Because desire always involves the substitution of one word for another (Lacan), the snake, as a phallic symbol, should be seen as a substitute for the absent object of desire, i.e., the young boy's penis. As he plays with the snake, the young

boy acts out the masturbatory fantasies of the male imperial painter/viewer, who exclusively sees and exoticizes the young boy's buttocks.

Gérome's painting recalls a similar scene in *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility Tour* (1972), where a young snake charmer enters the French man's room and undresses in front of him to show him that there is no trickery. In this scene, the snake appears as a third body where the homoerotic encounter between Flaubert and the young boy takes place:

> He lifted the snake to my ear; *it bit me hard*; with a finger he took the blood from the bite and spread it on the ground; then *he breathed twice into my mouth, made me breathe twice on the large black snake*, which he had wrapped around my neck, *twice rubbed my bloody ear with his hand that he had moistened with his saliva,* once again asked me for "a big tip"--and the thing was done. (The italics are my emphasis 89)

Even though his narrative suggests the primitiveness of the Orient and its strange cultural practices, Flaubert's writings about his sexual adventures in Egypt are quite subversive of the French civilizing mission in the Orient. After noting how sodomy is accepted in the East, Flaubert confesses in a letter to his friend Louis Bouilhet (15 January 1850)--and not without irony--that "traveling as [he was] for educational purposes, and charged with a mission by the government, [he has] considered it [his] duty to indulge in this form of ejaculation" (*Flaubert in Egypt* 84). In the Turkish bath, the Kellaa "was rubbing him gently" (83), and "lifted up [his] *boules d'amour* to clean them," put his right hand on his "prick," and asked for baksheesh. Flaubert pushed him away. Yet, far from being "angry," Flaubert "laughed aloud like a dirty old man." In another letter to Bouilhet (2 June 1850), Flaubert wrote that he finally "consumed that business at the baths." It was "on a pockmarked young rascal wearing a white turban. It made

[Flaubert] laugh, that's all. But [he'll] be at it again. To be done well, an experiment must be repeated" (203-04). Flaubert might be complicit with the French civilizing mission as Said claims, but in presenting these homoerotic encounters as part of his official mission in Egypt, he is undermining the dichotomy between Eastern degeneracy and Occidental morality, which is at the heart of the French civilizing mission in the Middle East. Hence, Orientalism rather than being a monolithic discourse as Said presents it, is always ambivalent.

Similarly, Flaubert's self-presentation as a "frequenter" of Parisian brothels and prostitutes is subversive of the French civilizing mission, which locates degeneracy outside its national borders, i.e., in those countries to be conquered. For Flaubert, prostitution, indeed, seems to have a "particular mystique":

> It may be a perverted taste [...] but I love prostitution, and for itself, too, quite apart from its carnal aspects. My heart begins to pound every time I see one of those women in low-cut dresses walking under the lamplight in the rain, just as monks in their corded robes have always excited some deep, ascetic corner of my soul. (*Flaubert in Egypt* 9-10)

Subverting the moral superiority underlying the French civilizing mission, Flaubert compares the Muslim prostitutes to the Christian prostitutes he encountered in the brothels of France: "Kuchuk dances with my tarboosh on her head. Then she accompanies us to the end of her quarter, climbing up on our backs and making faces and jokes like any Christian tart" (116). In another letter, he writes that the "word *almeh* means 'learned woman,' 'blue-stocking,' or 'whore'--which proves, Monsieur, that in all countries women of letters...!!!" (129). The footnote accompanying the letter states that Flaubert is referring here to his French mistress Louise Colet. Thus, Flaubert's depiction

of the Oriental woman as a prostitute reveals not only the French colonial desire to dominate and subdue the East, but also Flaubert's own misogynistic attitude towards women in general whether they be Colets or Kuchuk Hanems. [5]

Flaubert's discourses on the "Oriental woman" depend on the context in which they have been articulated. When Louise Colet wrote Flaubert a letter in which she expressed her jealousy of Kuchuk Hanem, to appease her anger, Flaubert painted her a harsh picture of the Egyptian woman:

> The Oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man. Smoking, going to the baths, painting her eyelids and drinking coffee--such is the circle of occupations within which her existence confined. As for physical pleasure, it must be very slight, since the well known button, the seat of same, is sliced off at an early age. (*Flaubert in Egypt* 220)

In a letter to Sainte-Beuve (23-24 December 1862), Flaubert compares Amilcar's daughter Salammbô to Saint Thérèse. And in contrast with his previous assertion to Colet that the Oriental woman is a "machine," he now claims that all knowledge of the Oriental woman is impossible:

> Mme Bovary est agitée par des passions multiples; Salammbô au contaire demeure clouée par l'idée fixe. Cest une maniaque, une espèce de Saint Thérèse. N'importe! Je ne suis pas sur de sa réalité; car ni moi, ni vous, ni personne, aucun ancien et aucun modern, ne peut connaître la femme orientale, par la raison qu'il est impossible de la fréquenter. (qtd. in Lawrence R. Schehr "*Salammbô* as the Novel of Alterity" 328)

In *Salammbô* (1862), which is set during the Mercenaries' War (241-38 B.C.) between Carthage and the Numidians--just after Carthage lost the First Punic War against Rome--Flaubert points to the heterogeneity of the Orient and to the ethnic and political

conflicts setting on the one hand the Carthagenians/Phoenicians against the "Barbarians"/Africans, and against the Romans on the other hand. In this historical novel, Flaubert identifies with the Romans, the Carthagenians, and the "Barbarians." For instance, Mâtho, the Numidian or "Barbarian" hero who fell in love with the Canaanite Salammbô, is presented as a Christ-like figure. He dies a horrible death at the hands of an angry mob: his ears torn, his cheeks slit with needles, his face smeared in filth, his chest branded with "a red-hot bar" before being opened with a knife (350-53). Even though he identifies with Rome because it is the emblem of the Western world, Flaubert still feels sympathy for the Barbarian Matho and expresses his admiration for the Canaanite King Amilcar.

Historicizing this process of identification, Lisa Howe observes that the repeated defeats of Carthage echo the repeated defeats of Napoleon and "France's international losses" during the unstable period of the "bourgeois revolt" known as "the July Monarchy of 1830" ("The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *Voyage en Orient*" 46). According to Michel Butor, Salammbô is a "double text" (qtd. in Lowe 47), where Carthage appears as "the hidden face of ancient Rome," or the Other "buried" and "denied" at first by Rome, then by France. Despite its colonial undertones, Flaubert's novel situates Carthage half way between East and West; the same Greek, Mycenaean, Phoenician, and Egyptian influences, which gave birth to Carthage have also generated Western culture.

Another problem Porter identifies in *Orientalism* is Said's reluctance to consider other alternatives to Orientalism (Porter 151). Even though he wonders if there could ever be "nonrepressive and nonmanipulative" (24) Western studies of the Orient, Said

never returns to this issue later. This dissertation takes issue with Said's pessimistic view-- in *Orientalism* [6]at least--that knowledge of the other is impossible. Said's premise might have drastic implications on the political activism of North African feminists, such as stripping the latter from the incentive to reach out and understand the problems of other women across the boundaries of class, race, and nation. Finally, whereas Said de-emphasizes class and gender to focus exclusively on the Orient's subjection to Western hegemony, *The Production of the Muslim Woman* goes beyond the stereotypical vision of the victimized "Muslim woman in the discourses of Orientalism and Arab nationalism, to examine patriarchy in terms of different configurations of power such as class, education, race, and gender.

From a methodological point of view, *The Production of the Muslim Woman* is a hybrid work combining Western and Islamic feminist theory as well as a psychoanalytic and historicist approaches. Going beyond the ghetto of ethno-theory, this study tries to overcome the shortcomings and limits of any single approach; its primary objective is to interrogate the text, generate meanings, and disclose relations and concepts that would remain hidden were it to rely exclusively on one approach and not the other. It is the task of the postcolonial writer/critic/reader to interrogate her/his own premises and throw the theory against itself. As Judith Butler puts it, to deconstruct does not mean to dismiss, but to put into question:

> To deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power... To call a presupposition into question is not the same as doing away with it; rather, it is to free it up from its metaphysical lodgings in order

> to occupy and to serve very different political aims. (Butler, *Feminists Theorize the Political* 17)

Endorsing Butler's warnings against "a transcultural notion of patriarchy" (*Gender Trouble* 35), this study makes the claim that almost all societies are patriarchal, but that patriarchal oppression takes on different forms; hence the need for a localized strategic feminism, one in alliance with Western feminism, yet aware of the different forms of local patriarchies; and hence also the need to devise an appropriate in-situ feminist agenda. Even though this dissertation engages with Western feminist theory, it also interrogates its viability when applied to the North African context. If we grant that the image of the Muslim woman is invented, does this mean that the different forms of oppression she is subjected to are also invented? How can we reject state authority (Butler) in the North African context where Muslim feminists, in their dedication to social and political commitment, want to involve the state in promulgating laws that protect women's rights? What are the limits of constructedness? What problems accompany the idealization of agency and women's voices?

This dissertation also shows the limits of using Lacanian theory in the Maghrebian context. For instance, what are the consequences of applying Jacques Lacan's notion that the phallus works best when veiled to the Algerian context where the FIS holds that the glory of Islam consists in the control of the female body through seclusion and veiling? Should we dismiss psychoanalysis altogether? It is a common misconception indeed to dismiss psychoanalysis because of its Western universalism. In his essay, "The Function and Field of Speech and language in Psychoanalysis," Lacan stands against the American "ahistoricism" and states that the symbolic is always mediated through the local culture:[7]

> In the symbolic order first of all, one cannot neglect the importance of the c factor, which I noted at the Congress of Psychiatry in 1950 as being the constant characteristic of any given cultural milieu: the condition here of the ahistoricism, which, by common accord, is recognized as being the principle feature of "communication" in the United States, and which, in my opinion, is at the antipodes of the psychoanalytic experience" (*Écrits* 37-8).

However, one has to be aware of the limits of psychoanalysis, notably of its overemphasis on "sexual matters" and "exclusion" (Claudia Tate, "Freud and His 'Negro': Psychoanalysis as Ally and Enemy of African Americans" 53) of racial and social issues. As Claudia Tate puts it, rather than dismissing psychoanalysis because of Freud's "Negro jokes" (56) or because it is a white practice intended for the white "well-to-do," psychoanalysis needs to be critiqued and revised in order "to address more pressing concerns--such as Western cultural crises in which the family, race, and cultural difference play critical roles," and be put "in a much larger cultural context than the white bourgeois family" (61). Just as psychoanalysis is useful in illuminating the not so obvious meanings of a text, a historicist approach is also instrumental in situating the ideological production and deployment of the "Muslim woman" within a certain conjuncture.

There are five chapters in this dissertation. The first chapter, "A Semiotic Reading of Islamic Feminism: Hybridity, Authority, and the Strategic Reinvention of the Muslim Woman in Fatima Mernissi," focuses on the production of the "Muslim woman" in the discourse of the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi. In opposition to the Western monolithic perception of the "Muslim woman," Mernissi reinvents the Muslim woman as a plural yet situated signifier. Just like the "Muslim woman" fabricated by the Islamist discourse, the "Muslim women" produced by Mernissi are strategic inventions

that ought to be examined in view of the current hegemonic configurations of power in Morocco. However, by marking Jahilia as the original point of Islamic culture, Mernissi undercuts any notion of Islam being heir to the earlier Middle Eastern cultures, falling therefore in the originary thinking of Islamic fundamentalism. This chapter also questions Mernissi's use of Freudian theory to analyze the psyche of Muslim societies as well as the sources of her authority to write on behalf of Moroccan women.

The second chapter fills out Said's silence over female Orientalism. "Isabelle, *ou 'La Roumia Convertie'*: A Case Study in Female Orientalism" focuses on the relationship of Western women with North African women and on their understanding of gender as white women residing in the Arab world. The production of the "Muslim woman" in Eberhardt's autobiographical and fictional writings will be investigated in view of the fin-de-siècle French colonial culture. This chapter demonstrates how Eberhardt's ambivalence vis à vis the "Muslim woman" and the French civilizing mission in the Maghreb depends on her position inside/outside the French imperial world. This corroborates the view that culture is a relation of power (Amselle), not something specific to an ethnicity or locale. This chapter also uses Eberhardt to critique Bhabha for his androcentric view of the hybrid.

Relying on De Lauretis's notion of gender as "representation," the third chapter, "The Muslim Woman and the Iconography of the veil in French Feminism and Psychoanalysis," discusses the viability of Western feminist and psychoanalytic theory in the North African context and argues that these discourses derive at times from the same Orientalist impulse we find in the male Orientalism discussed by Said. The first part of this chapter argues that even though he is situated on the left, Frantz Fanon's discourse on

the veil in "Algeria Unveiled" is both patriarchal and Orientalist. The second section traces Lacan's notion of the "veiled phallus" to the primacy of the specular in Western metaphysics and to the discourses of the veil produced during the Algerian Revolution. The third part of this chapter examines how French feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray recycle the earlier Orientalist discourses on the "Muslim woman." In contrast with the other French feminists, Hélène Cixous's discourse on the "Muslim woman" stands inside/outside French imperial ideology. The final part of this chapter examines how Cixous's *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage: Scènes primitives* (2000) presents a "doubled vision" (De Lauretis 10) vis à vis the veil and Algerian Muslim women. Cixous's ambivalence will be examined against her self-proclaimed "literary nationality" (*Hélène Cixous: Photos de Racines* 207) (1994), her autobiography, and the Frenchification of the Algerian Jews.

The fourth chapter, "Body, Home, and Nation: The Production of the Tunisian Muslim Woman in the Nationalist and Reformist Thought of Tahar al Haddad and Habib Bourguiba," focuses on the invention of the "Tunisian Muslim woman" in the feminist and nationalist discourses of Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) and Tahar al Haddad (1899-1935). This chapter examines how the double privilege of gender and education gives al Haddad and Bourguiba not only the authority to speak on behalf of the "Tunisian woman," but also the power to claim for her a traditional past and a future.

The last chapter, "Reinventing Domesticity and the Sacred: The House of the Prophet as a Technology of Power," makes the claim that as a technology of power, the House of the Prophet is claimed not only by hegemonic Islamic groups, but also by those who are situated on the margin of Islamic orthodoxy. This chapter argues that in

contrast with the cynicism of Abul 'Alâ al Ma'arri in *The Epistle of Forgiveness* (1032), which makes him reject the House of the Prophet as an instrument of political legitimation, Assia Djebar's political commitment in *Loin de Médine* (1991) makes her engage in the dominant discourse of Islamic orthodoxy and reinvent the House of the Prophet through the lens of both écriture feminine and Islamic feminism. This chapter will also briefly examine the invention of the House of the Prophet in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and *Al Tawba*, a 1992 theatrical readaptation of al Ma'arri's divine comedy by the Tunisian novelist Aroussia Naluti.

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[1] I am relying here on Homi K. Bhabha's distinction between metonymy and metaphor: whereas the first is a "supplementary strategy" that is open and based on difference, the second is closed and sutured as it conflates "the many as one," and "totalize[s] the social in a homogenous empty time" *(The Location of Culture* 155).

[2] My own claim that the "Muslim woman" is a political invention derives from my privileges of class and Western education, and the colonial status of my ancestry; the Turks who confiscated almost the whole region of Beja, the most fertile land in Tunisia, and formerly known as "The Basket of Rome." During my visit to Tunisia in May 2001, I realized how deep the gap is between the preoccupations of upper and middle-class Muslim women studying in American universities, and the Muslim female students from the lower-classes who work as maids and in slave-like conditions to support their families and buy school-books. One of these young women was Amna whom I hired as a baby-sitter so that I could go to the Tunisian National Archives and The National Library and write about Bourguiba and al Haddad. I realized (and not without guilt) that intellectual pursuits like the present dissertation are the domain of the privileged; Muslim women like Amna worry about food and still go to school on an empty stomach. Not once did Amna complain about Tunisian men or Islamic patriarchy. Her main concern was feeding her sick old mother, that is to say, survival. My contact with Tunisian women from the lower classes made me realize that patriarchy is a matter of power and social class, not simply gender.

[3] Paper presented at the 2001 African Literature Association Annual Conference in Richmond, Virginia under the title of "Shibboleths in the Production of Culture."

[4] Edward W. Said, "Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler," *Boundary 2* (Fall 1992) 5.

[5] Flaubert's mystical interest in prostitutes could also be explained by the teachings of the Saint Simonians who preached free love and destigmatized prostitution in early nineteenth century France.

[6] Said's political commitment for the Palestinian people made him later change this position. See Bruce Robbins, "Race, Gender, Class, Postcolonialism: Toward a New Humanistic Paradigm?" *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwarz & Sangeeta Ray (Malden: Blackwell, 2000) 556-73.

[7] This dissertation views "local culture" as a set of power relations temporarily characterizing a specific locale, rather than a set of misogynistic cultural practices which are fixed in time and space. In this study,

the concept of "cultural difference" refers to the different power relations which govern all human societies, whether Eastern or Western.

Chapter One: A Semiotic Reading of Islamic Feminism: Hybridity, Authority, and the Strategic Reinvention of the Muslim Woman in Fatima Mernissi

This chapter examines how the "Muslim woman" has been constructed, even by Muslim women feminists, within the binary of the West and Islam. Using De Lauretis's claim that gender is representation, the first part of this chapter argues that Mernissi's reinvention of the "Muslim woman" stands outside/inside Western and Islamic ideologies. Whereas Mernissi's presentation of the "Muslim woman" as a plural signifier and her revision of Islamic tradition constitute a break with the earlier Orientalist and Islamic discourses on the "Muslim woman," her reliance on the opposition between "tradition" and "modernity" and her re-authentification of the hadith as sources of authority are in continuity with those earlier discourses on the "Muslim woman." The second section of this chapter examines the contradictions in Mernissi's construction of the Muslim woman and refashioning of Islamic tradition in view of the current power politics in Morocco and the Muslim world. The third section investigates the sources of Mernissi's authority to claim a past Islamic tradition for the "Muslim woman" as well as the implications of her invention of a homogenous "Islamic culture." The final section of this chapter questions Mernissi's reliance on a Freudian paradigm to study the consciousness of all Muslim societies.

Born in 1940 in a religious and conservative well-to-do family in Fez, Mernissi spent the first few years of her life in a harem before receiving a dual French and Arabic education in French colonial Morocco (*Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*) (1994). She was formerly a Professor at the University of Muhammad V at Rabat, and is currently a member of the United Nations' University Council. Because of her dual

cultural background, Mernissi's construction of the "Muslim woman" rests on the double bind to reproduce and resist the discourses of both the Orientalist and Islamic tradition.

I) Mernissi's Strategic Deployment of *Ijtihad*

Far from the metaphoric usage of the "Muslim woman" as a symbol for Islam or Muhammad's *umma* ("nation") in the respective discourses of Orientalism and Islamism, Mernissi's "Muslim woman" is deployed metonymically (Bhabha 155) to express the plurality and diversity of Muslim women's experiences. Unlike the Orientalist male invention of the "Muslim woman" as a prostitute or "victim of male violence" in Western feminist scholarship (Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* 201), or the subsequent scenario of her rape and abduction by imperial powers in Arab nationalist discourses, Mernissi reinvents "the Muslim woman" as an unfixed and plural signifier. In her investigation of the desegregation of the sexes in Moroccan society, Mernissi focuses on the differences between the women she is interviewing: "The categories 'modern' and 'traditional'[1] cover a range of differences in age, education, employment, and so on" (*Beyond the Veil* 90) (1985). In *Chahrazad n'est pas marocaine* (1991), she makes the claim that illiteracy is the major challenge facing rural Moroccan women in the twenty first century. Unlike the mythical Chahrazad who saved her life through her erudition, the illiteracy of Moroccan women (estimated at 95% in the rural areas and 57% in the cities during the eighties) foreclosed and doomed their future (*Chahrazad* 40-1).

In contrast with colonial feminism's uniform perception of the veil as a marker of Muslim women's oppression and the radical difference of Islam, the veil in Mernissi's *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1991), emerges as a shifting yet situated signifier. Locating the "veil" in its socio-historical context, Mernissi explains that the "veil" or *hijab* is a three-dimensional word in Arabic:

> The three dimensions often blend into one another. The first dimension is a visual one: to hide something from sight. The root of the verb *hajaba* means "to hide." The second dimension is spatial: to separate, to mark a border, to establish a threshold. And finally, the third dimension is ethical: it belongs to the realm of the forbidden. A space hidden by a hijab is a forbidden space. (93)

In the "Sura of the Veil," Mernissi writes, the *hijab* designates the House of the Prophet as a space visually and morally forbidden:

> O ye who believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Lo! that would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when ye ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. (85)

In Sufi philosophy, the *hijab* is a negative signifier which means "an obstacle that prevents one from seeing God" (96). In contrast with Muhammad's life where there was a "spatial intimacy between the mosque" and Aïsha's apartment (111) and therefore between women and politics, during the reign of the Ummayad Caliph Mu'awiya (94), a *hijab* was erected to separate women from politics and the Caliph from his people. The *hijab* of the Prince, according to Mernissi is "the curtain behind which the caliphs and kings sat to avoid the gaze of members of their court" (94). Contrasting the common view that Islam is incompatible with democracy, Mernissi argues that the early Islamic

period was democratic because of its inclusion of women and because of the absence of barriers (*hijab*) between the Prophet and his community.

Mernissi's reformist feminism lies especially in her strategic re-examination of the *hadith*. Her analysis of the *hadith* is subversive because *al-fiqh* ("the science of explaining religion") is a male field that traditionally excludes women. Following Benazir Bhutto's election as a Prime Minister in Pakistan in 1988, the Islamist groups argued that a woman leader is a *bida'*, that is to say, an innovation that is alien to Islam. To support their claim, they brandished al-Bukhari's *hadith*, according to which Abu Bakra heard the Prophet say: "Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity" (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 49). Using the same methodology as the male recorders, notably al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Saad, and al-Baghdadi, Mernissi makes a distinction between the *sahih* and *mawdhu'* ("true" and "false") *hadith* by investigating the credibility of everyone listed in the *hadith*'s chain of transmitters. She then proceeds to investigate Abu Bakra's biography as well as the historical context when the *hadith* was recorded. According to Mernissi, Abu Bakra opportunistically remembered that *hadith*--twenty-five years after Muhammad's death (53)--after the Battle of the Camel where Aïsha was defeated by Alî, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Because he "had refused to take part in the civil war" (53) against Aïsha, Abu Bakra fabricated that *hadith* after the war to protect himself against Alî's clan. Digging into Abu Bakra's biography, she discovers that al-Bukhari should have rejected that *hadith*, because Abu Bakra was convicted and flogged for providing a false testimony in an adultery trial during the reign of Umar Ibn al-Khattab (60-1). In using "the principles of Malik for *fiqh*" (61), she simultaneously shows how the sacred has been manipulated by

Muslim patriarchy and endorses, through the example she provides, women's active participation in the project of reforming the *Shari'a* laws.

Whereas in the Orientalist narrative of Lord Cromer "Islam degraded" (Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* 153) (1992) women through "veiling" and "segregation," in Mernissi's feminist narrative, Islam improved women's lives, by banishing the Jahilia practice of female infanticide and underscoring women's right to inheritance:

> Not only would a woman no longer be "inherited" like camels and palm trees, but she would herself inherit. She would enter into competition with men for the sharing of fortunes: "Unto the men (of a family) belongeth a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto the women a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much--a legal share." This little verse had the effect of a bombshell among the male population of Medina, who found themselves for the first time in direct, personal conflict with the Muslim god. Before this verse, only men were assured the right of inheritance in Arabia, and women were usually part of the inherited goods. (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 120)

In contrast with Ahmed who claims that the veiling of Muhammad's wives is a logical continuity to the pattern of male domination that started to emerge in Arabia during the rise of Islam (*Women and Gender in Islam* 33), Mernissi asserts that Muhammad's ideal of social and gender equality constitutes a break with the Jahilia pre-Islamic practices. Women's participation in war, their right to "gain booty," and "to have a say with regard to the sex act" overthrew "the pre-Islamic--relations between men and women" (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 130). However, the strong male opposition to Islam's ideal of gender equality--as exemplified by Umar Ibn al-Khattab and the Medinese hypocrites[2]--pushed Muhammad to abandon these ideals in order to guarantee

the survival of the new religion. Digging into Muhammad's biography, Mernissi also shows how his wives participated in war, entered the mosque, asked him for marriage (like his first wife Khadija) and even repudiated him as in the cases of Mulaika Bint Ka'ab and Fatima Bint al-Dahhak (*Beyond the Veil* 52-3) (1985). In her effort to bring about legislation that is favorable to women, Mernissi strategically invents a Muhammad who has neither the divine-like status he is given in Orthodox Islam, nor is marred by the sensuality and pedophilia of Mahound, the protagonist of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. In her reconstruction of Muhammad's biography, Mernissi shows that his strength lies in his love, not aggression, towards women. Commenting on the split between Muhammad's teaching[3] and his fatal attraction to women's beauty, she writes:

> It should be noted here that the Muslim Prophet's heroism does not lie in any relation of aggression, conquest, or exercise of brute force against women, but on the contrary in his vulnerability [...] It is because he is vulnerable, and therefore human, that his example has exerted such power over generations of believers. (*Beyond the Veil* 57)

II) Mernissi's Islamic Feminism: Between Conformity and Resistance

A closer examination of Mernissi's writings reveals not only resistance to, but also conformity with the Orientalist and Islamic discourses on the Muslim woman. Mernissi's feminist reinvention of the "Muslim woman" illustrates what De Lauretis calls the feminist subject's double position "inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so" (10). Even though it is presented as a multiple signifier, the veil in Mernissi's writings is quite often associated with the perpetuation of gender inequality. Reversing the equation of the veil with Islamic identity maintained today by the Islamist

groups and in the past by Arab nationalists, Mernissi reinvents the *hijab* as an obstacle to democracy and to the "true" meaning of Islam. According to Mernissi, Islam's egalitarian project was compromised when Muhammad, because of his military difficulties, complied with the wishes of the hypocrites and secluded his wives:

> In a city on the brink of civil war, in which the number of the Hypocrites had increased dangerously since the siege, the anti-slave-holding policy that Islam sought to promote was officially abandoned--at least as far as women were concerned. Since the security of all, including slaves, could no longer be assured, protection would be limited to those who were free. *And the hijab incarnates, expresses, and symbolizes this official retreat from the principle of equality.* Symbolically, regression on social equality became entangled and implicated in regression on sexual equality in the case of the female slave. *The hijab/curtain descended on them both, mingling and confusing* the two ideas in the consciousness of Muslims during the fifteen centuries that followed. (*The Veil and the Male Elite* [the italics are my emphasis] 179)

Thus, in responding to the "internal" or Islamist threat, Mernissi falls within the modernist view that associates the veil with oppression and links women's emancipation with unveiling. Echoing Qassim Amin and other Arab nationalists, Mernissi associates unveiling with cultural survival and progress. Examining the history of Moroccan women's emancipation, she writes that King Muhammad V "puzzled the entire country in 1943 when he presented his daughter, Princess Aïsha, unveiled before the nation" (155). Unlike Mernissi, who holds an uncritical attitude towards Qassim Amin, the father of Egyptian feminism, Ahmed argues that Amin's advocacy of women's liberation through unveiling, rather than higher education, derives from the Western construction of the veil, "the marker of cultural difference" (*Women and Gender in Islam* 160-61), as a symbol of Islam's inferiority. Echoing Frantz Fanon's discourse on the cultural alienation of the

national bourgeoisie, Ahmed writes that it is the upper class status and the French education of Qassim Amin, Doria Shafik, Mai Ziada, and Huda Sha'rawi that make them conceive of Muslim women's emancipation only through the unveiling of their bodies. The Arabic narrative of resistance, whereby the veil becomes the symbol of Arab Islamic identity, is written by feminists who did not have a Western education. For example, even though she is a member of the upper-middle class, Malak Hifni Nassef's traditional education made her oppose the emancipation of Egyptian women after the Western model (179). Ahmed shows that the current Islamic dress, *al-ziyy al-Islami*, is not a fixed code of dressing, but a pastiche of modern and old dress codes (220-21).

Armed with recent sociological studies, Ahmed demonstrates that most of the women who wear the Islamic dress today are from families where other women are already veiled (*Women and Gender in Islam* 222); belong to the new middle classes who recently migrated to the urban areas (221); and are the first generation of women in their family to enter a "sexually integrated world" (223). In contrast with Mernissi's feminist construction of the *hijab* as a negative signifier, Ahmed argues that Islamic dress has to be reconceived as a sign of "educational and professional upward mobility" and "a practical coping strategy, enabling women to negotiate in the new world while affirming the traditional values of their upbringing" (223). Whereas colonial feminism views Muslim women's return to Islam as detrimental to their interests in the long run, the "activities being pursued by some veiled women, such as reclaiming of the right to attend prayer in mosques," seem to support the view that "some veiled women are to some extent challenging the practices of establishment Islam with respect to women" (228). Ahmed concludes that the division between secular and Islamic feminisms reflects the

dichotomy between elitist and "grass-root feminism" and the "urban-rural divisions of society" (225).

Thus, it is the double privilege of class and Western education that allows Mernissi to speak on behalf of all Moroccan women and equate women's emancipation with unveiling. As in Western colonial feminism, the veil in Mernissi's writings is seen as a symbol of female oppression. Even though she talks about the history of the veil in Sufi philosophy, she does not examine wearing of the veil in Morocco as a class issue. In her recent visit to Morocco, the American feminist Elizabeth Warnock Fernea observes that the issue of women's emancipation in Morocco is primarily a question of class and social status (88). In Morocco, Fernea discovers in contrast with what she hears about Moroccan women in Western mass media that there are Moroccan women judges, university professors, and others elected in Parliament (*In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey* 72) (1998), yet most of them come from the upper and middle classes of Moroccan society.

In Mernissi's autobiographical work, *Dreams of Trespass*, women's seclusion is presented as both anachronistic and alien to Islam. As Mernissi's cousin Chama explains, the harems were adopted from the Byzantines in the Middle Ages. At that time power meant the conquest of territory and women, but the rules of the game have changed today:

> While the Arabs were busy locking women behind doors, the Romans and the other Christians got together and decided to change the rules of the power game in the Mediterranean. Collecting women, they declared, was not relevant anymore. From now on, the sultan would be the one who could build the most powerful weapons and machines, including firearms and big ships. But the Romans and other Christians decided not to tell the Arabs about the change; they would keep it a secret so as to surprise

> them. So the Arabs went to sleep, thinking that they knew the rules of the power game. (44-5)

Mernissi's concept of "chronopolitics" which she uses to describe "Islamic fundamentalism's" attempt to turn the clocks into Haroun al Rachid's time seems objectionable on two grounds. First, because in reducing the problem of "Islamic fundamentalism" to a clash between the Middle Ages and modernity, Mernissi falls not only within the binarism characterizing the Islamist thought, but also the Eurocentric evolutionary understanding of time. Indeed, Mernissi's concept of "chronopolitics" is based on the same dichotomy between tradition and modernity that we find in the writings of Amin, the Western-educated Egyptian feminist who equates the wearing of the veil with the backwardness of Islamic tradition. In *Maps of Englishness* (1996), Simon Gikandi traces the dichotomy between tradition and modernity to the European modernist discourse, when "the invocation of colonial alterity," the dismantling of the old social fabric, combined with the racial anxieties "about what constitutes Englishness" (228) led to the invention of a pure European tradition. As Gikandi argues, the concept of tradition which African nationalist leaders like Nkrumah or Kenyatta have deployed to assert African identity derives "its moral authority from its association with [the] bourgeois civility" (Gikandi 227) exemplified in the writings of T.S. Eliot. As a parallel, Mernissi's perception of the veil does not seem locally generated, but imposed by her elite status and acquaintance with Western culture.

The second objection to Mernissi's concept of "chronopolitics" is that Islamic tradition, to use Jean-Loup Amselle's words, is "an exclusively contemporary conflict, that of fundamentalists speaking in the name of tradition while simultaneously projecting current ideological models into the past" (*Mestizo Logics* 3). Mernissi herself explains

the problem of Islamic fundamentalism and the oppression of women by the lack of democracy and the increasing rate of poverty, unemployment, and neocolonialism in countries like Morocco (*Beyond the Veil* 149, 163).

Two related problems arise here: first, how can Mernissi reduce the problem of fundamentalism to a clash between tradition and modernity while claiming that fundamentalism is caused by the contemporary problems of poverty, unemployment, and neocolonialism? Second, how can she attack Islamic tradition while relying on that same patriarchal concept to invent women's rights in Morocco? Mernissi's re-authentication of Islamic tradition ought to be conceived along the lines of Bhabha's view that tradition is an ongoing process of negotiation, subjected to the current hegemonic configurations of power. In "restaging the past," Mernissi's contradictions illustrate what Bhabha calls "the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'" (*The Location of Culture* 2).

Quite problematic indeed is Mernissi's criticism of Islamic tradition and reliance on the authority of the hadith to bring about women's rights in Moroccan society. In her re-authentification of the hadith, Mernissi ascribes to herself the authority of the Muslim male elite who have the power to distinguish between the false and true hadith. Rather than deconstructing or destabilizing the religious authority of the hadith, Mernissi reinforces the Law of the Muslim Father she is criticizing. She does nothing but reverse the terms of that Muslim symbolic: to the Law of the Muslim Father, she substitutes the Law of the Muslim Mother.

Not least significant is Mernissi's ambivalence towards the notion of "truth." In *Beyond the Veil* (1975)--written in French even before Said's *Orientalism*--Mernissi reiterates the Foucauldian suspicion towards truth and certainty:

> My modest aim in this research is not to irritate the reader by claiming to have uncovered the truth about the new male-female dynamics that has emerged in modern Moroccan society. I leave the truth to those who seek certainty. My own feeling is that we move forward faster and live better when we seek doubt [...] The qualitative analysis is not intended to flood the reader with statistical truths, which are in any case at anyone's disposal at the offices of the census department in Rabat. No, qualitative analysis ought to have the opposite effect: not to fortify your certitudes but to destroy them. It is understandable that a good number of walking dead may not appreciate that. (94)

Whether her reinvention of the Muslim woman is truthful or not, Mernissi could care less; as she puts it herself, she left truth for those who seek certainty (*Beyond the Veil* 94). However, throughout her writings, Mernissi presents her reinvention of early Muslim society and the ideal of gender equality in Muhammad's time as the truth that has been hidden or "veiled" by the Muslim male elite. Mernissi's re-authentification of the hadith--a strategy within the very system she opposes--paradoxically endorses the notion of truth from which the hadith derives its authority and hence, reinforces the power of tradition to reinscribe and perpetuate itself.

Even though her distinction between true and false hadith is phallocentric, Mernissi's feminist revision of Islamic tradition is strategically deployed to provide a common basis for feminist mobilization in Moroccan society. The contradictions in the Islamic feminism of Mernissi also stem from the double bind to protect the rights of "Muslim women" against the rising Islamist or "internal" threat and to respond to the increasingly anti-Islamic feeling in the West (the external threat). To put it differently,

Mernissi's feminist construction of the "Muslim woman" is subjected to "two levels of articulation": a "comparison/competition" on the "internal" level, and a "comparison/competition at the international level " (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Studies* 159).

Even though Mernissi emphasizes the diversity of Moroccan women's experiences, this diversity is still based on the exclusion of illiterate men and women and the Berber speaking population of Morocco, who are denied not only access to ancient Arabic sources, but more importantly, a position from which to speak and legislate laws on behalf of Muslim women. The rhetoric of diversity, as Scott Michaelsen puts it, is thus "a theory of assimilation grounded upon a fundamental exclusion, an exclusion so thoroughly buried it goes virtually unnoticed, almost unread" (*Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics* 23) (1997). Thus, it is the privileges of class, race, and education which give Mernissi the power to re-authenticate the hadith, compete with male religious authorities like al Bukhari, and speak on behalf of the Moroccan "Muslim woman."

III) A North African Oedipus? Beyond the Reification of Culture

Another problem in Mernissi's feminist reinvention of the "Muslim woman" is her assumption of a homogeneous oppressive Islamic culture. Comparing the Western and Islamic perceptions of female sexuality, Mernissi claims that in contrast with the model of passive female sexuality in Freud's theory, the entire Muslim social structure is an attack on, and a defense against the disruptive power of female sexuality. For instance, the eleventh century theologian, al-Ghazali (1058-1111) sees civilization as a struggle to contain women's destructive power or *fitna* ("chaos") (*Beyond the Veil* 31). Societies, he

says, prosper only if we create institutions that foster male dominance through sexual segregation. Mernissi's claim that the teachings of al-Ghazali determine the male-female dynamics in contemporary Muslim society is problematic for many reasons. First, Mernissi ignores those teachings in al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum al Din* or *The Revivication of Islam*,[4] which are not detrimental to women. Despite his obvious and undeniable misogyny, al-Ghazali's recommendation for the Muslim man to engage in foreplay and be preoccupied with his wife's sexual pleasure is very advanced for his century:

> Let him proceed with gentle words and kisses. The Prophet said, "Let none of you come upon his wife like an animal, and let there be an emissary between them." He was asked, "What is this emissary, O Messenger of God?" He said, "The kiss and [sweet] words."
>
> Once the husband has attained his fulfillment, let him tarry until his wife also attains hers. Her orgasm (inzāl) may be delayed, thus exciting her desire; to withdraw quickly is harmful to the woman. Difference in the nature of [their] reaching a climax causes discord whenever the husband ejaculates first. Congruence in attaining a climax is more gratifying to her because the man is not preoccupied with is his own pleasure, but rather with hers; for it is likely that the woman might be shy. (Madelain Farah, *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam* 106-07)

The second problem with Mernissi's analysis is her "cultural mummification" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 78) of Moroccan society and of the Islamic world in general. Unlike Ahmed, who focuses on the heterogeneity of Islamic tradition, its constant change through time, and its affinities with the Judeo-Christian traditions, Mernissi's construction of Islamic tradition seems based on a closed and localized notion of culture. By positing a total cultural break between Jahilia and Islam, Mernissi reproduces the Islamist originary narrative locating the origin of culture and civilization in the early years of Islam. As Harrow puts it, culture is to be viewed as a process of "contestation" ("Shibboleths in the Production of Culture"), rather than something

confined within some established geographical borders. Mernissi never questions the paradigm from which this so-called "Moroccan Islamic culture" is assumed to be present and already operating. Rather than positing an originary Islamic Moroccan culture that is oppressive to women, women's condition in Morocco has to be examined in view of a syncretic[5] Mediterranean patriarchal culture (Amselle 161), for the boundaries between the crescent and the cross, between the southern Muslim shore of the Mediterranean and the northern Christian side have constantly been fluid and shifting. For instance, the history of the renegade population in North Africa points not simply to the cultural exchange which must have inevitably occurred between the northern and southern bank of the Mediterranean, but more importantly, to the invention of North Africa as Europe's Muslim Other.

Mernissi's view on love in Muslim society raises another theoretical problem: how solid is any claim that bases social practice on an authoritative text, especially a text from the eleventh century? To claim that al-Ghazali's teachings have determined women's condition and rights in Morocco presumes that Moroccan society is culturally reified and frozen. Also, Mernissi's claim that the entire Muslim order condemns love between a man and a woman, and a husband and his wife presupposes a homogeneous misogynistic Islamic tradition with no internal antagonistic or contradictory elements. Ibn Hazm's (994-1064) *The Ring of the Dove; A Treatise on the Art and Practice of Arab Love*, for instance, undermines Mernissi's claim that Islamic legal discourse condemns love between a man and a woman. Just as Montaigne's and de Courtois's defense of the arranged marriage serve to protect the aristocratic blood line, the "Muslim order's" attack

on love needs to be historicized as a defense of the practice of endogamy which existed not just in Morocco, but in Southern Europe, especially in Italy, Greece, and France.[6]

Throughout her writings, Mernissi presents Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic patriarchy as essentially male. The two women's marches, which took place in Morocco on 12 March 2000, show that the Islamist movement is not always male. Whereas the Rabat demonstration was led by the feminists who supported the plan of Saïd Saadi, the Moroccan Secretary of State, who wanted to reform *al Mudawana* (the Moroccan family/*Shari'a* laws), the Casablanca march was led on the same day by the Islamist sisters, who believed that the abolition of polygamy, the banning of unilateral divorce, and women's right to get married without their parents' consent were innovations alien and contrary to the teachings of Islam (Ahmed R. Benchemsi, "Maroc: minijupes contre tchadors," *Jeune Afrique* 34-7). Mernissi's reading of the veil as a universal symbol of female oppression, reveals how her upper-class social background separates her from the lower class Moroccan women, who wear the veil to engage in public activities they would otherwise be denied. Furthermore, Mernissi's distinction between the Muslim exploitation of the female body through seclusion and veiling and the exploitation of women through the commodification of their bodies in the West does not apply to all the classes and all the Muslim countries (*Beyond the Veil* 167).

Mernissi's use of Freudian theory as a universal model to analyze the psyche of Muslim societies is quite problematic. Ignoring the revisions of Freud's theory done by Lacan and Kristeva, Mernissi reads Freud in literal rather than symbolic terms. Mernissi makes the claim that all Muslim men display symptoms of a Oedipus complex, i.e., obsession with the mother and hatred for the wife: "In Muslim societies not only is the

marital bond weakened and love for the wife discouraged, but his mother is the only woman a man is allowed to love at all, and this love is encouraged to take the form of life-long gratitude" (*Beyond the Veil* 121). She also ignores the implications of applying the European construct of the Name of the Father to non-Western societies where the Name of the Father does not necessarily involve the biological father. In *Oedipe Africain*, Marie Cécile and Edmond Ortigues write that the Oedipus complex rather than being universal is always mediated through local culture. During their clinical practice in Dakar from 1962-1966 (120), these two French psychoanalysts "found out that the mental illnesses of their patients are related to certain aspects of Western African culture and basic tenets" (Hortense Spillers, "All the Things You Could Be by Now: If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race" 122). In the West African context, the Oedipus myth is "a structure of relations" (139): the Father is "a function" rather than a "progenitor" (139) and "the youth... does not imagine killing the father but must be referred to the ancestors through him" (136). Mernissi's claim that all men in Muslim societies suffer from a Oedipus complex is not only totalizing--as it assumes "a singular patriarchal kinship system [common to all Arab and Muslim societies, i.e., over twenty different countries]" (Mohanty 204)--but also recalls the reductionist tendency in Western feminist scholarship to analyze the "Muslim woman" as victim of a homogeneous Islamic patriarchal family system in the Middle East. Moreover, Mernissi's statement that the Muslim order perceives the Muslim woman as the enemy within and the Christian West as the enemy without is not relevant solely to Islamic culture, but to all said patriarchal cultures.[7] Once again, because of the double privilege of class and education, Mernissi was able to combine the authority of the Muslim

theologian with that of the Western psychoanalyst, to unlock the mysteries of "Islamic memory" and investigate "the consciousness of Muslims" over the last "fifteen centuries" (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 179).

As demonstrated in this chapter, the Islamic feminism of Mernissi, far from being ethnocentric, uses Freudian, historicist and post-structuralist approaches to her feminist reconstruction of Islam. Despite her essentialist construction of the West and the Muslim world, her reinvention of the early Muslim women is strategic in that it destabilizes the authority of legalistic Islam and in reforming the *Shari'a* laws. Subverting Islamic patriarchy's claim that "women are deficient in mind and faith," Mernissi uses the Islamic concept of *al-ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning) to revise and historicize the misogynistic *hadith* held as insurmountable obstacles to Muslim women's emancipation. Unlike Judith Butler,[8] who locates political agency in subverting the dominant phallocentric discourse, "Third World" feminists like Mernissi are committed to effect social and economic change through the intermediacy of the state, i.e., they want to involve the government in enacting laws that guarantee women's education and their equal access to economic and social privileges.

Mernissi, is one of the Arab feminists, who, to use Ahmed's words, "hears the voice of ethical Islam," and for whom there is no contradiction between Islam and democracy or Islam and secularism.[9] As Mernissi puts it: "The democratic glorification of the human individual, regardless of sex, race, or status, is the kernel of the Muslim message" (*Beyond the Veil* 19). This is why she argues later in the book that democracy starts in the domestic space not in parliaments:

> I have in mind rather the relations we establish with the people closest to us, with whom we share the greatest interests and weave

> the most intense and most intimate human relations in a domain considered non-political, like the household (in which life's essential functions are enacted: eating, sleeping, love-making), to seek it in the high ground for democracy, the party cell or the parliamentary chamber. (95-6)

Finally, both Mernissi's reliance on the *Shari'a* law and defensive claims that there is no discrepancy between Islam and democracy, that Islam elevated women's status far more than any other religion, recall the attacks on secularism and modernism by Muslim extremists, for whom Bourguiba's secular politics such as the closing of the Zaytuna Mosque and the abolition of the veil and polygamy, exemplify the barbarity of the civil or secular state. Thus, Mernissis's Islamic feminist agenda risks being co-opted by the Islamist groups to deny North African women the rights they already enjoy under the "secular" state.

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[1] I shall discuss later in this chapter the division between tradition and modernity in the writings of Mernissi and Ahmed.

[2] According to Mernissi, the hypocrites are a powerful group of Medinese, who, threatened by Muhammad's egalitarian project--such as his stand on slavery and prostitution, women's right to inheritance and booty (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 131)--had invented the story of Aïsha's affair with Safwan (178), and harassed Muhammad's wives in public (180). As a result, Muhammad was pushed to comply with their wishes by veiling his wives. This demarcation between the veiled and the unveiled woman sanctioned the harassment of the "unveiled woman," and protected thus the hypocrites' lucrative trade in slave-prostitution. Even though Mernissi explains Muhammad's failure to abolish slavery by the strong male opposition to Islam's ideal of gender and racial equality, she never tackles the problem of Non-Muslim slaves in early Islam.

[3] Even though he says women should be married for their religion, the women Muhammad married were chosen for their beauty rather than their faith. See Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* (London: Al Saqi books, 1985) 54.

[4] I am using here Mernissi's translation of the Arabic title *Ihya' 'Ulum al Din*. The exact date when al Ghazali wrote this monumental work is unknown. Subsequent quotations from al Ghazali are from Madelain Farah's translation of some essays in *Ihya*, published under *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam*.

[5] Louise Shapiro's *Breaking the Codes: Female Criminality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* suggests that the patriarchies on both sides of the Mediterranean seem to have reached a consensus as to what a woman's role and place in society should be. "Blaming the fall of Rome on women's emancipation," Camille Ducreux, a Parisian lawyer, argued that a woman's natural place is home, not politics: "The Greek hid his wife in the gynécée, the Roman placed her under the guard of two lares (domestic spirits), the Moslem enclosed her in his harem, our society shelters her under the protective roof of the home" (Shapiro 187). Dr. Toulouse, another French expert in "*la science intersexuelle*" made the claim that in mental institutions

women sought "solitude more than men did." They "naturally" want to be left alone, "a bit as a recluse in the home" (Shapiro 187). As a matter of fact al-Ghazali's *The Revivication of Islam* bears many similarities with the medieval moral treaties like *The Goodman of Paris* (1393) which urged women to seek the safety of the home (James F. McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot* 9). The early Church Fathers and the Catholic Church also warned men against what al-Ghazali calls *fitna* i.e., "chaos" or "women's power of seduction." The Abbè de Gibergues cautioned his male congregation that "the devil makes use of women to ruin men by seducing them" (McMillan 9-10). Jean Jacques Rousseau--the father of French humanism--has also recommended women's seclusion in harems similar to those erected by the "Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians'" (*Letter to D'Alembert* 8: 89).

[6] Moreover, in sixteenth and seventeenth century France, many writers warned people against the dangers of marrying for love. For instance, Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) wrote that one must marry not for love, but for the sake of family line. In *Le Livre de famille*, Antoine de Courtois (1762-1828) defended arranged marriages because parents knew what was best for their children's interests (McMillan 31). It would be very naïve, indeed, to conclude based on the authority of the two above texts that French society condemns love between a man and a woman, and a husband and his wife. The very fact that Montaigne, and de Courtois attacked love, proves that romantic love did exist in their time.

[7] Rick Lazio's attack on Hillary Rodham Clinton in the 2000 New York senate election as an agent of Islamic terrorism for receiving a $50,000 campaign donation from a Muslim group, and Hilary's subsequent return of this "tainted money" after conceding that all Muslims are terrorists, ironically reveals how Christian patriarchy, despite its claim that Western women's emancipation is a model for the "Muslim woman," still perceives the "Christian woman" as the enemy within and Islam as the enemy without.

[8] In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler opposes pushing the state to legislate hate crime laws, because in depending on the government to protect them, gays, lesbians and bisexuals risk being overpowered by the state, undermining thus their own authority and political agency.

[9] In *Women and Gender in Islam*, Ahmed does not discuss thoroughly the issue of Islam and democracy as Mernissi does in *Islam and Democracy* and *Beyond the Veil*.

Chapter Two: Isabelle, *ou "La Roumia Convertie"*: A Case Study in Female Orientalism

I) Isabelle Eberhardt: An Introduction

Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904) was a European woman who traveled throughout the Maghreb disguised as an Arab man at the turn of the nineteenth century. She was the daughter of Nathalie Eberhardt, wife of General Paul de Moerder, a Russian of noble birth, and officer of the Tsar's imperial army. Mme de Moerdre eloped to Switzerland with her children's tutor, Alexander Trophimowsky, a Russian priest who later became an anarchist. He is believed to Eberhardt's father even though he never acknowledged she was his daughter.[1] Because of her upbringing, Eberhardt mastered both Russian and French. Later on, Trophimowsky taught her Arabic, which paved the way for her fascination with Islamic mysticism. In 1897, she sailed with her mother to Tunisia where they officially converted to Islam. After her mother's death, she shocked the French colonial authorities in Tunisia and Algeria by her addiction to kif and alleged sexual promiscuity with both Arab men and the French soldiers stationed in North Africa. Her masquerade as Si Mahmoud Essadi as well as her "scandalous" marriage with an Arab man, Slimène Ehnni, threatened the racial hierarchy underlying French North Africa. In 1901, she was expelled from North Africa by the French authorities after a fanatic member of the Tidjanya order tried to assassinate her, partly because of her affiliation with another rival religious brotherhood, the Qadiriya. The French authorities deemed her presence to be dangerous for the colonial law and order (*In the Shadow of Islam* 8) (1993). In October 1901, her husband was transferred to Marseilles where he and his wife Eberhardt married this time in a French civil ceremony. Once a French citizen,

Eberhardt was able to return to North Africa. This time, however, she was recruited by General Hubert Lyautey as an informant. Her journey to Kenadsa (Morocco) and her meeting with the Qadiriya leaders gave her invaluable information that she would later submit to the French authorities (*In the Shadow of Islam* 10). Eberhardt's career came to an end when she tragically died during the floods that struck Ain Sefra (Algeria) in 1904. General Lyautey found the manuscripts she was working on in an urn. He sent them to Victor Barrucand,[2] who revised Eberhardt's "*Sud-Oranais*" stories and published them in 1920 under the present title (*In the Shadow of Islam* 13).

Eberhardt's writings cannot be understood without being located in the context of the French presence in North Africa, the prevalent nineteenth century gender ideology in France, and Eberhardt's personal history. This chapter examines Eberhardt's oeuvre--namely, *Écrits intimes* (1991), *In the Shadow of Islam*, *Écrits sur le sable* (1988), *Departures* (1994), *The Passionate Nomad* (1987), *The Oblivion Seekers* (1972), and *Rakhil* (1990)--as a case of female Orientalism. My objective here is not just to provide a corrective to Said's silence on female Orientalism, but more importantly, to determine whether occidental women share the biases of their countrymen during the colonial encounter.

In *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* (1992), Billie Melman argues that unlike the uniform and authoritative discourse on the "Muslim woman" in Said's discussion of male Orientalism, the representation of the Oriental woman was not unified in female Orientalism. Melman argues "that the discourse about things Oriental was polyphonic and that the experience of the eastern Mediterranean was heterogeneous and [not only] political" (3) as Said claims. Along the lines of Melman's

criticism, this chapter contends that Eberhardt's construction of the "Muslim woman" as a prostitute/Saint reveals a split within "the subject of colonial enunciation" (Bhabha 72). One major claim in this chapter is that the production of the "Muslim woman" in Eberhardt's writings depends on the location of the author within the apparatus of power, which informs both her colonial subjectivity and her ideological construction of the Other Without. I will be using Eberhardt's own expression, "*la roumia convertie*" ("the converted non-Muslim woman") to discuss the antagonistic sites of enunciation she occupies while negotiating her social, sexual, and racial identity. In contrast with Bhabha's presentation of the hybrid as androcentric, my analysis of "*la roumia convertie*" as a metaphor for the articulation of identity and difference shows that the hybrid is always gendered. This chapter also argues that the Third Republic's views on women's roles and Eberhardt's double allegiance to the bourgeois feminism of Maria Deraismes, and the radical feminism of the Saint Simonians and Hubertine Auclert, have a strong bearing on her reinvention of the Muslim woman as a prostitute/Saint. This chapter also makes the claim that Eberhardt, while reproducing the male Orientalist stereotypes about the "Muslim woman," transforms them to criticize the ideal of domesticity in fin-de-siècle European society. In relocating the harem on the road, Eberhardt not only redefines the seraglio genre found in male Orientalism, but also subverts the domestication and desexualization of the harem by nineteenth century women travelers in the Middle East.

Eberhardt's writings are both complicit with and resistant to the French imperial ideology. Eberhardt is not unique, however, in presenting the colonial female subject's position as inside/outside the hegemonic discourse of empire. In *Imperial Eyes* (1992),

Mary Louise Pratt shows how Flora Tristan, the French socialist feminist, while relying on the "linear emplotment of conquest narrative" (157), created in Peru a "feminotopia," i.e., "an idealized world of female autonomy, empowerment and pleasure" (166-67). In *Maps of Englishness*, Gikandi also examines the "ambivalent interpellation" (47) in Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures* (West Indies) and Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* towards the British imperial project. Joining Pratt, Gikandi argues that "because it seems free of the gender ideologies that constrain white women in the metropolis, the imperial field was construed as a social space for freedom and fulfillment" (144). In opposition to Pratt and Gikandi, in her analysis of Olive Schreiner's writings about South Africa, Anne McClintock focuses on Schreiner's rebellious feminism and de-emphasizes her racist attitudes towards Blacks (*Imperial Leather* 258-95) (1995).

In *Women's Orients*, Melman notes that Western women's writing about the Middle East is essentially "a middle class activity" that coincides with the rise of the European colonial powers and collapse of the Ottoman empire (32). In the Maghreb, the Turkish Empire encompassed Tunisia and Algeria, but did not extend to Morocco. In the nineteenth century, the ties of these colonies with Turkey became quite loose, as Algeria and Tunisia gradually overthrew the indirect rule of Istanbul and placed themselves under the direct rule of the native Deys (Algeria) and the Beys (Tunisia). Eberhardt's peregrinations in the Maghreb could not have been possible if "the Old Sick Man" hadn't lost its grip on North Africa, paving the way for the French capture of Algiers in 1832 and Tunisia in 1881.

II) The Female Imperial Subject under the Third Republic: An Overview of Colonial History and Gender Ideology in Nineteenth Century France

In colonial Algeria, the French pursued two policies: association and assimilation. Given the fact that the French and the Algerian population belonged to two different racial stocks in the colonial view, the anti-assimilationists argued that the cultural gap between the two societies could never be bridged (Jean-Pierre Biondi, *Les Anticolonialistes 1881-1962* 31). Even though the policy of assimilation depended on the complicity of the native rulers and administrators, it was based on a notion of partnership which did not exist given the inequality inherent in any relation between a colonizer and a colonized society (Elizabeth Ezra *The Colonial Unconscious* 6). The associationist policy was first put into practice by Napoleon III, who stated in an 1860 speech in Algiers, that France "will take care of the happiness of these millions of Arabs, improve their existence, elevate them to the dignity of free men, spread education among them while respecting their religion." "France," he insisted, "[did] not have the right to transform the indigenous population of North Africa into French" (Charles-Robert Ageron, *France Coloniale ou Parti Colonial?* 192).

This associationist policy was also championed by General Hubert Lyautey, who sponsored Eberhardt's journey to Kenadsa and recruited her as an informant on the rebellious tribes in the south. Complicit with Lyautey's policy, as early as 1902, *L'Akhbar*, the weekly newspaper of Victor Barrucand and Isabelle Eberhardt, held the slogan: 'Neither exploitation, nor assimilation, association'" (Ageron 224-25). Instead of direct rule, Lyautey championed the protectorate system, which the French imposed on Tunisia in 1881 and Morocco in 1912. "Instead of getting rid of the old native

administrators," Lyautey once explained, "We must use them to govern with the [native] ruler, and not against" him (Ageron 211). But the colonial divide and rule policy was at the heart of Lyautey's policy of association. In his own words:

> Running a protectorate means to maintain as often as possible the indigenous fights, to give them the direct power of the police, administration, justice itself, tax collection, under the supervision of one agent who resides near the native chief. It is through this agent that the eyes of the indigenous chief and his people will be opened to our ideas about justice. (Ageron 213)

This divide and rule policy is best illustrated in the doctrine of "pacification" Lyautey introduced to Algeria. This policy consisted of winning one tribe after another, and with the cooperation of the tribes he had already rallied to the side of France, he would exert an economic boycott against those tribes hostile to French rule. In 1892, Eugène Etienne, a member of the French Colonial Party wrote: "The question of Morocco is capital for the security of Algeria [...] We cannot admit that another power settles there before us" (Ageron 144). Paul Bourde, the brain of the French Colonial Party, also suggested the necessity of a treaty with England, whereby Morocco would be exchanged for Egypt (Ageron 145). Eberhardt's participation in the pacification of these hostile tribes who lived near the Algerian-Moroccan border led in the long run to the colonization of Morocco. Eberhardt's journey to Kenadsa as a liaison agent between Lyautey and her Muslim brothers shows her complicity with the French colonial project. Including herself in the masculine world of empire, she writes:

> Very soon *we* [my emphasis] can hope to see accomplished, thanks to the actions of the General and his collaborators who are as intelligent as they are dedicated, not--as our colleague from la Dépêche coloniale called it--"the moral conquest of the Berbers," but rather the pacification and economic conquest of the region. (*Departures* 182)

The use of the collective relative pronoun "we" not only allows this Russian woman to inscribe herself as French, but also to re-redefine French empire in non-exclusive gendered terms. Eberhardt's description of Lyautey's collaborators as "intelligent" and "dedicated" is a self-congratulatory statement that simultaneously underscores European women's active participation in the project of colonialism, and Western patriarchy's reluctance to recognize them as equal partners in the imperial field.

In contrast with association, the French policy of assimilation was based on the principle that Algeria, being an extension of France, must have institutions similar to those in the homeland. The French who immigrated to the colonies enjoyed their full rights as French citizens, including "the right to be represented by an elect deputy in the metropolitan Parliament" (Ageron 190). The theory of assimilation, by extension applied both to the foreign settlers of European origin (mainly Spanish, Italians, Maltese, and Sicilians) and the native Algerian population, who could theoretically be naturalized French citizens if they were to demonstrate their love and allegiance to France. For instance Eberhardt's Algerian husband, Slimène, obtained French citizenship after serving in the French army for many years as a Spahi.

In 1870, assimilation became the official colonial policy of the Third Republic. It was championed by Jules Ferry, the Prime Minister of the Third Republic, and one of the founding fathers of the French colonial education. Despite the constant bickering between the Royalists and the Republicans in the Ferry period, both sides seemed to agree that "'the inferior races' could only bend down to the civilization coming from the [North]" (Biondi 31). In an 1885 speech, Ferry, deputy of the Vosges then, gave three reasons for the French conquest of Tunisia, Annam, Tonkin, Congo, and part of

Madagascar: 1) to guarantee France's control of the world's markets and natural resources; 2) to bring civilization to the rest of the world, because "an occidental society like France, which has reached an elevated degree of scientific, technical, and cultural development, has rights and duties vis à vis 'the inferior races' which have remained on the margins of progress"; 3) and last, "to maintain France's rank in the world" (Biondi 28), especially after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war (1870) and the loss of the Alsace and the Lorraine.

Many people in France opposed the French "civilizing mission." The pacifist economist Frédéric Passy argued that it "was a waste of French blood while Germany was getting stronger" (29). The nationalists also disapproved of Ferry's new conquests. Paul Déroulède for instance, shouted at Ferry: "I lost two sisters (Alsace and Lorraine) and you offer me twenty servants!" (29). The French intellectual circles were also divided towards Ferry's imperialist policy: Whereas Alphonse Daudet, Pierre Loti, Guy de Maupassant, Jules Vallès, Lèon Bloy, Sèverine, and Henri Rochefort took a stand against the project of colonization (Biondi 31-3), Emile Zola, Louis Bertrand, and George Sand endorsed the Republic's imperialist policy and claimed that France would be regenerated by its colonies (Ageron 96-7). Sharing the revolutionary idealism of the Third Republic, Robert Randau, Eberhardt's friend in Algeria, also prophesized in his fiction that France would create "an immense colonial empire in Africa without brutalizing the population, with the simple peaceful propaganda of our kindness, without betraying the pure traditions of our Revolution" (Ageron 69).

Eberhardt's frequent battles with the French colonial authorities have to be contextualized within the nineteenth century gender ideology at home and in the colonies.

Even though French women had been working in the factories since the beginning of the nineteenth century, both the Republicans and the Royalists in fin-de-siècle France agreed that a woman's role was to be a mother and wife. If the ideal of the angel in the house gained strength in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century France, it was because of the ideological rivalry between the Catholic Church--which lost most of its privileges after the French Revolution--and the anti-clericals who supported the laic Republic. According to Ferry, the Church created barriers between husbands and wives by its tight control of girls' education. In a famous speech, he called for the "necessity of rescuing women from the Church in order to win them to science" (McMillan 50). In the law of 9 August 1879, Ferry made girls' primary education compulsory and announced the creation of a training school for elementary school women teachers.

The Third Republic's preoccupation with women's roles as mothers was also caused by the decline in France's population after the Franco Russian war. Women were urged to stay at home and raise republican *citoyens* ("male citizens") till "the corrupt, clerical, infertile Empire would be replaced by a morally regenerate, secular, and fecund republic" (Shapiro 179). In Algeria, "it was the job of the [colonial] woman 'to create France' wherever she went" (Julia Clancy Smith and Frances Gouda, *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* 81) (1998). Because of the threat of racial decline, the French women, whether at home or in the imperial field, were taught courses in child-rearing, housework, and the new science of puériculture (infant hygiene) (Clancy Smith 81). Because of the national anxieties about depopulation, there was naturally an increasing fear of the lesbian and the autonomous bourgeois feminist woman, who refused to get married and have children (Shapiro 181).

Eberhardt's male disguise, sexual freedom, and use of the neo-Malthusian method of contraception (Annette Kobak, *Isabelle: The Life of Isabelle Eberhardt* 99) (1988) did certainly make her a dangerous non-reproductive *hommesse* ("masculine woman") in the eyes of the Third Republic.

In the nineteenth century, some of the rights Muslim women enjoyed, especially in inheritance and control of their own property in case of divorce were still denied the French women. Decreed by Napoleon in 1804, Article 213 of the Civil Code placed the married woman's property under the tutelage of her husband. She could not open a business or dispose of her property without his consent (Shapiro 182-83). By institutionalizing the "crime de passion," the Napoleonic Code allowed only the French male to get away with the murder of his adulterous wife. Only in 1881, did French women obtain the right to open a savings bank account without the assistance of their husbands. Unlike the British Suffragettes, French women obtained the right to vote only after W.W.II., because of the strong male opposition to the female vote. Reflecting the laws in the mother country, colonial Algeria declared that only the Muslim men had the right to vote if they were naturalized French citizens.

III) Between Complicity and Resistance: Ebehardt's Ambivalence towards the "Muslim Woman" and the French Civilizing Mission

Even though she supported Lyautey's policy of pacification, Eberhardt was also a firm believer in the principle of assimilation. Defending the French civilizing mission, she tells her husband Slimène that the best way to serve Islam and the Arab nation is by serving France:

> Imagine that in working for the goal that I set out for you here that you are working for all your Arab brothers, for all our Muslim brothers. You will provide for the French gentlemen--disdainful and Arabophobe--the example of an Arab who, having begun as Spahi of the second order, has raised himself to a rank envied and respected, by his intelligence and work. If there were many such Arabs in Algeria, the French would have been obliged to change their minds on the subject of "dirty Arabs." That is how you must serve Islam and the Arab nation, and not by fomenting useless and bloody revolts which serve only as ammunition for the enemies of all that is Arab, and not by discouraging those honest French who would like to be brothers. (*Écrits intimes* 327)[3]

This is contradictory not just with her support for Lyautey's policy of pacification, but also with her defense of the Marguerite rebels and her participation in the 1899 Bône riots (Kobak 64-5). In her diaries, Eberhardt mentioned that she would write an article in defense of the Marguerite rebels who attacked a French garrison, but she never kept her promise:

> I may have to go to France this winter to see about writing a piece in defense of the Marguerite rebels. O! if I could only say everything I know , speak my mind and come out with the whole truth! What a good deed that would be! In due course it would have positive results and establish my reputation too! Brieux was certainly right about that: I must start my career by coming out openly in defense of my Algerian Muslim brethren. (*The Passionate Nomad* 100)

As the above passage suggests, Eberhardt's project of writing this article can be read not only as a career move, but also as a sign of her genuine care for her Muslim brothers. Because of her participation in the Bône riots, however, Eberhardt was duly recorded in the colonial records at Constantine as a dangerous Russian woman conniving with the natives (Kobak 65).

In a letter to Victor Barrucand, Eberhardt's friend and editor of *L'Akhbar*, Rosalia Balaban Bentami[4] wrote:

> You cannot imagine how this Isabelle Eberhardt awakened forgotten feelings in me--my unrealized dreams! I understand very well why she idealizes the Arab and Islam so much because it's very characteristic of the Russian soul to get carried away about anything that's surrounded by mystery. But there is one thing that touched me profoundly and that she passes over as if it were unimportant--that's the life of the Arab women... she, the Russian woman... the woman who's free as a bird, who's Bohemian, she doesn't see a whole people, millions of women--prisoners, deprived of the most elementary rights in the world, the right to live, to think, to see the sun... to have respect for their personality. If you knew, dear Sir, how I study them and how I want to cry. (247-48)

Bentami's criticism of Eberhardt's silence on the Muslim woman's condition is not only inaccurate, but also Eurocentric. Eberhardt did in fact criticize the seclusion of Muslim women in North Africa. She once wrote: "I am not bound at all as a Muslim woman to wear a *gandoura* and a *mléya* and to be cloistered. These measures have been imposed on Muslim women to prevent their possible fall and preserve their chastity." True purity, she argued, was one which was "free and not imposed" (*Écrits intimes* 79). Bentami's own marriage to an Arab man (Kobak 247) did not deprive her of "the right to live," "to see the sun," and to write about the oppression of the "Muslim woman."[5] Also, her statement that the Russian woman was "as free as a bird" is inaccurate given the evidence to the contrary in Eberhardt's own family background. Her adoptive father Trophimowsky not only controlled Mme de Moerdre's money, but also used it to purchase Villa Tropicale under his own name (Kobak 15), an estate which Eberhardt and her brothers could not inherit later because it was claimed by Trophimosky's heirs in Russia. All of Mme de Moerdre's children suffered from Trophimowsky's patriarchal tyranny: Nicolas left home in 1885 (Kobak 19), Nathalie eloped in 1887 (Kobak 20),

Augustin in 1888 (Kobak 25), Isabelle in 1897, and Vladimir put his head in a gas oven in 1898 (Koback 67).

In the colonies, it was as a helpmate--and not as a "free bird"--that the French colonial order defined the French woman's role. As early as 1831, Marshall Soult, the French Minister of war, declared that the colonization of Algeria must be led "by married peasant soldiers who will work on their land, while serving in the military." As for their wives, they "will be employed as farm workers or laundresses" (Ageron 16). Even at the time of Eberhardt's peregrinations in North Africa, the imperial field was not a suitable place for single European women. In view of the debate about the dangerous implications of hypnosis, the medical discourse in fin-de-siècle France "urged women not to travel alone and never to meet the eyes of male strangers" (Shapiro 134-35).

Also, the order of expulsion against Eberhardt did not come solely from the French authorities, but also with the benediction of the Russian consulate (Kobak 163), who without hesitation, supported the eviction of the Russian woman from the French territories of North Africa. The reason why the French Arab Bureaux offered protection and tolerated Eberhardt's "eccentric" behavior, was not because the French, like the Russians, allow women to be "free birds," but because Eberhardt was a subject of the Russian Tsar, a friend of the Third Republic, England's arch-enemy, and the guarantor of a durable peace with Germany (Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Nomade j'étais* 266) (1995).

In the early years of the French conquest of Algeria (1840s-1850s), the stereotype of the "Muslim woman" as victim of Islamic laws hardly appeared in the writings of French writers. It was in the period between 1870-1900, that this stereotype was produced. Once the military conquest was over and the hostile tribes pacified, "Islam," as

Clancy Smith and Gouda put it, "was moved from the battlefield into the bedroom" (154). The new interest in the Muslim woman was kindled by the debate over the Algerian man's right to vote (155). In the discourse of anti-assimilation, the stereotype of the "Muslim woman's" oppression was deployed as a political pawn to deny the Algerian man the right to vote, on the ground of his anti-French culture which degraded and oppressed women. In French terms, the Algerian "Muslim woman" is oppressed not because she is denied equal access to political, social and economic opportunities, but because she is subjected to the "primitive" practices of veiling, seclusion and polygamy. Thus, both patriarchies on the opposite sides of the Mediterranean agreed on denying the "Muslim woman" her political rights such as the right to vote.

Eberhardt's criticism of the French women's movement and bourgeois women in general subverts the project of colonial feminism. Eberhardt states that she deliberately exiled herself in the Maghreb from the Paris "where the newspapers' lip-service to feminism [are] even more repugnant than the Parisian coquettes" (*In the Shadow of Islam* 70). Eberhardt seems alienated from the French feminist movement, which she dubs as a bourgeois world of "salons" (70) and dance balls (69). In 1900, the year of the Great Exhibition in Paris, Eberhardt recalls only a sense of disgust from her visit to Paris. In "The Age of the Void" ("*L'Âge du néant*"), a short story decrying the "tragi-comedy of modern life," Eberhardt feels alienated from "the narrow-minded life" of those bourgeois "insipid" women," with "no big minds, dwarfed and strangely looking alike." They are nothing but "slaves to appearances at the detriment of the real" and vulgar "courtisanes" with no "esthetic grace" (*Écrits sur le sable* 531-32). Penniless and still unknown despite her talent, Eberhardt reported all her anger against French Bourgeois women.

During her visit to Paris, the Russian explorer Lydia Paschkoff introduced her to the famous French lesbian feminist Sèverine,[6] and to the famous literary salon of Marie Laetizia Bonaparte-Wyse--grand niece of Bonaparte I (Charles-Roux, *Nomade j'étais* 205)--where George Sand, Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, and Saint-Beuve often appeared (211). In one of her letters to Eberhardt, Paschkoff gives her the following advice:

> In France one must be French to live from journalism and have--as I was told but refused to do--a lover in the Press. A husband is more difficult, but those who have a husband manage to make a career for themselves [...] Never! I prefer to tell you all this brutally. I am told that even George Sand could have got nowhere without Sandeau, Musset, etc. Sèverine got on because of her lovers Va [...] and Puy [...] and they are Frenchwomen.
>
> My Job on the Figaro was a miracle. I had the whole staff against me, except one, who was in love with me, and he let me down when he saw that there was no hope. All the Russians were against me, and when the Ambassador invited me to the Embassy it did me more harm than anything else. (Macworth 71)

As Paschkoff's letter indicates, it was not easy for French women to achieve literary fame in nineteenth century France. To succeed, they have to be either someone's wife or someone's lover. Eberhardt's Russian origin and modest social background could only add more hurdles on the path of her literary career.

Even though she dissociates herself from nineteenth century French feminism, Eberhardt's writings both reflect and resist the bourgeois feminism[7] of Maria Deraismes and the radical feminism of the Saint Simonians and Hubertine Auclert. Given her upper-class background, Deraismes's feminism focused primarily on the centrality of the family. In her writings, "free love" was condemned because it entailed "the annihilation of the family" (Claire Goldberg Moses, *Femininsm in the 19th Century* 181). To save the family, women must receive the same education as their husbands (Moses 183). Even

though she championed girls' education and the termination of the Napoleonic Civic Code, Deraismes saw that it was too soon for the issue of the woman's vote.

Recalling Deraismes's emphasis on women's education, Eberhardt wanted to create a school for Muslim girls. Despite the "constant intrigues" of the Moorish women" (*The Passionate Nomad* 88) and the feelings of "hatred and disgust" they inspired in her (*Écrits intimes* 317), Eberhardt wanted to create a "[Qur'anic] school for little girls with an elementary French course, writing and reading in Arabic, the essentials of Islamic history, and everything in the most ardent Islamic spirit" (127). In contrast with the principle of assimilation underlying Ferry's colonial education, and Hubertine Auclert's[8] call for French women to conquer the domestic space of the "Muslim woman" and to teach her the principles of French civilization (*Femmes* 49), Eberhardt wanted to turn the Muslim little girls into better Muslims:

> If we can at least find at least forty five little girls to start with, then, the parents, noticing the good results and observing that instead of Europeanizing their daughters, I would have made them more Muslims, maybe then, they will be encouraged to send their daughters, and we will expand our business. (*Écrits intimes* 134)

Echoing Deraismes, Eberhardt argues that marital relationships should be based on love and friendship, not power and gender inequality:

> Our modern world is so distorted and warped that in marriage the husband is hardly ever the one to do the initiating into sensuality. Stupid and revolting as it is, young girls are hitched to a husband for life, and he is a ridiculous figure in the end. The woman's physical virginity is all his. She is then expected to spend the rest of her life with him, usually in disgust, and suffer what is known as her "marital duty," until the day that someone comes along to teach her, in a web of lies, the existence of a whole universe of thrills, thoughts and sensations that will regenerate her from head to toe. That is where our marriage is so different from any other--and shocks so many solid citizens: Slimène means two things to me--he is both friend and lover. (*The Passionate Nomad* 79-80)

In presenting her marriage to an Algerian man as an ideal to be pursued by Europeans, Eberhardt subverts the Eurocentrism at the heart of Auclert's attack on women's oppression under Islam. Eberhardt's indictment of the young girls' predicament in Europe to marry men they do not love and to suffer for the rest of their lives from "what is known as their marital duty," shows that what Auclert denounced as the Islamic practices of "bride sales"[9] and "child rape"[10] were not unheard of on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean. However, Eberhardt's intention[11] to hire a Russian woman to teach Muslim girls the gendered-vocation of needlework (135), shows how she has embraced the ethics of domesticity at the heart of the very bourgeois culture that she is criticizing.

Eberhardt's emphasis on women's sexual fulfillment is to be examined in view of the tradition of male Orientalism, the Saint Simonians' doctrine of free love, and the patriarchal concept of the family in the first half of nineteenth century France (McMillan 78). Like the French male Orientalists Eugène Delacroix's (*Women of Algiers)* and André Gide (*L'Immoraliste*), Eberhardt reconstructs the Maghreb as a place of sexual freedom even though the southern shore of the Mediterranean had the same oppressive sexual mores as its northern side. As a technology of space, the Maghreb becomes the locale where European identity projects itself. Putting on Arab male clothes constitutes an act of transvestism/minstrelsy that allows her to express and liberate her sexuality. Commenting on her sexual life with Slimène, she writes:

> As far as I am concerned, though, I now have a focus for my sexuality, and the silly phrase: "I am no longer my own master" is quite to the point. When it comes to the senses, Slimène is my one and only, undisputed lover. He is the only one I feel attracted to, the only one to put me in the mood to forget the intellect and descend--is it a descent? I doubt it very much--to the very proverbial realm of sexual exploits. (79)

Like her fellow male Orientalist Massignon, Eberhardt's colonial "penetration" of the world of the *zawiya* and fascination with Islamic mysticism--especially with the Sufi concepts of love, passion, and spiritual ecstasy (*In the Shadow of Islam* 116)--allow her to sublimate and legitimate her sexual drives. Eberhardt's rewriting of physical love along the spiritual transcendence of sex in Sufi philosophy allows her to overcome the "feeling of shame" about her sexuality. In her diaries, Eberhardt wrote that she used to "beat her breasts" because she felt her sexuality made her "debauched' and "depraved" (Kobak 99).

Explaining to her Tunisian correspondent Alî Abdelwahab why she does not want to marry El Khoudja, she writes: "Knowing the despotic character of the moors and the cloistered life of Moorish women, [she] refused his proposal, preferring an illegal union to the loss of all freedom and all future" (*Écrits intimes* 72). Eberhardt's emphasis on being the mistress and not the wife of her rich and powerful lovers--namely, the Turkish diplomat Ahmed Rachid and the Algerian El Khoudja Ben Abdullah--and subsequent marriage to a poor Spahi in the French army, underscore a view that defines patriarchy in terms of money. Eberhardt's marriage to Slimène subverts her own stereotypes about Moorish violence and despotism. In a letter to her husband, Eberhardt apologizes for beating him up: "[She] felt ashamed of [herself] because he didn't defend himself and smiled at [her] blind anger" (*Écrits intimes* 386). And she promises to be an obedient and submissive wife from then on. Eberhardt's power over her husband can also be explained by his inferior status as a colonized subject. In marrying the inferior Muslim Other, both Eberhardt and Bentami--the Russian woman who was charged by Barrucand to translate Eberhardt's work from Russian into French--entered marital unions where they had more freedom than they could ever have dreamt of if they had been married to

someone from their own societies. In these marital contracts between European women and native men, racial superiority seems to redress the balance of gender inferiority.

Probably because of his social and racial status, Sliméne accepted Eberhardt's lifestyle and did not object to her peregrinations in the Algerian South. Indeed, she traveled alone to Figuig, Beni Ouni and Colomb-Bechar, and Kenadsa. When her friend, the novelist Robert Randau expressed "his astonishment at her frequent absences and Slimène's patient acceptance of them, she protested that her husband knew very well that her heart remained with him, but that she could not do otherwise than follow her own destiny" (Kobak 169). In their first encounter with Randau, Slimène introduced his wife as a man: "May I introduce you to Si Mahmoud Saâdi, this is his battle name, in reality, it is Mrs. Ehnni, my wife" (Kobak 195).

Because of her Russian origin, her gender, and conversion to Islam, Eberhardt occupies a double position inside/outside the French and the Muslim patriarchal order. Eberhardt's ambivalence towards the "French civilizing mission" in general and the "Muslim woman" in particular derives from the different sites of enunciation she occupies while negotiating her social, racial, and sexual identity (Bhabha 28). However unlike Bhabha's androcentric view of hybridity and colonial mimicry, Eberhardt's double belonging to French and Muslim society, shows that the hybrid is always gendered.[12] This gendered hybridity is best illustrated in her frequent clashes with the French colonial authorities. Responding to the decree of her expulsion, Eberhardt wrote:

> According to the terms of the decree, I am being banned from all Algerian territory, whether under civilian or military control. I can only wonder about the rationale for this measure. I am a Russian citizen and can in all good conscience say that I have done nothing wrong to deserve it. I have never participated in or had any knowledge of any anti-French activities either in the Sahara or in

> the Tell. On the contrary, I have gone out of my way to defend the late naïb of Ouargla, Sidi Mohammed Taïb, who died fighting a hero's death fighting alongside the French, against the accusations made by a handful of Muslims who have argued that the naïb had betrayed Islam by installing the French at in-Salah, I have always spoken favorably of France to the natives, for I consider it my adoptive country. (62)

Including herself in the French empire, Eberhardt strategically calls France "her adoptive country," others her Muslim brothers as "natives," and writes herself off as an agent of French imperialism. Just as she tries to include herself in the imperial field on the basis of her racial and national background, the French colonial order tries to exclude her on the basis of her gender. Throughout her stay in the Algerian desert, Eberhardt's movements were restricted by the French military. Vexed by Eberhardt's reluctance to travel with him, the head of the military Arab Bureau at Biskra, Captain Adolphe-Roger de Susbielle, forbade her to stay at Chegga for more than twenty-four hours (Kobak 90-1). Captain Gaston Cauvet, head of the Arab Bureau at El Oued, also put her under surveillance. In a report to his superiors, he wrote: "Physically she is neurotic and unhinged, and I'm inclined to think that she has come to El Oued principally to satisfy unhindered her dissolute tastes and her penchant for natives in a place where there are few Europeans" (Kobak 130-31). An anonymous letter sent to General Dechizelle at Batna, also presented her as the enemy within. The writer of the letter wrote that she was the subject of an investigation by the Russian and Swiss police for poisoning and stealing the money of her adoptive father Trophimowsky. She was also accused of harboring "a profound hatred for France and would like nothing better than to excite France's Arab subjects against her" (Kobak 142-43).

IV) *La Roumia Convertie*

I would like to use here Eberhardt's description of her mother as "*la roumia convertie*" ("the converted non-Muslim woman") (*Écrits intimes* 382) to discuss Eberhardt's dual position as insider/outsider with respect to Muslim society. In her personal diary, published after her death as *The Passionate Nomad*, Eberhardt describes how she felt embarrassed with her *roumi* cap (63) while sitting in a Constantine café. In Arabic, the word *roumi* (masculine) or *roumia* (feminine) means a non-Muslim of European origin, usually Christian. Derived from *al-roum*, the Arabic plural for "Romans," this word is loaded with connotations of cultural, racial, and religious otherness. Eberhardt's embarrassment at the café was caused by her display of a sign of alterity that sets her apart from the Algerian men sitting in the café. This feeling of unease disappears only when she starts performing what she constructs as native male behavior, i.e., smoking kif.

In her diaries, Eberhardt makes a cross before those passages in Russian and a crescent before those in Arabic (*The Passionate Nomad* 71). In locating the ☪--the sign of Islam's alterity--and the Russian Orthodox Church (†) in a French text, not only does she subvert the binarism in male Orientalism between the Christian West and the Muslim East, she also deconstructs the production by Western Europe of Russia and the Orthodox Church as Oriental Others.

As a cultural hybrid, "*la roumia convertie*" occupies different sites of enunciation. In a letter to her brother Augustin, Eberhardt writes: "My body is in the West/And my soul is in the Orient/My body is in infidel country/And my heart is in Istanbul" (Kobak 35). In another letter, she advises Slimène to beware the "examples of the unbelieving,

the pseudo-Muslims around [him] who are blind, degenerate and the last of the infidels" (*Écrits intimes* 336). The two above examples reveal an internal dislocation in the subject of enunciation (Bhabha 30). Whereas in the first passage, Eberhardt seems split because of her double belonging to an infidel Europe and a regenerate Orient, in the second, "*la roumia convertie*" creates pseudo-Muslims and excludes them to write herself as a true Muslim. However, in referring to those fake Muslims as infidels, she is simultaneously othering the "*roumia*" in her, and therefore excluding herself from what she calls the society of "true Muslims."

As a mimic woman and a gendered hybrid, "*la roumia convertie*" is both free and subjected to the Law of the Muslim Father. Abdullah, the Tidjanya fanatic who tried to assassinate her, said at his trial that he attacked Eberhardt because she dressed as a man:

> I received a mission from God, who ordered me to go to the Djrid, passing by Behima, where I was to meet Mademoiselle Eberhardt, who created disorder in the Moslem religion...[she] wore masculine dress, which is contrary to our customs, and thus made trouble in our religion. (Macworth 128).

Indeed, it is her masquerade as an Arab man--a violation of the Islamic "sexual division of gender" and therefore of "*hudud Allah*" (Bouhdiba 30-2)--that provoked the attack by Abdullah. At other times, however, both her male disguise and racial Otherness turn paradoxically into a blessing that allows her to pray with men (*Écrits intimes* 92), and to sleep outdoors with Khelifa and Rezki, while Hennia and her son slept indoors in the larger room (*The Passionate Nomad* 40-1).

As a white person, however, Eberhardt enjoys the preferential treatment due to the members of her race in North Africa.[13] Because he tried to assassinate a white woman, Abdullah was initially sentenced to the death penalty, but with Eberhardt's intercession

his sentence was commuted to a life in prison (Kobak 174). The murder of Arab subjects, however, incurred no such serious legal penalties. A week after Abdullah's trial, Maitre Laffont, Eberhardt's attorney, easily obtained the acquittal of three Arab men for the murder of a Touggourt shopkeeper during a robbery (Kobak 176).

As a colonial subject, *"la roumia convertie"* is in collusion with the French imperialist discourse. Reflecting the French distortion of Algerian history, she writes "that Old Algiers is medieval, Turkish, Moorish, or what have you, but not Arabic and certainly not African" (*The Passionate Nomad* 92). Eberhardt's statement is in accordance with French colonial historiography, which obscures the Arab period and presents the Romans as the ancestors of the French in North Africa (Prochaska, *Making Algeria French* 213).

As a colonial accomplice, Eberhardt, the explorer, records everything that could be useful to the French imperial project: topographic information, religious and cultural beliefs, customs, and her own views on the Algerian leaders she encounters. For instance, Eberhardt's information on Sheikh Embarek is clearly addressed to the French colonial powers. Eberhardt warns the colonial authorities that even though Sheikh Embarek might be helpful in subduing the rebellious tribes, the French have to pay attention to his greed and ambitions:

> This sheikh Embarek exercises great influence over the Ouled Bou Anane, and he is plotting for absolute leadership of his tribe. Since the Ouled Bou Anane have made peace with the French, and frequent the markets south of Oran, Embarek foresees the complete annexation. He is ready to assist this, for he hopes by then to be the great chief of all the Doui Menia: he to whom Christians "would give a scarlet burnous and decorations!"
>
> Embarek is ambitious and smart, but he is also a gunpowder man, a highwayman, having only renounced the

> traditional pillaging in hope of extracting greater profit from peace than from skirmishes. (*In the Shadow of Islam* 63)

She also provides the colonial government with information about the nature of the local government and the vulnerability of the native leaders:

> At Kenadsa, the Arab theocratic tendency has triumphed over the Berber tradition, which is republican and confederate. The chief of the zawiya is the only hereditary lord of the ksar. It is he who settles all questions and who, in the case of war, appoints military chiefs. It is he who renders criminal justice, while civil affairs are judged by the cadi. Yet here too, the marabout is the supreme authority, to whom one may appeal the cadi's decisions. (67)
>
> Since the Marabouts' neighborly rapport and increasing friendship with the French, a secret discontent has invaded the hearts of the local classes. No one dares raise his voice and criticize the masters' acts. They bow, they repeat the opinions of Sidi Brahim and even praise them, but were it not for his enormous moral authority, they would consider him and his disciples to be "M'zanat'--renegades. (68-9)

It is true that Eberdardt is providing information to the French colonial authorities, but at the same time, while endorsing the French colonial policy of pacification, she is trying to save the lives of her Algerian co-religionists by preventing a more brutal form of colonization as previously seen in Colonel Pélissier's[14] mass-extermination of the Ouled Riah tribe in 1845.

Just as the French troops are trying to penetrate the Algerian desert and tame its inhabitants, in her romantic quest, Eberhardt wants "the sun to be still [hers]" (16). After her fever has left her, she admits that she "wanted to possess this country, and this country has instead possessed [her]" (111). As an imperial subject, Eberhardt is in the masculinist position to "possess" the country however. Her claim to the contrary--(she is possessed by the country)--serves the anti-conquest rhetoric of the imperial project. According to Pratt, the anti-conquest trope whereby the European traveler appears

feminized and innocent serves to hide his/her complicity with the colonial enterprise (*Imperial Eyes* 82-4). Suddenly, the Maghreb becomes a threat that risks to engulf and destroy the Western traveler: "Sometimes, I wonder if this land won't take over all her conquerors, with their new dreams of power and freedom, just as she has distorted all the old dreams" (*In the Shadow of Islam* 111).

In those passages where the Maghreb is not a threat to the European imperial subject, it becomes the locus of degeneration and decadence. In a rhetoric, which mixes nineteenth century racial ideology and the "mal du siècle" feeling of the decadent French poets, Eberhardt constructs the absence of European people as the direct cause of racial degeneration in Sfissifa:

> We headed for Sfissifa, a little Muslim town without a single European, without even a Jew [...] It was there my curiosity recognized you, sickly villagers--pale, whining, and effeminately dressed--a race weakened by ancient inbreeding and sedentary lives. I saw you again, villages crumbling in the shade of delightful gardens, invaded by desert little by little, being devoured. And I realized then, there are people, too, who exude decay. (*In the Shadow of Islam* 21)

Even though she is married to an Algerian, Eberhardt shows at times a condescending attitude towards Arabs. In a letter to the "Dépêche Algérienne," she wrote that unlike other women's interest in beautiful clothes:

> All I want is a good horse as a mute and loyal companion, a handful of servants hardly more complex than my mount, and a life as far away as possible from the hustle and bustle I happened to find so sterile in the civilized world where I feel so deeply out of place. (*The Passionate Nomad* 59)

What is significant here is the split within her colonial subjectivity. On the one hand, the "native"--because of his racial inferiority--can be conceived only as her servant,

regardless of his/her class. In *Écrits intimes*, for instance, she urges Alî Abdelwahab, a member of the Tunisian bourgeoisie, to do different things for her, such as babysitting her brother Alexander or selling Trophimowsky's botanical garden to the Bey of Tunis. On the other hand, by exposing the hollowness and sterility of the "civilized world," Eberhardt undermines the very basis of her authority as a colonial subject. In "*L'Âge du néant*," too, Eberhardt subverts the project of the French civilizing mission by denouncing modern civilization as the "great fraud of our time" (*Écrits sur le sable* 531). She has even promised to write a book about the "harmful" effects of "Europeanization" on Arab society (*Écrits intimes* 218).

In *Écrits intimes*, she states that all of these Arab women--whom she calls "*gueuses*"--inspired her with an unbearable feeling of disgust and hatred" (312). According to *Le Grand Robert de la langue Française*,[15] the word *gueux* has a variety of meanings ranging from *mendiant* ("beggar"), *fripon/coquin* ("rascal"), *va-nu-pied* ("nobody"/"low life"), *débauche* ("debauched person"), and *femme de mauvaise vie* ("prostitute"). In fin-de-siècle France, *la gueuse* became a slur that designates the Republic in the discourse of the Far Right. According to Charles-Roux, the only Tunisian women--in fact woman--Eberhardt fought with was the mother-in-law of Alî Abdelwahab, a man with whom Eberhardt was having an affair[16] and a regular correspondence. The Arab women she was calling "gueuses" were in fact wealthy women from the Tunisian elite (Charles-Roux, *Nomade j'étais* 107). Because Abdelwahab's wife Aïcha and her mother were neither beggars nor prostitutes, the noun "*gueuses*" probably meant in this context "nobodies." What Eberhardt's condescending attitude reveals is not simply her anti-bourgeois feelings, but also her deployment of race

as a sign of social inscription, to compensate for her social subordination. It is as the "Arab woman" that now Eberhardt refers to Alî's wife, formerly her friend and sister "Aïcha" (*Écrits intimes* 132, 174).

Eberhardt's identification with or differentiation from the "Muslim woman" depends on the power position she occupies. In a fight with her husband Slimène, she distances herself from the "Muslim woman" and demands that she be given the respect and equality due to a Muslim brother:

> Yes, indeed, I am your wife before God and Islam. But I am not a vulgar Fathma or an ordinary Aïcha. I am your brother Mahmoud, the servant of God and Djilani, rather than the servant of her husband that every Arab woman is according to the law of Shari'a. And I don't want, do you hear, that you show yourself to be unworthy of the beautiful dreams that I have made for both of us, and of which I have only told you a part, in the letter of last Tuesday. (*Écrits intimes* 336-37)[17]

As the above quotation shows, Eberhardt's identification with the Other and not the Other Without[18] expresses a relation of power. This subordination of the Algerian "Muslim woman" is expressed in Eberhardt's reliance on the French colonial discourse, which dismisses all Muslim women as Aïsha, Fatima or Zohra; names usually given to Algerian maids working for the French settlers (Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled" 52). Just as the vulgar Aïcha and Fathma function as metaphors for gender inequality and oppression, they can also be metaphors for financial security and happiness depending on Eberhardt's financial situation. Broke and starving, Eberhardt wrote:

> Here is complete destitution... no food, no money, no heat... Nothing!" Now, how little would the real misery and the cloistered life of Arab women be... Even blessed would be my absolute dependence vis à vis Rouh [Slimène]. (*Écrits intimes* 286)[19]

In her writings, Eberhardt not only reproduces the stereotypes of the Muslim woman as prostitute in the discourse of male Orientalism, but more importantly she reinvents them to negotiate her social and sexual identity. In *The Oblivion Seekers*, there is a fetishistic mode of representation that fixes the "Muslim woman" as a prostitute and victim of her "*mektoub*." The story of Achoura Ben Said, who becomes a prostitute after being abandoned by her husband, derives from the stories of Ouled Nail, the Algerian dancers/prostitutes who caught the imagination of the Western travelers in North Africa. In the opening passage of "*Achoura*," we see a postcard of an "Ouled Nail" (31) prostitute, who seemed in her "bizarre garments" like a mysterious "ancient oriental idol."[20] In this short story, Achoura's victimization is produced as a cultural trope to discuss Islam's inferiority. Indeed, her marriage at a very young age, seclusion, and repudiation (32) conform to the Eurocentric view that Islam is a barbaric religion that condones polygamy and the sale of brides. In the above example, the reproduction of the Achoura as a prostitute results from the colonial subject's constitution through what Bhabha calls a "fixed" ideological construction of the Other, which circulates as stereotype (*The Location of Culture* 66).

More interesting, however, are those passages where she collaborates with and resists the discourse of male Orientalism. Describing the impact of the French civilizing mission in Algeria, she observes: "Despite the riff-raff French civilization has brought over here, whore and whoremaster that it is, Algiers is still a place full of grace and charm" (*The Passionate Nomad* 91). Even though Algeria is still feminized as a graceful and charming woman, by turning France into a pimp, Eberhardt strips French imperialism of its moral justification for the colonization of Algeria.

Still, an overview of *In the Shadow of Islam* reveals that Eberhardt shares a lot of cultural narcissism and racial prejudice with her fellow European male Orientalists. Blacks, in particular, seem to be the first target of her racist attack: they were "wild, eager for childlike games and barbarous frenzy, very near, now, to our animal origins" (77). Her views about Maghrebian women, whether Muslims or Jews, Blacks or Arabs, seem to derive from the nineteenth century racial ideology in Europe. Just as sensuality is Arab, greed is Jewish (101-02), and savagery is Black, intellectual pursuits like Eberhardt's romantic quest in North Africa are Aryan characteristics. Eberhardt's racial and cultural self-complacency separates her from the "Maghrebian woman":

> So when will I have done with this mania that leads me to interpret the simplest gestures in a religious sense? There is our Aryan weakness. When others cook their dinner, we think of the sacrifice of the Soma, of libations of butter on the fire. Just now a woman lifted a pot to add an armful of thorny wood to the fire: all that mattered to me was the flame shooting up, straight and free, towards peacefulness of the stars. (102)

Eberhardt's presentation of white skin as a marker of civilization and intellect and Blackness as a symbol of savagery recalls the nineteenth century racial doctrine of Le Comte de Gobineau, who claimed that the Aryans created the civilizations of Egypt, India and China (*Essai sur l'inègalité des races humaines* II 347-48). Eberhardt's racism prevents her from identifying with the Black Muslim women she meets in the Maghreb. If condescendingly and reluctantly Eberhardt calls Black men her brothers in Islam, the possibility of identifying with her Black Muslim sisters is unthinkable. The following passage illustrates not only Eberhardt's racial prejudice, but also her erasure of the Black Muslim sister:

> I find blacks to be disconcerting and repulsive, mainly because of the extreme mobility of their faces: their ferret's eyes, and features

> plagued by tics and grimaces. They [blacks] bring out in me a stubborn sense of their non-humanity, a lack of kinship which I succumb to childishly, every time, in the face of these blacks, my brothers [...] There's only one among the slaves that I find likable: the gatekeeper Ba Mahmadou ou Salem, confidant of Sidi Brahim. He's a tall, tranquil Sudanese, with a face scarred by brands. He wears immaculatory white clothes under a long black burnous. In his expressions, his gestures, and in his regular features, there's nothing of the ape-man, grimacing and crafty; or of the animal cunning which passes for intelligence among the blacks. (*In the Shadow of Islam* 46)

The Black Muslim woman has no name; sexual promiscuity seems to be the generic name for "black womanhood":

> The colored women's morals are extremely loose. For a few sous, for a scarf, and even for pleasure, they give themselves to whomever, Arab or negro. They make open advances to guests, offering themselves with casual forwardness which is often funny to watch...
>
> The male slaves manage to contain somewhat the urgings of their blood, but all of black womanhood abandon themselves to instinct, and their quarrels are as frivolous as their loves. Sometimes in the courtyards noisy arguments break out, degenerating into fist fights and naked brawls in the sun. (*In the Shadow of Islam* 48)

What is important here is that Eberhardt not only reproduces the male Orientalist stereotype of the "Muslim woman" as prostitute, but also transforms it to negotiate her own social, sexual and gender identity. Eberhardt's construction of the Black Muslim woman as harlot and the Arab Muslim woman as independent reflects the rigid boundaries of class, race, and gender in nineteenth century Europe. Even though she does not openly identify with the Black "Muslim woman" as she does with the Arab, Eberhardt's construction of Black womanhood as sexually promiscuous (48) mirrors her own lifestyle in North Africa, where she took many Algerian, Tunisian, and French lovers (*In the Shadow of Islam* 6). What is significant here is that the Black Muslim

woman functions like an alter ego onto which Eberhardt projects her fears of social and economic destitution.

Despite her contempt for the Republican feminism of Maria Deraismes, Eberhardt shares the Third Republic's contempt for the working-class woman. It is as "*Jenny l'ouvrière*" ("working-girl"), that Eberhardt disparagingly refers to her sister-in-law. In *Écrits intimes* she writes that her brother "got engaged to a commoner, daughter and sister of sailors" (69). In fin-de-siècle France, the bourgeois establishment analyzed "the perceived pathology of the city in terms of the condition of working-class women" (Shapiro 21). Because of her autonomy and independence, the working-girl occupied a central place in those scientific and social discussions on female sexuality and criminal behavior (Shapiro 22). Eberhardt's construction of the lower class Black "Muslim woman" as a "harlot" parallels the bourgeois contempt for the working-class "French woman," who is "no woman" at all in the eyes of the Republican politician Jules Simon (McMillan 37).

At the same time, the projection of her sexual fantasies onto the enslaved black woman betrays Eberhardt's desire to liberate herself from the sexual oppression imposed by bourgeois morality. This process of inclusion and exclusion of the "Other Without" (Arab Muslim woman and the Black Muslim woman) is an integral part of the mechanisms involved in the formation of identity. The sexuality of the Black "Muslim woman" and "the autonomy" of the Arab upper class "Muslim woman"/Saint are therefore foils to define Eberhardt's own position in Europe. If on the other hand, the Arab "Muslim woman" or female marabout has earned the admiration of this female imperial subject, it is not because this special category of Muslim woman conforms to the

bourgeois ideal of the angel in the house, but because in her reinvention of the Maghreb, Eberhardt constructs this non-European space as a feminotopia, i.e., "an idealized [world] of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure" (Pratt 166-67). The invention of the upper-class Arab woman as autonomous reflects Eberhardt's inner desire to reconstruct a European womanhood that is free from the prison-house of gender.

Unlike the Black "Muslim woman," the Arab "Muslim woman" often functions as a surrogate self for this European woman traveler. Even though Eberhardt displays at times a condescending attitude towards the Arab "Muslim woman," she does not dehumanize her like the Black or the Mulatto "Muslim woman." The Arab "Muslim woman" is referred to by her colonial name "Aïsha" or "Fathma," her title as "wife" or *Lella* (lady), and sometimes her real name. As she tells the story of Embarka, the "Muslim woman" who committed suicide to escape her abusive husband, Eberhardt cannot but identify with her lot. In this instance, Embarka functions as Eberhardt's recognizable imago in the mirror: she is a "rebel" (*In the Shadow of Islam* 74) who put an end to her "suffering" and "servitude" by taking her own life.

> I make enquiries and reconstruct the drama, seeking to penetrate her reasons. She was not on good terms with her relatives, I'm told; she had no one to complain to. Her husband, Hammou Hassine, didn't pay attention to her, except to beat her into submission. The little Bedouin, wild at heart, became resigned after a few attempts at revolt, or so it appeared. In actuality a feeling of extraordinary freedom possessed her.
>
> Many times she had fled to her brother, who always returned her to her husband. She was prevented from going to ask protection of the cadi or of Sidi Brahim. She was a slave, more slave than the negresses, in that her servitude brought her suffering. At the end she was calm, for she had grasped the key to ultimate liberation. One evening when everyone was at the mosque she mustered her resources for the escape, she raised herself on her little feet, she hung herself above her life and her condition with

> her long silk belt, without confiding a word to anyone, all by herself. (*In the Shadow of Islam* 74)

Eberhardt's perception of Embarka as a "slave" is framed by her views on women's bondage in Europe. Hammou Hassine is not different from the European male who desires the European woman to remain "a slave or an idol" (70). Eberhardt's account of Embarka's suicide not only illustrates a rare example of feminine solidarity in this narrative, but also the self-dissipation and nihilism underlying Eberhardt's romantic philosophy. Echoing the decadent poets, she writes: "A people for whom suicide is still possible is a strong people. Animals never kill themselves; nor negroes unless, that is, they are stimulated by alcohol. Suicide is a kind of drunkenness, but a deliberate drunkenness" (74).

Just as she celebrates Embarka's suicide as a brave rebellion against native patriarchy, Eberhardt sanctions female maraboutism and mystical Islam in general for liberating the "Muslim woman" from the constraints of gender. Behdad's argument that Eberhardt's encounter with the famous female marabout, Lella Zaynab, is instigated by her "search for Islamic spirituality" and the French army's need for "information to be used for a complete takeover" (129) might be true, but his analysis overlooks the interplay of class and gender in Eberhardt's fascination with this mystical woman. Indeed, many female marabouts traveled in the desert dressed as men like Eberhardt herself. Lella Fatma for example, "organized the resistance against the French in the Djurdjura mountains in 1857" (Mackworth 116). Eberhardt's wearing of an Arab male attire is consistent with her identification with these independent female marabouts who, liberated from the constraints of motherhood and wifehood, rode in the desert wearing

male garments. Mackworth points to Eberhardt's acquaintance with the tradition of female maraboutism:

> Riding in the desert of Southern Oran during the year of Isabelle's stay in El Oued, was an exquisite little saint affiliated to the Qadrya--the eighteen-year-old Dehbiya of the Sedjara tribe. In 1899 she had visited Oran, dressed in her habitual male costume consisting of two light burnous, a woolen haik, an abeyah and a kenbouch, her nails lightly tinted with henna as a concession to feminine coquetry. Dehbiya was venerated in our region as one of the holiest female marabouts in Islam because of her skill in the science of ecstasy, which was held in great consideration among the Qadrya. (116)

Eberhardt's friendship with Lella Zaynab, the Rahmaniya marabout at the *zawiya* of El Hamil (*The Passionate Nomad* 107), seemed like a dangerous alliance for the French colonial authorities who put both of them under surveillance (*Departures* 239). According to Karim Hamdi, Lella Zaynab stood against both the French and the Muslim patriarchy to become her father's successor as the marabout of El Hamil. Even though the French forced Lella Zaynab's father to appoint his nephew as his successor, Lella Zaynab after his death pleaded her case in front of all the Rahmaniya brothers and became her father's successor (*Departures* 239-40).

Eberhardt's admiration of female autonomy in mystical Islam is clear in her appreciation of Lella Khaddoudja, an upper class Arab woman, whose pursuit of Islamic spirituality allowed her to escape the drudgery of domestic life.[21] As she decides to go on a pilgrimage, Lella Khaddoudja, Sidi Brahim's relative, leaves behind her wifely and motherly duties and finds "in the sacred soil" of Mecca a new home:

> The Sudanese tells me that this house belongs to one Lella Khaddoudja, a relative of Sidi Brahim. Being widowed very young, with two children, a boy and a little girl, the pious maraboute remarried one of her cousins on the strict condition that

> they leave immediately for Mecca. The cousin kept his promise, and Lella Khaddoudja left the zawiya, leaving her son behind.
>
> The day she left Kenadsa," says Ba Mahmadou, "we all, every servant, accompanied her as far as the Ain ech Cheikh fountain, on the road to Bechar. From her seat on mule back she turned one last time to look at the ksar, and told us she would never return, because she would rather live and die on the sacred soil of Hedjaz. (61)
>
> I, too, begin musing about Lella Khaddoudja, who must have a rather adventurous soul, to break so willingly with the sleepy routine, the cloistered life she was born to, to go off and start a new life under another sky.(62)

Eberhardt's construction of the Arab "Muslim woman" reverses the ideal of femininity in Victorian gender ideology. Eberhardt's rejection of the cult of domesticity is illustrated not only in her solitary journey to the Maghreb, but also in her escape from the constraints of motherhood. In contrast with the bourgeois feminism of Deraismes which reduced marriage to "the propagation" of the human species (Moses 181), Eberhardt did not want to have children. When asked by her friend Robert Randau whether she wanted to have children, Eberhardt said that "if [she] "had a child [she] should not give up [her] wanderings." She would "carry him with [her], strapped to [her] saddle, wherever [she] went." But for the moment, she had no wish to become a mother (qtd. in Mackworth 169). The romantic diction used to describe Lella Khaddoudja's spiritual journey reinforces Eberhardt's identification with the "Other without." The two women are brought together by a common destiny: a rejection of domesticity, an "adventurous soul," a fascination with Islamic spirituality, and an attempt to reconfigure the patriarchal concept of home.

In *Marginales en Terre d'Islam* (1992), Dalenda and Abdelhamid Largueche explain that the *zawiya* is a liminal and subversive space, where the sacred is reunited with the profane. Indeed, these Sufi sanctuaries have always been an asylum for the

social outcasts: ex-prostitutes, the mentally ill, divorcées, run-away wives, homosexuals, etc. In the mystical world of Sufi brotherhood, Eberhardt uses the subversive space of the *zawiya* to legitimate her homoerotic desire. Right after the passage where she states that a good Muslim is he who "can unite without sin Faith with Sensuality" (117), she describes a brown young woman, using a homoerotic register of language:

> I remind myself that we already spoke of these things in Algiers, before the immensity of the sea glittering in the moonlight, on certain nights one spring. They seemed quite natural to us [the Muslim brothers] in a setting of wanton sensuality, accompanied by 1001 cigarettes, in the presence of that young woman, brown and detached, her neck resting on the diva cushions, who knew how to listen, all ears and eyes, an exemplar of Oriental beauty who could smile at us and display herself to advantage. (117)

In *Colonial Desire* (1995), Robert Young claims that "the repulsion that [Western] writers commonly express when describing other races, particularly Africans," is accompanied "with an equal emphasis, sometimes apparently inadvertent, on the beauty, attractiveness or desirability of the racial other" (Young 96). Eberhardt's description of Black women and Mulattos falls within this ambivalent axis of attraction and repulsion towards the racial other. Despite their filthiness and immorality, Eberhardt, masquerading as Si Mahmoud Essadi, finds Black/colored women sexually attractive. The following passage illustrates a voyeuristic trajectory of desire:

> Under the low vault of the door which opens on to the interior court, two young women had paused. One was a Sudanese negress with a round face and large, russet doe's eyes. Small but weighty chains of silver passed through her earlobes and dangled down to her shoulders; silver snakes fastened the two long mats of her jet-black hair that spread across the chest.
>
> A citron-yellow mlahfa was wound in soft folds round her tall, thin body. Seated, her elbows on her knees, she was speaking

> with expressive hand gestures, her palms waving and bracelets clicking.
>
> The other, a mulatta, remained standing. Her strange beauty was alluring; an aquiline profile, dark and fine; large, sad eyes; voluptuous, arched lips revealing fine teeth.
>
> A mlahfa of red wool, the hue of pale blood, draped her supple form. One of the panels of her veils fell straight down from her head to her arching loins, passing behind her lovely nude arm, the color of old bronze. She held herself very straight, with her large, terracotta amphora resting on her rounded hip. (57)

Eberhardt's attraction to Blackness reflects what Gobineau calls "the tragic flaw" of the Aryan races. As "the elite races" are compelled by their civilizing instincts to mix their blood with the "inferior" races, in the long run, this process of hybridization will bring about their demise (Gobineau 1: 153). Whereas for Gobineau, civilization is white and male (Gobineau 1: 92-3), Eberhardt's narrative, while still retaining Gobineau's ethnocentrism, endorses the view that civilization could also be female.

Eberhardt's travelogue subverts not only the phallocentrism of the nineteenth century imperial ideology, but also the bourgeois heterosexual matrix. Eberhardt's disguise as an Arab man becomes instrumental in expressing her desire for other women. As a she/he, Isabelle/Mahmoud becomes a "non-differentiated oneness" (Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* 207) i.e., a subject who is simultaneously a he, a she, and a she/he. In Eberhardt's own words, she "[has] lived already in all men and in all women (*In the Shadow of Islam* 98). In her personal writings, Eberhardt seems shifting between various forms of otherness. In *Écrits intimes*, she uses both the male (18) and female (64) inflection of French grammar. In a letter to Alî Abdelwahab, she genders herself as female in those passages in Arabic and signs herself as Podo, the short form for Nicolas Podolinsky, the male pseudonym under which she published her short story "Infernalia" (64). At other times, her letters are signed Meriem in Arabic and Podolinsky in French

(86-7). This double signature allows her to crisscross the boundaries of gender, race, and religion. In the Maghreb, Si Mahmoud Saadi/Isabelle passes for a Turk in Tunisia (Kobak 97), and a Tunisian in Algeria (Charles-Roux *Nomade j'étais* 103). Before she became Mrs. Ehnni, Si Mahmoud also corresponded with a French officer posted in Algeria under the pseudonym of Nadia (Kobak 47). Eberhardt also writes herself as "daughter of Nicolas," meaning a daughter of an unknown father in Russian (*Écrits intimes* 111). In Sardaignes, she passed for the wife of her lover Abdel Aziz Osman, and received letters under the false name of "Mme Mereina Aziz Bey" (Charles-Roux, *Nomade j'étais* 171).

In *Belated Travelers* (1994), Ali Behdad claims that Eberhardt's male Arab disguise, rather than challenging the "categories of race and gender, as Garber claims," is a "phallocentric appropriation" (123) of an oriental signifier that reinforces the differences between the colonizer and the colonized. This chapter argues that the disguise of "*la roumia convertie*" serves multiple functions: Eberhardt not only appropriates an oriental signifier as Behdad claims, but also disrupts European ideologies of race, gender and class. Even though she has "gone native," Eberhardt has always remained the *roumia*; hence, the attempt upon her life by Abdullah. Even though he is right in reading Eberhardt's Arab male disguise as a colonial gesture, Behdad seems to ignore how Eberhardt's wearing of an Arab male attire allows her to negotiate the antagonistic claims of her sexual and social identity in Europe. Just as they are constitutive of gender identity, clothes are also markers of social identity: Eberhardt's wearing of Arab male attire is significant not just because it subverts European gender and racial ideology, but more importantly, because it allows her to negotiate her social

position in Europe, i.e., to define herself as a middle-class woman, rather than a member of the destitute classes. Because she cannot afford the garments of European middle-class women, Eberhardt crossdresses to enter through the door of exoticism those same circles from which she has been excluded. During the prosecution of the Sufi fanatic who has tried to assassinate her, Eberhardt writes to her husband Slimène, informing him of her worries that her Arab male clothes might be too provocative to wear during the trial. Thinking about the possibility of wearing a European male attire, she writes:

> You absolutely must not buy European clothes, because you've no idea how much it costs and I formally forbid you to contract a centime of debts. You know me and know very well that I'm prepared to obey you in everything, except when you're talking nonsense. One can tell you know nothing of what it costs to dress not well, but at least passable as a Frenchwoman: a wig (this costs for a shaved head like mine, some 15 to 20 francs, because a simple plait won't do), a hat, underwear, corset, petticoats, skirts, stockings, shoes, gloves and so on. All I will concede to is to stop dressing as an Arab, which is anyway the only thing that would prejudice the authorities against me. I shall therefore dress as a European [man]... I swear to you, it's not for the pleasure of dressing up as a man, but because its impossible for me to do otherwise. At court-martial... they always said to me, "We quite understand that you wish to wear men's clothes, but why don't you dress as a European?" Anyway that's all I have to say to you on the subject. It's impossible for me to do otherwise... I don't care if I dress as a workman, but to wear ill-fitting, cheap and ridiculous women's clothes, no, never. (qtd. in Katrina O'Loughlin, "The Spectre of the Veiled Dance" 233)

Even though the possibility that she might be using her poverty as an excuse to cross-dress is not ruled out, the importance of class and economic independence in defining the position of women in Europe can be adduced from Eberhardt's adamant refusal--whether genuine or not--to wear the cheap clothes of working-class women. Bearing in mind Eberhardt's aristocratic background, her willingness to wear the clothes of the European working-men, rather than the "cheap" clothes that poor women wear, reveals the

precariousness of her economic situation as well as her fear of falling to a lower level, of being contaminated by the European working-class women.

To avoid problems with the French authorities at the trial, Eberhardt appears not in European men's clothes as she said to her husband, but in Arab women's attire. Her choice of Arab women's clothes both conforms to and transgresses the Law of the Colonial Father: in wearing female attire, she subscribes herself to the clear-cut bourgeois distinction between the sexes, yet, her masquerade as an Arab woman, i.e., her use of an oriental signifier, allows her to cross the class boundaries characterizing French society.

Just as the Arab male attire is a means of social escapism as seen in her determination not to wear the cheap clothes of poor French women, her refusal to act upon Paschcoff's[22] advice to wear Arab clothes during her first encounter with the lesbian feminist Sèverine reveals Eberhardt's effort to rewrite herself as an active desiring subject. As a voyeuristic colonial subject, Eberhardt objectifies the colonized female subject, but resists being turned into Sèverine's object of desire. Eberhardt's objectification of the Muslim woman is also illustrated in her visit to the brothel with Brigadier Smain to "watch the lascivious dancing and preliminaries to love-making (Kobak 92). On her way back from El-Hamel (Algeria), Eberhardt did perform some "fantasias" in honor of some prostitutes she met on the road:

> I did some galloping along the road with Si Abbès, under the paternal gaze of Si Ahmed Mokrani. Some women from the brothel were on their way back from El-Hamel (Algeria). Painted and bedecked, they were rather pretty, and came to have a cigarette with us. Did fantasias in their honor all along the way. Laughed a lot. (*The Passionate Nomad* 107)

The "us" that Eberhardt uses to include herself in the male group of Muslim men, does not just separate her from the "Other Without," but more importantly, it translates a

voyeuristic desire to see herself desired by the object of her own desire, i.e., "the Muslim woman," under the watchful eye of Islamic patriarchy. In Arabic "fantasia" means "ostentation." In North Africa, the fantasia is a male sport involving a set of acrobatic movements on horseback, with loud cries, music, and rifle shots. Eberhardt's involvement in this male sport is transgressive because she engages in a male gendered sport and displays herself as an androgynous object of desire; one that is desired by both the prostitutes and the men she is travelling with.

Eberhardt's male disguise seems to be a double-edged sword: while it gives vent to her homoerotic desire, it disallows the possibility of her interaction with her upper-class Muslim sister, like Sidi Brahim's mother:

> What is she like, this great Muslim lady, whose presence I can never enter as Si Mahmoud, the man whom everyone treats me as being?--even if, due to indiscretions at Bechar, they have suspicions, they carefully avoid letting me know, for this would be a grave breach of Muslim courtesy. Does she have the serious manner of Sidi Brahim? And what thoughts occupy the head of this woman so specially placed: cloistered, yet invested with an authority before which her son himself yields? (*In the Shadow of Islam* 56)

V) Redefining the Seraglio

In contrast with the nineteenth century European and American women travelers, who have been able to penetrate where no Western man has ever been before--the bastille[23] of the Muslim household--Eberhardt's disguise as an Arab man forecloses for her the possibility of knowing and interacting with the upper-class "Muslim woman." Her description of the "little world of women" in Kenadsa is based on hearsay, not on an

actual eyewitness account. She herself admits that she has never seen Sidi Brahim's mother:

> [Even though she] has charge of all the interior administration: expenses, receipts, alms. *One never sees* her [my emphasis], but her power is felt everywhere. Feared and venerated by all, this elderly Muslim queen-mother lives here nearly cloistered, only coming out rarely and heavily veiled in order to visit the tombs of Sidi Ben-Bou-Ziane, and of Sidi Mohammed, her husband. (47-8)

Invented as a place of exoticism and abundant sexuality by male Orientalists in the Renaissance, the harem was transformed by nineteenth century Western women travelers into a desexualized space that conforms to the Victorian ideal of domesticity (Melman 316). Standing against both male and female Orientalism, Eberhardt resexualizes the North African "harem woman" and moves the Seraglio from the enclosed space of the home into the open space of the desert. In *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (1999), Mohja Kahf argues that the subjugation of the Muslim woman was barely present in the literature of the Renaissance. The cultural trope of the oppressed Muslim woman appeared only in the nineteenth century with the establishment of the French and British empires. In contrast with the British traveler Katherine Ann Elwood who constructed the harem as a "retreat," a "shrine," and an "abode of the sacred" (Melman 139), Eberhardt invents a "bohemian" harem, where the "Muslim woman" is unveiled and on the road: either meeting a secret lover (*In the Shadow of Islam* 91); near a fountain (98); or going to a marabout (99). Eberhardt's redefinition of the harem genre challenges not only the tradition of male Orientalism, but also the middle-class gender ideology in Europe. In contrast with the desexualized "Muslim woman" in the writings of Victorian women travelers in the Middle East, Eberhardt's North African "Muslim woman" is primarily a sexual being,

whether she is a female marabout (through the Sufi notion of transgressive love) or a Black slave. Thus, Eberhardt uses the ethnographic authority and the very aesthetics of the dominant bourgeois culture to subvert its gender ideology.

Eberhardt's subversion of the bourgeois ideal of the angel in the hearth is also illustrated in her reconfiguration of the patriarchal concept of home. A social outcast in Europe, Eberhardt tries to escape European patriarchy by finding a home elsewhere, i.e., in Islam and the Maghreb. Her conversion to Islam, the rival faith to Christianity, and her marriage to an Arab constitute a challenge to the French civilizing mission in Africa. Eberhardt's incurable romantic "malaise" (*In the Shadow of Islam* 102) makes her seek freedom in the desert. Following the steps of Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Valéry, she writes: "To be alone is to be free, and freedom has been the sole happiness required by my restless impatient nature--an arrogant nature" (107). Crossing the boundary between the domestic and public space, she "rediscover[s] in the village's only Arab street calm impressions of 'home'" (17). In her new home, she sleeps on the road, "on a mat in front of the Moorish café," under the roof of "the great sky," and "the moonlit night" (22).

As this chapter demonstrates, there is a split in Eberhardt's attitude towards the North African "Muslim woman." Despite her racial prejudices and complicity with the French colonial authorities, Eberhardt at times does not see the "Muslim woman" as the absolute Other, but rather as a mirror or imago in which she could contemplate herself. As an alter ego, the "Muslim woman" becomes Eberhardt's metaphor to discuss European identity. The function of the "Muslim woman" in Eberhardt's narrative goes beyond the metaphor of colonial penetration in male Orientalism (France's "male/active" penetration of "female/passive" North Africa) to assist in the establishment of Eberhardt's own

identity and place in European society. Eberhardt might have inherited her emphasis on the "Muslim woman's" sexuality from the Enlightenment's fascination with Oriental sexuality,[24] but what is more fundamentally significant, is her use of the "Muslim woman's" sexuality as a trope to criticize European bourgeois morality and gender ideology.

Although ethnocentric and overtly racist at times, Eberhardt's narrative seems to deconstruct its own discourse of racial and ethnic superiority by emphasizing the similarities between the position of the "Occidental" and "Oriental woman." Rather than subverting the value system underlying French colonial ideology, in identifying with the "Other Without" and converting to Islamic mysticism, Eberhardt reverses the concept of "cultural difference," which is central in the discourse of French imperialism. In contrast with the paternalistic discourse of the French establishment, which appropriated the language of feminism to attack Arabo-Islamic culture, Eberhardt not only attacks the shallowness of Parisian feminism, but also creates the mystical "Muslim woman" as more independent and autonomous than her French sister, stripping thus French imperialism from the cloak of morality with which it hides and justifies its colonial project.

However, as in the discourse of male Orientalism, "the Muslim woman," is not allowed to speak in Eberhardt's writings and is ignored as a historically resistant subject. Eberhardt said nothing about the Algerian women's resistance to French colonialism and their sexual and economic oppression at the hands of the French colonial Father. Eberhardt's subversion of Western patriarchy has been recuperated by the colonial order when Barrucand published her book under the Orientalist title *Dans L'Ombre Chaude de L'Islam*. Whereas in Eberhardt's narrative, "l'ombre chaude de l'Islam" means "a new

understanding of love" (76), in decontextualizing the book's title from this subversive meaning, Barrucand relocates this narrative in medieval Christianity perception of Islam as a religion of sensuality and spiritual darkness. In doing so, Barrucand markets the radical difference of Islam and silences the dissenting voice of this European woman.

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[1] According to Pierre Arnoult, Isabelle Eberhardt's father was Arthur Rimbaud. Besides their physical resemblance, both of them had a "common destiny" that brought them to the Maghreb (Abdel-Jaouad, "Isabelle Eberhardt: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Nomad" 93). In *Écrits intimes*, Eberhardt claimed that she was the daughter of a Turkish Muslim doctor who raped her mother (116-17).

[2] According to Abdel-Jaouad, one reason why Eberhardt's work remained to some extent unknown was Barrucand's claim that he co-authored her work. Recent research on Eberhardt, however, has demonstrated that Barrucand did not make serious changes to Eberhardt's text. See "Isabelle Eberhardt: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Nomad" (94).

[3] I am using Rice's translation in "Eberhardt's Journey from Anarchy to Complicity," Karim Hamdi and Laura Rice, eds, *Departures: Selected Writings* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1994) 195.

[4] The Russian woman Barrucand charged with translating Eberhardt's entries in Russian into French. Quoted in Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Nomade j'étais: les années Africaines d'Isabelle Eberhardt 1899-1904* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1995) 110.

[5] Eberhardt's and Bentami's marriage to an Arab man gave them privileges they could not have had if they had married a Russian man. The marriage to an "inferior" Other allowed them to enter marital unions where they had the upper hand as wives on account of their racial "superiority."

[6] Her real name is Caroline Rémy. Better known as the radical feminist Sèverine (McMillan 20).

[7] The word "feminism" here refers to women's movements and writings in nineteenth century France.

[8] In contrast with Deraismes, the radical feminist Hubertine Auclert was a strong supporter of women's right to vote and tried to keep a strong alliance between Republicanism and socialism. At sixteen, she was expelled from a convent because the nuns saw her as demented (Clancy Smith 167). She was also "written off" by the French police as "suffering from madness or hysterics" because she thought of men as her equals. Quoted in McMillan (80). Auclert's feminism was closely tied with the Saint Simonian socialism of the 1840s, which attacked the patriarchal institution of the family. Referenced in Moses (230).

[9] Hubertine Auclert, *Les Femmes Arabes en Algérie* (Paris: n.p., 1900) 3.

[10] Ibid, 42-59.

[11] Eberhardt's project to open Qur'anic school for Muslim girls was never carried out.

[12] In "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha leaves out gender in his discussion of colonial mimicry in the works of "Kipling, Forster, Orwell, [and] Naipaul" (*The Location of Culture* 87).

[13] To tighten their grip over North Africa, the "French colonial policies" played Berbers against Arabs and "resurrected the Romans as imperial progenitors of the French [and Berbers] in Africa" (David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* 213).

[14] For more information about this massacre, see Djebar, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, trans. Dorothy S. Blair (Portsmouth: Routledge, 1993) 64-79.

[15] "*Gueux*" and " *Gueuses*," *Le Grand Robert de la langue Française*, 1987 ed.

[16] Charles-Roux hints at the possibility of an affair between Eberhardt and her Tunisian correspondent in *Nomade j'étais* (99). Charles-Roux also reports that Alî's mother-in-law showed Isabelle the door after it was rumored in Tunis that Alî was taking money from her numerous lovers. In front of a witness, Alî did return to Isabelle the money he borrowed from her to go to Istanbul, and their correspondence gradually ended after that (108).

[17] Mackworth's translation (142).

[18] The "Other Without" refers here to the "Muslim woman" as the gendered subaltern.

[19] My translation.

[20] Malek Alloula argues that the production of the Muslim woman as prostitute provided an aesthetic and moral justification for the colonization of Algeria. See *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 120.

[21] Lella Khaddoudja is the only woman from the native elite towards whom Eberhardt feels connected. This is probably because Lella Khaddoudja's frequent pilgrimages to Mecca made her break away from her patriarchal role as mother and wife and live on the road like Eberhardt herself.

[22] In a letter, Paschkoff gave Eberhardt this advice: "Wherever you go you should present yourself in elegant Oriental costume. Abou Naddara [Eberhardt's Egyptian mentor] will tell you that his clothes did a lot to make him the fashion [in Paris]" (Mackworth 71).

[23] In contrast with the radical feminist Hubertine Auclert and Marie Bujéga--daughter and wife of French colonial civil administrators--Eberhardt shows no interest in serving the "colonial state" by bringing "France into the domesticated space of the secluded Arab woman" (Clancy Smith 171).

[24] Mohja Kahf studies this shifting image of the Muslim woman in *Western Representations of Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas, 1999).

Chapter Three: The Muslim Woman and the Iconography of the Veil in French Feminism and Psychoanalysis

In the preceding chapter, I studied the production of the Maghrebian Muslim woman in the writings of Isabelle Eberhardt, a Russian woman traveling in French colonial Tunisia and Algeria at the turn of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I examine the metaphor of the veil and the production of the "Muslim woman" in those discourses situated on the French Left in the imperial and post-imperial era. This chapter questions the viability of Western feminist and psychoanalytic theory in the North African context and argues that these discourses derive at times from the same Orientalist impulse we find in the male Orientalism discussed by Edward Said. Using de Lauretis's notion of "gender" as "representation" (*Technologies of Gender* 3), I will examine how the metaphor of the veil in psychoanalysis and French feminism derives from earlier discourses on Muslim women and Islam. The first part of this chapter examines Fanon's discourse on the veil in his essay "Algeria Unveiled." Even though situated on the left, Fanon's discourse seems to derive from a patriarchal and sometimes an Orientalist impulse. The second section examines Jacques Lacan's notion of the "veiled phallus" in view of the primacy of the specular in Western metaphysics and the discourses on the veil generated by the Algerian Revolution. Using de Lauretis's notion that the subject of feminism speaks from a doubled position that is both inside/outside ideology, the third part of this chapter argues that in contrast with Simone de Beauvoir, and Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous's écriture féminine--especially her recent work *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage: Scènes primitives* (2000)--presents a "doubled vision" (*Technologies of Gender* 10), which both reproduces and resists those Orientalist discourses on the veil.

In "Transparent Veils, Western Women Dis-Orient the East," Billie Melman argues that the discourse of the veil precedes the existence of Islam and the colonial situation. Used at first in the Christian East, the veil "touched on the definite status of femininity and female sexuality in Western culture" (461). In Pauline gender ideology, "a woman can prophesy only when her head is veiled, because man's head represents the spirit in Christ whereas woman's is associated with flesh and the body--that is, with sexuality" (461-62). In the Age of Enlightenment, the veil was "[desacralized]" (462), but "retained its association with purity and virginity." While it was increasingly being "eroticized," it became used in a metaphysical sense, "the ability to unveil" was associated with the idea of "uncovering" truth or "identity." Gradually, "the veiled woman was transformed from an ambiguous symbol of female empowerment to a site of alterity" (463). In "The Newly Veiled Woman, Irigaray, Specularity, and the Islamic Veil," Anne-Emmanuelle Berger discusses the symbol of the veil in Irigaray's text as an "instance of theoretical imperialism" (94). In contrast with Melman who presents the veil as a Christian symbol, and Berger who strips the veil from its Judeo-Christian background and presents it as if it were an authentic Islamic cultural icon appropriated by an imperialist Western feminist/psychoanalytic center, I would like to treat the issue of the veil from a non-originary point of view. Rather than presenting the problem of the veil in terms of a Western appropriation of an Oriental signifier, I would like to pose the problem differently: How can the veiled Muslim women speak in these Western discourses on the veil? And what are the implications of applying these theories of the veil to the North African context?

In *Technologies of Gender*, De Lauretis argues that the human subject is produced through discourse and that gender is a "representation" or a "construction" (3) that is produced and reproduced by various discourses. Revealing how feminism inherited Western phallocentrism, de Lauretis argues that the "construction of gender "as sexual difference" has shaped "feminist interventions in the arena of formal and abstract knowledge, in the epistemologies and cognitive fields defined by the social and physical sciences as well as the human sciences or humanities" (1). From this perspective, the metaphor of the "veiled phallus" in the psychoanalytic works of Lacan (*Écrits* 288) and Gallop (*Reading Lacan* 130) and the metaphor of the veil in French feminism in general derive from a pre-established Western tradition that favors visibility/presence over invisibility/absence and truth/light over concealment/darkness.

Because of the primacy of the visible in Western epistemology,[1] the veil discourse in French feminism and psychoanalysis focuses only on what is concealed/hidden, not on the specific local and social significance of the veil. In French language, the word *voile*[2] ("veil") appears as a multiple signifier. In the seventeenth century, it referred to a piece of cloth covering the statues of the Gods, monuments etc. Starting from the sixteenth century onwards, the verb *voiler* ("to veil") was used metaphorically in the sense of "making less visible," "concealing" and "masking" light or truth. In the nineteenth century, following the rise of French imperialism, the veil referred not only to the tchador/veil covering the face of the Muslim woman, but also to the Arabic word *litham*, which is a veil covering the face of the male Touareg living in the Sahara Desert. Whereas in some parts of the Muslim world, both men and women wear the veil, in Europe, *le voile* ("the veil") is an exclusively feminine garment worn by brides, widows,

and nuns. In the nineteenth century, the veil was invented anew as a marker of cultural difference, i.e., a symbol of the Muslim woman's sexual oppression by Islam and Arab culture.[3]

I) The Algerian Woman and the Dynamism of the Veil: Patriarchy, Nationalism, and Orientalism in Frantz Fanon's "Algeria Unveiled"

A Martinican psychiatrist appointed to work for the French army in Algeria, Frantz Fanon, a Marxist black revolutionary, soon defected to the Algerian side and joined the FLN in its fight against the French colonial regime. Fanon's views on the veil and the "Muslim woman" in "Algeria Unveiled" come as a response to the Battle of the Veil launched by the French colonial government to weaken the ranks of the Algerian resistance during the War of Independence (1954-1962). In May 1958, the French generals in Algiers, showing their resolution to keep Algeria French, dragged Algerian women from their homes and publicly unveiled them, shouting "Vive l'Algérie française!" Hence, it is within the context of Algerian nationalism, Hegel's dialectic, and French colonial discourse that I shall examine Fanon's views on the "historic dynamism" (65) of the veil.

Throughout "Algeria Unveiled," there is a tension that arises from Fanon's ambivalent discourse about the veil, Algerian culture, and the "Algerian woman." Presenting the issue of the veil through a Hegelian dialectic, Fanon writes that the veil became a symbol of Algerian identity only because the French constructed it as a sign of cultural difference/Islamic inferiority: "It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude. To the colonialist offensive against the veil, the

colonized opposes the cult of the veil" (47). In his Hegelian reading of the veil, Fanon overlooks the symbolic exploitation of the "Muslim woman's" body in the patriarchal discourses of French colonialism and Algerian nationalism. Just as the French male imperial order waged its war of colonization on the female body of Algeria, the Algerian nationalist male elite turned the "Algerian woman" and the domestic space of the home into the site of the anti-colonial struggle. The French colonial image of Algeria as "a prey fought over with equal ferocity by Islam and France" (41) reveals not only the "policy" and "philosophy" of the French occupier as Fanon says, but also the patriarchal ideology of the colonized. Because she is the symbol of Algeria, the "Muslim woman" becomes the flesh/"prey" over which both the French and Algerian men/predators are fighting.

Throughout his essay, Fanon wavers between the "historic dynamism" (63) of the veil and the fixedness of Algerian/Islamic culture. In contrast with the colonial French discourse where the veil appears as the symbol of women's oppression, Fanon presents it as an unstable semiotic icon. During the anti-colonial struggle in Morocco, "the white veil was replaced with the black veil" (36) to protest the exile of King Muhammad by the French colonial authorities. In Algeria, Kabilean and Arab women in the rural areas are often unveiled. Fanon also notes that the veil was initially worn because "[Islamic] tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes" (63). When the French became "bent on unveiling Algeria," the veil turned into a "mechanism of resistance." During the Battle of Algiers (1958), both the removal and resumption of the *haïk* ("veil") served as a "technique of camouflage" (61). At first, the veil was strategically removed to carry weapons for the Algerian fighters. Passing for a French woman, the unveiled Algerian

woman would carry in her suitcase weapons, funds and tracts to the *fidaïs* ("suicide bombers"). When the French colonial authorities discovered the trick, the veil was once again restored "to conceal packages" for the Revolution. When the French were alerted, all women became suspect and were forced to pass through "magnetic detectors" (62). After the events of May 1958, "the veil was resumed, but stripped once and for all of its exclusively traditional dimension" (63). In contrast with the semiotic dynamism of the veil in the colonial era, Fanon constructs it as a fixed and ahistorical icon in pre-colonial Algeria: before the French occupation, Fanon asserts, the veil was "an undifferentiated element in a homogeneous whole" (47).

In his reading of the veil, Fanon recognizes the "power of nationalism as a scopic politics" (McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven," *Dangerous Liaisons* 97). Just as the veil was constructed as the symbol of cultural difference in French colonial discourse, the veiled Muslim woman was produced as the visible marker of Islamic identity in Algerian nationalism. As Fanon puts it:

> It is by their apparel that types of society first become known, whether through written accounts and photographic records or motion pictures. Thus, there are civilizations without hats. The fact of belonging to a given cultural group is usually revealed by clothing traditions [...] One may remain for a long time unaware of the fact that a Moslem does not eat pork or that he denies himself daily sexual relations during the month of Ramadan but the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society. (35)

Fanon's statement reveals that rather than being a given, cultures are fabricated through clothing, "motion pictures" and "photographic records." This inventedness of culture, however, is at odds with Fanon's nationalist construction of the veil as the symbol of Algeria's authentic identity. Reproducing the Arab nationalist discourse where the veil is

symbolic of a pre-colonial Islamic identity, Fanon states that the veil stands for Algerian "society's uniqueness" (35) and "originality" (37). "French colonialism," he says, "has settled itself in the very center of the Algerian individual and has undertaken a sustained work of cleanup, of expulsion of self, of rationally pursued mutilation" (65). The French campaign against the veil epitomizes the colonial effort to "expel" or "clean up" the true "self" of Algeria. Likewise, underneath Fanon's fear that Westernization might lead to the "erosion" of Algeria's "national culture" (39) lies the assumption that cultures can be stocked/frozen and contained within a special locale. Although situated on the Left, Fanon deploys at times the discourse of French Orientalism. Even though he rejects the colonial narrative about the oppression, "confinement," "humility," and "the silent existence" of the "Algerian woman" (65), Fanon implicitly reproduces the same discourse when he states that the Algerian woman's life is "limited in scope" because of the "sclerosis" (66) Islamic tradition must assume during the anti-colonial struggle.

In equating the violence of colonization with the rape of the Algerian woman's body,[4] Fanon is reproducing the patriarchal discourse of nationalism, where lands and women's bodies are presented as men's property. When he is pressured by his boss to "exhibit" his wife, the Algerian man feels that he is "prostituting his wife" (40). In the erotic discourse of the French conquest, "the flesh" of the Algerian woman (symbol of Algeria) is "laid bare" (42) by the "aggressive" French occupier/rapist. Unveiled and raped, the "Algerian woman" is subjected to "a double deflowering" (45) without "consent" or "acceptance." In contrast with McClintock's reading of "Algeria Unveiled," I argue here that Fanon reproduces rather than refutes the "erotics of ravishment" underlying the rhetoric of the French conquest ("No Longer in a Future Heaven" 96). By

phallicizing the "Algerian woman" who penetrates into the heart of the European city, Fanon is reversing the colonial metaphor of sexual penetration. In the Battle of Algiers, the Algerian woman who conceals pistols and "grenades" (50) under her veil becomes a "veiled phallus" that threatens to emasculate not only the Algerian men as McClintock (98) argues, but also the French male colonial order. Reversing the colonial metaphor, the "Algerian [phallic] woman penetrates a little further into the flesh of the Revolution" (54). In this nationalist narrative, the reconquest of Algeria also involves a "double deflowering":

> But after a certain period the pattern of activity that the struggle involved shifted in the direction of the European city. The protective mantle of the Kasbah, the almost organic curtain of safety that the Arab town weaves round the native, withdrew, and the Algerian woman, exposed was sent forth into the conqueror's city. (51)

As a "veiled phallus," the Algerian woman has to break first the "organic curtain"/hymen of the Kasbah before penetrating into the effeminized European city. In reproducing the erotics of the French conquest, Fanon remains, despite his Marxist revolutionary agenda, trapped within the phallocentric discourse of French imperialism.

Fanon's assertion that the veil "distorts the Algerian woman's corporal pattern" (59) is quite patriarchal. For "the city woman," the veil has become second nature: "accustomed to confinement, her body did not have the normal mobility before a limitless horizon of avenues, of unfolded sidewalks, of houses, of people dodged or bumped into" (49). The Algerian woman feels "naked" when she walks unveiled: "the veil protects, reassures, isolates, [without it] the unveiled body seems to escape, to dissolve" (59). In a paternalistic tone, Fanon adds that as part of the war effort, his female comrade must not only "[relearn] her body" (59), but also "achieve a victory" over "her childish fears" (52).

Fanon also makes excuses for the sexual harassment the unveiled "Algerian woman" is subjected to in the street of Algiers while carrying weapons for the revolution. Dismissing sexual harassment as a universal male behavior, Fanon writes: "The unveiled Algerian girl who 'walks the street' is very often noticed by young men who behave like young men all over the world, but who use a special approach as the result of the idea people habitually have of one who has discarded the veil" (53).

For Fanon, only the French colonizer is frustrated by the "woman who sees without being seen" (44). The Algerian man "does not see her. There is even a permanent intention not to perceive the feminine profile, not to pay attention to women." Revisiting Fanon's discourse on the veil, Djebar asserts that the veiled woman frustrates both the colonizer and the Algerian. In *Women of Algiers*, Djebar writes:

> There's also the danger that the feminine glance, liberated to circulation outside, runs the risk at any moment of exposing the other glances of the moving body [breasts, sex, navel]. As if all of a sudden the whole body were to begin to "defy" [and threaten men's] exclusive right to stare. (139)

In *Fantasia*, Algerian women willingly participated in the Algerian Revolution: they were not entrusted with direct action (Fanon 53), nor did they need their husband's permission "to leave on an assignment " (Fanon 59). Djebar's resurrection of the voices of Jennet, Zohra, and Cherifa in *Fantasia* shows that Algerian women did not participate in the nationalist struggle at the invitation of Algerian men as Fanon claims.

Because the veil was removed during the course of the revolutionary struggle, Fanon seems to imply that it will ultimately be abandoned to meet the demands of independence. In the socialist future of Algeria, Fanon's sister in the fight against imperialism seems unveiled, yet subordinated to a nationalist male leadership.

II) The "Veiled Phallus" in the Land of Veiled Women: Reading Jacques Lacan in a North African Context[5]

Defending Lacan against his feminist critics,[6] Jane Gallop reminds them of the nature of Lacan's text--where nothing is really what it seems--and of his assertion that the phallus "can play its role only when veiled" (*Reading Lacan* 130). Because "metonymic interpretations" (133) can also be phallocentric, Gallop calls for a new kind of feminine reading that transcends the opposition between metaphor and metonymy. Using Lacan's notion of the "latent phallus," Gallop argues that there is an inevitable latency to all open, visible meanings. Unlike the unproblematic division between the hidden and the surface meaning in the conventional Freudian act of psychoanalytical interpretation, Lacan advances the thesis that every time a meaning moves to the surface, becomes open and not latent, it is simultaneously trying to hide its own reasons for making that meaning visible.

Lacan's equation of the veil with the unconscious can be traced to Freud's metaphor of the veil, in which he claims that female sexuality, in contrast with that of the male, is inaccessible to psychoanalytic research. For Freud, women's sexuality is "veiled in impenetrable darkness" not only because of cultural inhibitions, but also because of "the conventional reticence and insincerity of women" (*Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* 16). Freud's Africanist construction of female sexuality as "lack" or "the dark continent" (55) has been reproduced in Gallop's perception of metonymy as "the dark continent of rhetoric," an effeminized symbolic space associated with the invisibility and "hiddenness of female genitalia" (Gallop 127).

In "The Agency of the Letter," Lacan deliberately plays on the ambiguity in the word *voile* ("veil") in the French language. Besides the inherent duplicity between concealing and revealing in the act of veiling (*Écrits* 156), the word *voile* occupies an ambiguous position between male and female in French. It means a "ship" when preceded by the feminine definite article *la*, and a "veil" when it is preceded by the masculine definite article *le*. Lacan's notion that the phallus "can play its role only when veiled" ("Signification of the Phallus," *Écrits* 288) and Gallop's reproduction of Lacan's metaphor (in her discussion of the interdependence between metonymy and metaphor) raise many questions as to the consequences of applying such a concept to the Algerian context, where the FIS ("Islamic Salvation Army") holds that Islamic identity lies in the control of the "Muslim woman's" dangerous sexuality. Because she possesses the phallus, i.e., the power of seduction or *fitna*, the "Muslim woman" must constantly be supervised; her sexuality controlled through the institutions of segregation and seclusion. From the standpoint of Muslim women activists, this metaphor could be disabling because it reinforces patriarchal fears of women's hidden powers, justifying thus women's seclusion.

Even though Lacan was not himself involved in the Algerian Revolution, his stepdaughter, Laurence Bataille, joined in 1958 a French left-wing network, which collected funds for the FLN (Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 295). She was arrested on 10 May 1960 and sent to the Roquette prison for aiding the Algerian rebels. In prison, Lacan brought her an extract from his seminar on the "Ethics of Psychoanalysis" where he talks about "Antigone's revolt against Creon" (295). She was quickly released after her lawyer (Roland Dumas) managed to get the charges dropped.

A left-wing intellectual, Lacan could only support his stepdaughter's political commitment. However, the metaphor of the "veiled phallus" disturbingly recalls the colonial French discourses produced on the Algerian woman during the Battle of the Veil in the 1950s. If the "French administration" focused their efforts on deveiling the "Algerian woman" to win the war, it was because their "sociologists" and "specialists" had argued that "beneath the patrilineal pattern of Algerian society" lied a deeper "structure of matrilineal essence" ("Unveiling Algeria" 57). To destroy Algerian resistance, "[they] must first of all conquer the women" hiding "behind the veil" (37-38). Lacan's metaphor embodies the colonial French argument that "behind the visible, manifest Algerian patriarchy" lies a "basic" yet invisible matriarchal system. The doubleness underlying the concept of the "veiled phallus" also recalls the doubleness of these discourses produced on the "Algerian woman" during the Battle of the Veil, where she appears both as the locus of power and victim of the Algerian man's barbarity.

Put in a Maghrebian context, the "veiled phallus" can stand for the subaltern effeminized Oriental phallic order that Said discussed in *Orientalism*. This "haremization effect"[7] raises questions as to the implications of applying Lacan's notion of the "veiled phallus" to the male Touareg who wear a veil to protect their faces from the sun of the Sahara Desert. In wearing the *litham* ("veil"), the male Touareg would seem to embody Lacan's notion of the "veiled phallus" and also acquire an ambivalent sexual identity in the eyes of those Europeans traveling in the Maghreb. The bisexuality of the male Touareg falls within the Orientalist trope that Islam's excessive sexual restrictions on women are thought to encourage the Eastern "malady of homosexuality." Lacan's metaphor recalls the ethnocentrism underlying Edouard Duchesnes's book *De la*

prostitution dans la ville D'Alger depuis la conquête (1853). In this nineteenth century French colonial narrative, Duchesnes explains homosexuality--the "Arab Muslim deviance"--by the hot African climate and the Islamic socio-cultural mores. Explaining Eastern deviant sexuality by Islam's seclusion and veiling of women, Duchesnes wrote: "[Because] young Algerian men are so handsome and go about in public unveiled, side by side with veiled females, homosexuality is thereby encouraged " (qtd. in Clancy Smith 159).

In "Veiling over Desire," Doane argues that Lacan's metaphor of the veiled phallus "reverses the usual terms of sexual difference in relation to the visual field" (132). In contrast with Doane who reads Lacan's destabilization of perception outside French colonial ideology, I would like to examine Lacan's metaphor of the "veiled phallus" in view of those discourses produced on Algerian women's participation in guerilla warfare at the moment of decolonization. At first, the Algerian woman was strategically unveiled and transformed by the *fidaï* into a "woman-arsenal" carrying "automatic pistols" or "bombs" in her suitcases (58). When the French discovered the trick, the Algerian woman reverted to a strategic wearing of the haïk "to conceal" the grenades "from the eyes of the occupier" (61). As a result, all women became suspicious: French and Algerian, veiled and unveiled. This recalls the destabilization of perception in Lacan's and Gallop's theory in which everything is indiscriminately suspect.

The notion of duplicity underlying Lacan's metaphor of the "veiled phallus" cannot be dissociated from the threat of Islamic "terrorism" in France after the Algerian war of independence. Ever since the Algerian Revolution, the image of the veil in Western mass media became linked with an increasing fear of the Islamic threat.

Whereas the nineteenth century French discourse focused on unveiling the body of the Algerian woman/nation, the discourse on the veil starting from the late 1950s onwards has shifted to "hyperveiling"[8] the female Muslim body. As Neil MacMaster and Toni Lewis put it: "The Iranian Revolution of 1979, the war in Lebanon [in the 1970s], the Gulf War [1992]... and the spread of fundamentalism into the Maghreb, especially Algeria, have created a level of anxiety that is higher in France than for any other Western nation" (128).[9] Lacan's image of the "veiled phallus" also recalls these Western press reports or films in the 1950s, where "heavily veiled women are shown carrying weapons, establishing an equation between the oppression of women, fanaticism and terrorism" (128). In these images, the veil becomes the symbol of Islam's medieval barbarity, fanaticism, and thus irredeemable alterity. In the discourse of the French right, *le foulard* ("scarf") has become since the 1980s associated with feelings of cultural anxiety. In "Tchadors, Excision, Cannibals," the right wing journalist Max Clos wrote in the *Figaro*:

> Can we accept in our land excision and cannibalism? It seems like we are far from the issue of the veil here. But in reality we are not. It is the same problem minus the butchery and the mutilation, for the consequences are the same on what is primordial; the safeguard of our identity. (MacMaster 132)[10]

My major argument here is that the scopic phallocentrism in Lacan and Freud has found its way in the discourse of some French feminists, who despite their dismantling of the workings of Western patriarchy at home, have failed to decolonize their writing from the concept of difference at the heart of the Euro-centric universalist mode of thinking.

III) Between Complicity and Transvaluation: Hélène Cixous's Double Vision of the Muslim Woman and the Veil

a) The Iconography of the Veil and the Harem in Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray

Even though de Beauvoir, in collaboration with Gisèle Halimi, mobilized the left forces in France to bring to trial the torturers of Djamila Boupacha (an Algerian woman wrongfully sequestered and raped by her French torturers),[11] her views on Muslim women are still informed by the French Orientalist tradition. In *The Second Sex*, first published in France in 1953, de Beauvoir reiterates the Orientalist stereotype of the harem with its associated meaning of seclusion and veiling as a place of female idleness and sexual indulgence. Secluded from the outside world, the harem slave "has to kill time" by taking a "passion for rose preserves and perfumed baths" (603). Equating the harem with a brothel," de Beauvoir states that if the harem woman "eagerly seeks sexual pleasure, it is very often because she is deprived of it." To escape "masculine ugliness," the slave woman "finds consolation in creamy sauces, heavy wines, velvets, the caress of water, of sunshine, of a woman friend, of a young lover." In this feminist text, the "Muslim woman," as a monolithic category, functions as a metonymy for Islam's inferiority. For de Beauvoir, the "abject condition" of the "Muslim woman" is caused not only by "the feudal structure" of her society, but also by "the warlike ideals" of Islam which "has dedicated man directly to Death and has deprived woman of her magic" (166).

In French, the expression *le voile d'une vierge* means not only "the veil of a bride," but also the hymen or "the veil of virginity." This throws light on the intimate connection between the veil, language, and the female body in French feminism. In

"Veiled Lips," using the myth of Persephone, Irigaray questions the woman's position in "a system of representation which depends on the repression of her difference" (93). In the Greek myth, Persephone was abducted by her father Hades to live in his underworld against the will of her mother Demeter. With the intercession of heavenly God Jupiter, Persephone was to pass the winter with her father and summer with her mother. Triply veiled, the korè (virgin), violated, stolen, and veiled ("*Violer. Voler. Voiler*") (105), stands for the absence and burial of women's "magic" in language. In a man's language, woman is always the "veil," "the sheath," or "the envelope" which "assist[s] him [and] support[s] him" (106). As Persephone, the daughter was "stolen away from her mother, from herself, by her father, the brother" (112), the veil in Irigaray's essay becomes symbolic not only of women's oppression by patriarchy, but also of their alienation from the maternal. Even though Irigaray does not mention any Muslim women in her work, she has influenced many North African women writers such as Djebar. Because of the reliance of Muslim women writers on French feminist theories, one question needs to be addressed here: How can the veiled Muslim women speak or be read in a system of representation where the veil--the sign of her cultural difference--is "synonymous with rape, ravishment, theft, and death" (114)?

This image of the veiled "woman" as wrapped goods in Irigaray's works can be traced to Freud who claims that women cover themselves with clothes and "jewels in order to hide [their] organs" (*Speculum* 115) (1985), that is to say, their "lack." "The duplicity of the veil" for Freud serves to "cover a lesser 'value' and to overvalue the fetish" (*Speculum* 16). Reflecting similar imagery in "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon writes that the French doctors are often disappointed to discover that Algerian women are

"commonplace" and "vulgar" when "they remove their veils" during "medical consultation" (44-45). In contrast with the French men who wonder why the Algerian women are veiled if they have nothing to hide, European women in Algeria read the veil as part of universal feminine coquetry. Just as "beauty treatment, hairdos, fashion" (45) in the West are used to disguise "feminine imperfections," the veil of the "Algerian woman" serves to "conceal" and "cultivate the man's doubt and desire." The male "customer," however, is often misled by "the wrapping in which the 'merchandise'" has been presented to him. The European women conclude that the wrapping in which the "Algerian woman" comes in "does not really alter [her] nature, nor [her value]." Despite his Marxist views, Fanon does not critique the commodification of the "Algerian woman" in the discourse of the European women. In contrast with Fanon, Irigaray writes that the veiling of women's bodies serves to enhance their value in a "hommosexual" system of exchange. As "fetish-objects" exchanged between men, women are the manifestation and the circulation of a power of the Phallus" (*Speculum* 182-83). Reversing Freud's metaphor, Irigaray writes that women veil themselves not because they are hiding the "deficiency of [their] genitals" (115), but in order to compete in a capitalistic economy controlled by men (114). Here, the veil does not hide women's lack, but enables the commodification of the female body. Even though she critiques the capitalist commodification of the woman's body over which Fanon remains silent, Irigaray leaves out all differences between women and reproduces the universalist claim in Western feminism that all women are oppressed regardless of their differences of class, race, and sexual orientation.

Even though she criticizes Lacan for representing only the male subject as he reflects and contemplates himself in the mirror, Irigaray does not reject specularization as a constitutive condition for identity. To the flat mirror in Lacan's analytic theory, she substitutes the speculum, a curved instrument, which allows women to understand themselves and explore their sex (*Speculum* 146). Even though the speculum emphasizes female specificity and obliterates the symmetrical "self-representation" of the "male mirror" (Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* xxii) (1989), it is still contingent upon the primacy of the visible when deployed as a gynecological tool. Given the primacy of female visibility in Irigaray's feminist project, the veiled woman can only be read as a silent and "submissive slave" (87). The strategic shift in Djebar's writings from using French feminist aesthetics in the 1980s to the deployment of Islamic feminism after the break out of the Algerian Civil War, indicates her search for a more empowering feminist framework; one that responds to the particularities of the local patriarchy. In advocating Muslim women's rights from an Islamic point of view, Djebar is acknowledging the limits of applying French feminist theory to the Maghreb. This is why in *Loin de Médine*, Djebar reinvents the House of the Prophet through the lens of both Islamic feminism and écriture féminine.

b) The Decree Crémieux and the Aryanization of the Algerian Jews

In *Les Rêveries*, Cixous's perception of the Muslim woman and the veil seems less Eurocentric than that of de Beauvoir or Irigaray. In this section, I propose to explain the ambivalent discourse on the veil and the "Muslim woman" in Cixous's writings in view of the French colonial policy towards the Algerian Jews, the racist discourses

against Jews and Arabs, and Cixous's self-proclaimed literary identity. In the early years of the conquest of Algeria (1830), the French colonial attitude and policy towards Algeria's Jews and Arabs was the same. In 1837, Maréchal Bugeaud called for the expulsion of all the Jews from Algeria. In 1847, Doctor Bodichon proposed to settle the native question by "[exterminating] all Arabs" (Richard Ayoun and Bernard Cohen, *Les Juifs d'Algérie* 121). This changed however, with the Crémieux Decree of 1870, which automatically granted the Algerian Jews French citizenship provided that they abandon Rabbinic laws. In France and colonial Algeria, the right-wing circles opposed the Crémieux Decree as it gave the Algerian Jews too much power in the municipal elections (Ayoun 128) and "public administration" (134). The Crémieux Decree was not extended however to the rest of North Africa. The Tunisian Jews had to wait for the Morinaud Law of 1923 to be granted French citizenship, but still "on an individual basis" (Laskier 24). In Morocco, because France refused to grant them French citizenship, the Jews remained under the jurisdiction of Islamic law as *ahl dhimma* ("People of the Book") (Laskier 35).

In Algeria, the Westernization and integration of the Jews in French society depends on their "abnegation" of the Rabbinic laws such as the *yboum* or ("*levirate*") (142), whereby a brother-in-law marries his brother's widow. The Crémieux Decree made it illegal for a Rabbi to marry a couple without them having first a civil marriage. As early as 1873, the Rabbi L. Isidor wrote to his co-religionists: "In order to be French, you have to abandon your dear customs, and the practices which seem sacred to you. Look at our brothers in France and behave like them. We honor our faith by showing it is compatible with civilization" (Ayoun 142).

As Ayoun and Cohen put it: "It is not the alliance with the Zionist Jewish Nationalist project which isolated the Algerian Judaism from the indigenous society, but its acceptance without any hesitation of *la Francité* ("Frenchness") (152). As early as 1871, French colonial policy played Arabs and Jews against each other (160). For the Jewish intelligentsia, the Arab anti-colonial struggle was constructed as a misunderstanding of "the virtues of occidental democracy" (164). After the Balfour Declaration of 1917, very few Algerian Jews immigrated to Israel. Because Algeria's Jews were very attached to "French culture" (Laskier 315), most of them immigrated to France. The *'aliya* to Israel attracted only the poor Jews from Constantine and the M'zab.

During the Algerian revolution (1954-62), with few exceptions like Albert Memmi, the Jews of Algeria and Tunisia generally did not participate in the anti-colonial struggle. Whereas the Arab population perceived them as collaborating with the colonial French order, the French warned them against collaborating with the FLN in Algeria and the Neo-Destour Party in Tunisia (Laskier 261-62). In Algeria, because the Jewish leaders as French citizens were reluctant to join the nationalist struggle, there were bloody attacks against them in Constantine, Orléanville, and Batna (Laskier 318-19). Starting from May 1956, the Jews of Constantine organized themselves into organizations like the Misgeret to defend themselves, and to launch counterattacks against the FLN (Laskier 319). Also, because they were French citizens, some Algerian Jews were "reservists in the French army." Some of them were even used in the French army headquarters as "interrogators of FLN sympathizers" (Laskier 321), because they spoke both French and Arabic.

In 1960 the FLN made an official statement in which it addressed Algeria's Jews:

> You are an integral part of the Algerian people; you are not asked to choose between France and Algeria, but to become effective citizens of your true country. Either you choose to function fully in this country where the future will inaugurate freedom and democratic principles to be enjoyed by all the nation's children; or else you accept to live under the reign of contempt and to be content with a citizenship granted by your oppressors within a context which is in contradiction even with the most elementary human rights. (qtd. in Laskier 329)

Even though the Comité Juif Algérien d'Études Sociales responded that they had no authority to speak on behalf of all the Jews in Algeria, they stated that they would "live in humiliation" if they "renounced a citizenship for the preservation of which [they] always fought, to which [they] remain attached with a faithfulness that deserves respect, and which inspired [them] with its dignity and honor" (Laskier 329-30). After the Evian agreement of 1962 according Algeria its independence, there was a sharp decrease in the Algerian Jewish population. In summer 1962, only 10,000 Jews remained in Algeria, and most of them departed for France (Laskier 334). The bad socialist economy of "autogestion" under the regime of Ahmad Ben-Bella and Houari Boumedienne drove out the rest of the Jews in the late sixties and early seventies (Laskier 342-43).

c) Looking Through the Lens of Aryan Sycorax: The Muslim Woman and the Veil in the Text-Lait of Hélène Cixous

In "Difference, Intersubjectivity, and Agency in the Colonial and Decolonizing Spaces of Cixous's '*Sorties*,'" Sue Thomas argues that in her search for a maternal mythical symbolic, Cixous reproduces the Orientalist discourse of subduing and inhabiting Africa as a black and effeminate space. In relying on a Western masculinist universal symbolic, Cixous ends up by recolonizing the "dark continent" and inhabiting

the bodies of its women, namely, Cleopatra and Dido. Instead of the uniform Orientalist vision Thomas finds in Cixous's discourse on Africa and its women, my own reading of Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), *La Jeune née* (*The Newly Born Woman*) (1975), *Hélène Cixous: Photos de racines* (1994), and *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage: scènes primitives* (2000), reveals both conformity and resistance to the French colonial discourse on the Maghrebian "Muslim woman" and the veil. I propose to read Cixous's ambivalence towards Africa and the North African woman in view of de Lauretis's notion that the feminist subject "is at the same time inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that division, that doubled vision" (10). Hence Cixous's ambivalence towards Africa and the "Muslim woman" will be read against two warring ideological systems: first, the "Francisation" of the Algerian Jews and Cixous's internalization of Western Orientalist discourse; and second Cixous's resistance to that process of Aryanization through her self-proclaimed imaginary *identité littéraire* ("literary identity") (*Hélène Cixous* 205).

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous addresses the problem of creating a feminine language in terms of change. "The future," she writes, "must no longer be determined by the past" (245). The question is then how to create a feminine language that breaks free from earlier male colonialist discourses. In "*Sorties*," Cixous makes the claim that her écriture féminine can "escape the infernal repetition" and reproduction of the old "system," and helps "invent new worlds (*The Newly Born Woman* 72). However, in her search for a maternal pre-symbolic order, Cixous reproduces those colonialist masculinist metaphors referring to Africa as a woman, the "dark continent," and a primitive space that is "below" or "before culture" ("The Laugh of the Medusa," *New*

French Feminisms 247). As she insists on writing the female body and on recuperating the woman's voice, the "harem" and its associated meanings of veiling and seclusion becomes a metaphor for patriarchy's repression of female sexuality and silencing of women's voices:

> It is writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem. (251)

In the above passage, the veil is produced as an unchanging signifier of female victimization. Just as "hierarchy," in the words of Arjun Appadurai, is "associated" with "India," or "filial piety in China" (qtd. in Yaeger, *Cartography of Identity* 23), the veil[12] of the Muslim woman has become in Western feminist Writing a pre-narrated space, i.e., a metaphor for a backward and repressive Muslim East. If Africa is defined in Cixous's maternal text as pre-culture, the implication is that the veiled Sycorax lives outside history; i.e., outside the realm of culture. In "*Sorties*," the veil functions as a metaphor for historical marginalization: "Is this me, this no-body that is dressed up, wrapped in veils, carefully kept distant, pushed to the side of History and change, nullified, kept our of the way, on the edge of the stage, on the kitchen side, the bedside?" (*The Newly Born Woman* 69). Thus, écriture féminine or the search for a feminine language replicates the cultural patterns, which patronize and have power over the history of Muslim women. Even though she proposes a feminine practice of writing that "will always surpass the discourse that regulates [this Western] phallocentric system" ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 253) and "phallocentric speculation/specularization" (*The Newly Born Woman* 94),

Cixous's association, in the cultural context of Islam, of unveiling/visibility with freedom and veiling/invisibility with oppression and silence are reproductions of the same "phallologocentric" discourse she is criticizing.

In opposition with Cixous's earlier works, *Les Rêveries* underscores a transvaluation of the conventional discourse about Algeria in the tradition of French Orientalism. Parodying the imperial metaphor of exploring and inhabiting the body of a female exotic Algeria, Cixous puts herself in the masculinist position to "embrace" and repossess (13) Algeria by holding on to the body of her servant Aïcha (14), who appears creamy, feminine, and maternal (14). Whereas she presents her German mother and grandmother as upper class "masculine" women with "discrete virility" and small chest, she presents their servant, Aïcha as "the real woman," and her "veil" as a catalyst of her "burning" (91) sensuality. Turning the stereotype into a grotesque caricature, Cixous states that she wants to inhabit the body of the Algerian woman: she wants to be passionate and adulterous "*à la mauresque*" ("like a Moorish woman") (135), "she wants everything, the fine veil on the face, the linen and silk haïk, the harem pants, the hidden legs; she wants Algeria." Cixous adds that her mother's honesty is an offence or an absurdity in a country where the veil has become second nature to women--like "an organ" or "a retina"--and for others the symbol of "hypocrisy" and deceit" (102). In this passage, Cixous is responding not only to Fanon's patriarchal claim that the veil is a constitutive element of the Algerian woman's "corporal pattern" ("Unveiling Algeria" 59), but also to the Orientalist construction of the Oriental woman and man as "duplicitous."

The most traumatic event in Cixous's life in Algeria is perhaps the accident she saw at the fair in La Place d'Armes in Oran, where a woman was cut to pieces after her veil got caught in the slats of a carousel. As she describes the veil, Cixous states: "L'Algériefrançaise sort de la scène" (145). However, in dismissing the veil as another "*histoire d'Arabes*," Cixous puts the discourse on the veil outside the French colonial situation. In "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon explains how the veil became a sign of Algerian Islamic identity only when the French decided to break the native resistance by strategically unveiling the Algerian woman and imbuing her in the principles of French civilization by sending her into French schools. Two questions come to the fore here: Why does the veil occupy a preeminent place in Cixous' traumatic memories? And why does she still carry inside herself the body of that unknown "veiled young woman" (146)?

In "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self," Susan J. Brison problematizes the issue of remaking the self for survivors of traumatic events:

> A further obstacle confronting trauma survivors attempting to reconstruct coherent narratives is the difficulty of regaining one's voice, one's subjectivity, after one has been reduced to silence, to the status of an object, or, worse, made into someone else's speech, the medium of another's agency? (Bal, *Acts of Memory* 47)

Because memories are constructed through "socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations,"[13] I intend to read Cixous's memoirs associating the veil with trauma both as a reproduction of the French narrative about the oppressed "Muslim woman" and as a mental palimpsest of the Algerian woman's participation in the anti-colonial struggle. In this scene, the veil becomes a metaphor for Islam's amputation of female sexuality and repression of women's voices. Indeed, the accident in question happens when the unknown veiled woman--who stands metaphorically for all Muslim women--is embraced

by another unknown Arab man. As she jumps in fright, her veil gets caught in the slats: "her body was driven in the veil, her body was seized like meat in a grinder, she couldn't get out" (145). "Her screams could be heard from the top of the Cathedral before her body dropped on the floor cut in two around the middle." Just after witnessing this terrible accident, Cixous felt a "horrible feeling of relief" (145), for despite her death, the veiled woman was able to break the silence imposed on her by Islam and Arab culture. The question that rises here is: What does it mean to read the veiled woman's howling/the sound of death as "feminine" and "humane" (145)? My argument here is that even in death, this Algerian veiled woman is made to unspeak, as her death screams are interpreted according to the Western center (écriture féminine) equating visibility and voice with female freedom, and veiling and silence with female amputation and oppression. Also, how can this "veiled woman" speak when her death is reappropriated and reconstituted as a metaphor for "the tragedy of a town, a country, a history"? (146).

In presenting this veiled woman as a victim, Cixous is reading this accident along the lines of the Western narrative of the Muslim woman's victimization. In presenting this Muslim woman as a passive and silent victim, Cixous is erasing the history of female resistance in the anti-colonial struggle. My argument here is that Cixous's recontruction of this traumatic event along the narrative of the "Muslim woman's victimization" is shaped by the 1990s Civil War in Algeria where women have become the targets of Islamic Fundamentalism. By projecting the present into the past, and ignoring the strategic deployment of the *haïk* ("veil") in the Algerian Revolution, Cixous is denying the semiotic mutability of the veil.

The discourse on the veil in *Les Rêveries* is, however, ambivalent. When Cixous's mother used to go to the police commissioner as a midwife to solve "*les histoires Arabes* [*de culotte*]," [14] she would wear the veil, for she never knew whether these incidents would turn into tragedies or comedies (97-8). Thus, the veil is no longer a symbol of female oppression and amputation, but also as a symbol of female freedom, as the veiled woman can travel incognito and see without being seen. It follows that the invisible is no longer synonymous with darkness and oppression, but tied with the notion of some liberty under the veil. When the FLN attacks against Jews started during the Algerian war, Cixous's mother advised her to wear the veil and travel to Morocco if she were chased by the police" (104). Rather than dismissing the veil as a universal symbol of women's oppression like Irigaray, Cixous shows that under certain constraints placed on women's movements, the veil can function as the condition for moving into the male realm.

Also, Cixous's political commitment or what she calls her "literary identity" allows her to reach out for all Muslim women regardless of their social class. Cutting across social borders, she reveals how much she longed to visit her servant's house (92). Exposing the social disparities between Algeria's Jews and Arabs, she remembers how her mother never knew that the real names of her domestic workers were Messaouda and Barta (93). Instead she used to call them Aïcha and Fatma, two colonial names given indiscriminately to all Algerian women. This shows to what extent Algeria's Jews got separated/cut from the Arab population and to what extent they internalized the French colonial discourse.

Pointing to the separation of Arabs and Jews in her childhood, Cixous notes how the French colonial situation and social inequities divided the Arab and Jewish population of Algeria. As she revisits the past, Cixous tries to give names to the people she loved yet called *les Arabes* ("the Arabs") (35), *petizarabes* ("Arab children") (45), "mauresques" ("Moorish women") (59), or *lézarabes* (72).[15] She remembers Muhammad the doorman, Aïcha their servant, Barta the domestic worker at the Clinic, and Kheira the cook. Even though she never knew their homes" (152), she still remembers the names of her few Muslim classmates Zohra Drif, Samia and Leila (151). She was never allowed to visit their home, because the Algerian Jews "were filtered and rejected as 'French'" (58). She even recuperates her Algerian Arabic-French dialect: "*Yadibonfromage, yadlavachkiri, yadizoeufs, yadinestlé*" (114).[16]

Unlike her earlier works, Cixous's *Les Rêveries* reflects the recent feminist debate about the veil in the West. Rather than being a sign of the Muslim woman's oppression, Western feminists and Muslim feminists living in the West have recently been arguing that the veil gives Muslim women access to certain freedoms they would be otherwise denied in the segregated societies of certain Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia. As Ahmed puts it:

> The strict segregation of Islamic societies has meant in fact freedoms for women and freedoms to engage in activities that their Western sisters engaged in literally at the peril of their lives. For in segregated societies, all or almost all activities performed in the world of men for men and by men must also be performed in the world of women for women by women. The woman saint, the woman sooth-sayer, the witch, the seances held for women by women to exorcise or empower are a common and accepted part of the Middle Eastern folk life. ("Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem" 527-28).

Because these Western discourses on the veil and the Muslim women focus on what is concealed, they fail to understand the significance of the veil in its specific local context. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler warns against the "universalization" (35) of the notion of patriarchy, for it erases and elides the "distinct articulations of gender asymmetry in different cultural contexts" (35). In a 1998 interview, Butler challenges the notion in Eurocentric feminism, that the "veiled body" when "she/it enters public space, counts as an example of the abject" (Irene Costera Meijer and Baukje Prins, "How Bodies Come to Matter" 281). In some Islamic countries like Iran, women have access to some form of power "faciliated by the veil, precisely because that power is deflected and made less easily indentifiable" (281-82). Similarly, in "The Veil in their Minds and on Our Heads," Homa Hoodfar argues against the naïve association of de-veiling with female emancipation. When the Shah's father passed a law in 1936 to modernize Iran, "without any legal and socioeconomic adjustments" (259), those women who refused to take off the veil because of their religious beliefs, became dependent on their male relatives. Before the law, the veil allowed women to perform "public tasks" and to negotiate their wages as they sold their carpets directly to the customers. With the new law, some of them stopped "going to the carpet weaving workshops," and became increasingly dependent on "their male relatives" and carpet traders to sell their goods (261).

d) In Remembrance of Algeria Past: Hélène Cixous and the Search for Arabitude

In "Difference," Thomas's analysis ignores how Cixous's frequent discourse on the "dark continent" and the "African woman" serves to embrace and reclaim a denigrated Oriental Jewish/Arab identity. In 1963, the diatribe "in vogue" among the Ashkenazi Jews of Marseilles was the "Jew of Tizi Ouzou" (Ayoun 222). In "Sephardim

in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," Ella Shohat explains how the Arab Jew/Sephardi/Mizrahi voice was muffled and silenced by the discourse of European Zionism (McClintock, *Dangerous Liaisons* 30). In "the Zionist master narrative, European Zionism 'saved' Sephardi Jews from the harsh rule of their Arab 'captors,' and 'rushed' them into modernity... democracy... and humane values" (40). Sephardim[17] were often referred to as *schwartze chaies* ("black animals") (43) in European Jewish circles. Even Ben Gurion referred to the Moroccan Jews as "savages" (42). In the 1970s, finding inspiration in the revolt of Black America, the children of Arab Jewish immigrants formed the Black Panthers, a radical Arab Jewish organization in Israel (63). The amputated veiled Muslim woman Cixous still "carries inside her" functions as a symbol for an Arab identity from which she has been "cut off" or "separated" (146).

In "*Sorties*," Cixous claims à la Césaire that "we are black and we are beautiful" (69). Claiming a non-originary Jewish identity, she observes:

> I was born in Algeria, and my ancestors lived in Spain, Morocco, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany; my brothers by birth are Arab. So where are we in history? I side with those who are injured, trespassed upon, colonized. I am (not) Arab. Who am I? I am "doing" French history. I am a Jewish woman [...] Who is this "I"? Where is my place? [...] Which language is mine? French? German? Arabic? (71)

In putting in parentheses her denial of her Arab identity, she is putting under erasure her own statement that she is Jewish, not Arab. In *Les Rêveries*, Cixous states that her father, besides being Jewish," is "a real Arab under the false appearances of a young and handsome French doctor" (46). She also makes the claim that her sickness/thirst for

Algeria--*la désalgérie*--is also a sickness for *l'arabité* and l'arabitude (Arabness and Arabitude) (57).

In *Hélène Cixous*, Cixous draws only her Ashkenazi family tree. The missing Sephardic branch of her family tree stands for what de Lauretis calls the "space-off" representation, which, even though outside representation, does "still exist concurrently and alongside the represented space" (26). In Cixous's own words, "the omissions as well the acts of forgetting" (206) in her autobiographical narrative are still a constitutive part of her écriture féminine. In contrast with the Eurocentric image of woman as the dark continent in "The laugh of the Medusa," in *Les Rêveries*, Cixous not only breaks the silence over her Sephardic roots, but also overturns the racist values on which her earlier metaphors were based. As a cartography of remembrance and forgetting, Cixous's Algeria, with its exotic veils, its "dark continent," the "Abyss of the Savage Woman"[18] rather than being a "themed" or "prenarrated space" (Yaeger 17) as in "*Sorties*" and "The Laugh of the Medusa," becomes instrumental in retrieving Cixous's Arab/Jewish/African identity.

As a childhood narrative, *Les Rêveries* constitutes an act of "cultural memory" to resurrect a Jewish Algeria and to understand and destigmatize her Oriental roots. According to Mieke Bal, cultural memory is a social and individual memory which links "the past to the present and future" (*Acts of Memory* vii). All acts of remembering involve the reenactment of "traumatic events" (viii). The act of memory, is "potentially healing"(x), as it "calls for political and cultural solidarity." However, the subject of a traumatic event can heal only if he/she interacts with the others. In *Les Rêveries*, she explains that she is writing her childhood memories to quench her *désalgérie* (68), and to

"cure herself from her "incurable" (41) love for Algeria, which uncured might lead to her self-destruction (17).

Cixous's *Les Rêveries* could be seen as a feminist attempt to open a dialogue with Algerian intellectuals and feminists like Djebar who wrote about the current events in Algeria in *Vaste est la prison* (1995) and *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1996). Just as Shohat tries to open a dialogue in Israel between Palestinians and Sephardim and to show them how they "have been played against each other" (66) by a Eurocentric Zionist ideology, Cixous is also trying to show how Muslims and Jews in Algeria have been played against each other by the French colonial establishment. In French colonial Algeria, anti-Semitism was directed at all Jews regardless of their origin: "French Jews from both France and Algeria, Spain, Arabs, or Corsican" (43). When Vichy was in Oran, Cixous's father lost his job as a Jewish doctor (62). Cixous's family suffered a double exclusion, from the Arab circles because they were French, and from the French circles because they were Jewish Arabs. "After the War," Cixous's family was "no longer admitted to the Red Cross swimming pools" (64). As a child, Cixous could not visit her French friend Françoise at home (121-22) because she was Jewish. Thus, Cixous's autobiography could be located within the recent mobilization on the part of Jewish and Muslim intellectuals on the left (notably, Edward W. Said and Noam Chomsky) to put an end to the increasing violence against women in Algeria and Palestinians in Israel.

In this autobiography, the issue is not whether Cixous is creating an idealized homogeneous past, "the question" is rather as Shohat puts it, "who is mobilizing what in the articulation of the past, deploying what identities, identifications, and representations, and in the name of what political vision and goals?" ("Notes on the Post Colonial," *The*

Preoccupation of Postcolonial Studies 136). Cixous's identification with Muslim women and writing about Algeria after 45 years of silence is prompted by her "literary identity," that is to say, by her political engagement as a feminist facing the FIS's increasing violence against women in the 1990s Algeria. Cixous states that she thought about writing this book since 1994 (*Les Rêveries* 167), that is to say, two years after the break out of the civil war in Algeria. Given the fact that as a Jew, Cixous is no longer an Algerian citizen, her "literary nationality" (*Hélène Cixous* 207) does not simply give her the license to write about the current events in Algeria, but more importantly, it becomes a form of self-reterritorialization beyond the boundaries of nation. This imaginary "international" (*Les Rêveries* 107) identity becomes not only a passport for border crossing, for speaking and writing about Algeria and the Algerian women, but also for claiming a non-originary Jewish identity.

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[1] This scopophilic drive in Western metaphysics can be traced back to the symposium between Socrates and Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*. In Book 7, there is a "screen" or a "wall" (220), separating the prisoners from the light of a fire burning outside the cave. The prisoners know neither themselves nor one another, the only thing they can see are "the shadows cast by the fire on the wall of the cave" (20). Just as the act of concealing/veiling in the story of the cave is synonymous with obstruction and darkness, the act of seeing/unveiling is conversely associated with "the truth of what is beautiful and just and good" (226). Even though he has retained this phallocentrism, Friedrich Nietzsche departs in *The Gay Sciences* from Western metaphysics by undermining the idea of any truth lying behind the veil. Dissociating himself from the Orient of "the Egyptian youths," who, looking for truth, "endanger temples," "embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil [...] whatever is kept concealed for good reasons" (38), Nietzsche allies himself with the Greeks, who "are superficial out of profundity," and who know when "to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, [and] the skin." After stripping the courageous Greeks of their previously constructed cultural ties with the Orient and reinventing them as part of Western tradition, Nietzsche goes on to recreate the veil as a symbol of the "deception" of women who often conceal the fact that there is nothing behind the veil, i.e., that their "essence is [merely] to appear" (qtd. in Mary Anne Doane, "Veiling over Desire: Close Ups of the Woman" 121). In Nietzsche's text, the veil becomes the symbol of an Oriental/Egyptian otherness that is effeminate and duplicitous.

[2] "*Le Voile*," *Le Grand Robert de la langue Française*, 1987 ed.

[3] In *Woman and Gender in Islam*, Ahmed argues that the practice of seclusion and veiling in Medieval Islam was borrowed from the neighboring Christian, Judaic, and Persian societies, and that the nineteenth century European imperialist discourse invented Islamic civilization as separate from the Judeo-Christian and Greek civilizations of the Middle East (33).

[4] In *Fantasia*, Djebar revisits Fanon's patriarchal metaphor by telling the stories of women who were really raped during the process of French colonization.

[5] I make allusion here to the title of a travelogue by John Foster Fraser, *The Land of Veiled Women: Some Wanderings in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1913).

[6] Lacan's presentation of metaphor as open and masculine and metonymy as latent and feminine made many critics like Luce Irigaray accuse him of phallocentrism. See *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 108.

[7] I am using Reina Lewis's words in her analysis of Lacan's Oriental metaphor in *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996) 181.

[8] By "hyperveiling," MacMaster and Lewis refer to the French media's obsession with images of Muslim women wearing the tchador. See "Orientalism: from Unveiling to Hyperveiling," *European Studies* 82 (1998): 121-35.

[9] The same anxiety has struck the U.S. after the September 11, 2001 attacks. In the first days following the bombing of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the giant U.S. networks frequently deployed the veil as the symbol of Oriental or Islamic barbarity. If many veiled Muslim women became the target of retaliatory violence in the aftermath of the attacks, it was partly because the veil had been displayed all over the American mass media as a sign of Islamic/Arab hatred, duplicity, and barbarity. One day after the attacks, CNN, MSNBC, and FOX 47 broadcast a footage showing Palestinian children and a veiled Muslim woman celebrating the loss of thousands of American lives. According to the Independent Media Center, this footage was shot in 1991 during the invasion of Kuwait. Even though CNN denied the manipulation charge, it never showed this footage again. Whether or not these images were fabricated, the fact remains the same: the horrible pictures of this Palestinian woman dressed in black, eating cakes, and ululating over the death of American nationals were instrumental in kindling people's fear and in turning the veil into a sign of an irrational and demonic otherness. When the U.S. engaged its troops in Afghanistan, the threatening image of the Muslim woman ("veiled phallus") receded to the background to pave the way for the images of the helpless Afghan "Muslim woman" unable to breathe and see from beneath her burqa.

[10] This is my translation.

[11] In *Djamila Boupacha*, de Beauvoir and Halimi denounce this Algerian woman's torture and the sham trial of her torturers by the French Judicial authorities in Algeria.

[12] This does not mean that the meaning of the veil is fixed in the West. In weddings and mourning, the veil does not have an Arabic or Muslim connotation.

[13] From Jonathan Crewe, "Recalling Adamastor: Literature as Cultural Memory in 'White' South Africa," eds., Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1999) 75.

[14] She is condescendingly referring to the old wedding night sheet custom in North Africa. If the bridegroom has doubts about his wife's virginity, a midwife is called upon to check the bride's hymen. In such cases, the police intervenes to either protect the bride or to prevent fights between the two families.

[15] There is a pun/racial slur here: *Lézarabes* means not only Arabs but also *lézard* ("lizard").

[16] "*Du bon fromage*" ("good cheese"), "*La vache qui rit,*" (cheese), "*les oeufs*" ("eggs"), and "*Nestlé.*"

[17] Whereas Moroccan Jews used to hide Moroccan Jewish customs and holidays, now they are openly practicing their North African traditions. The election of Netanyahu to the position of Prime Minister shows that the Sephardim are no longer disempowered.

[18] The Abyss is the name of the poor neighborhood where thousands of "wretched" Arabs lived, separated from the Clos-Salembier, a middle and upper class *Pieds Noirs* suburb, where Cixous's family lived (40).

Chapter Four: Body, Home, and Nation: The Production of the Tunisian Muslim Woman in the Reformist Thought of Tahar al Haddad and Habib Bourguiba

> The Tunisian women's movement is original! It is not a feminist movement. It has no demands: it has been granted everything (*L'Action* 7 January 1957)[1]

Whereas the previous three chapters focused on the invention of the "Muslim woman" in female Orientalism, French psychoanalysis and feminism, and Islamic feminism, this fourth chapter examines the ideological production of the "Muslim woman" in the nationalist narratives of Tahar al Haddad (1899-1935) and Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000). Taking into consideration the debate over authenticity and modernity in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia, this chapter tries to reconceptualize the relations between gender, nation, home in al Haddad's social treatise *Our Woman in the Shari'a Law and Society*[2] (*Imra'atuna fi al shari'a wa al mujtama'*) (1930) and Bourguiba's policy and public speeches on the veil and women's rights. These texts will be studied in conjunction with some cartoons and articles published by the Tunisian nationalist press in the colonial era and the official government press in postcolonial Tunisia. This chapter starts by introducing al Haddad and Bourguiba in view of the debate over women's emancipation in nineteenth and early twentieth century Tunisia. The major objective of this first section is to demonstrate al Haddad's and Bourguiba's indebtedness and resistance to these early discourses on the "Muslim woman."

In *Nation and Narration* (1990), Bhabha presents nationalism as an ambivalent discourse and a fractured system of cultural production. Relying on Bhabha's notion that the nationalist subject is split[3] at the site of enunciation, this second section examines the ambivalence within al Haddad's and Bourguiba's nationalist reconstruction of the

"Muslim woman." Despite their revolutionary ideas, al Haddad and Bourguiba often tend to reinforce Tunisian women's roles as wives, mothers and guardians of Islamic tradition, as assigned to them within a patriarchal system.

According to Bhabha, the nation is a "modern Janus" figure "wavering between two vocabularies" and vacillating between the imperatives of authenticity and the social reality of "modernity" (2). Taking up Bhabha's notion that all nationalist discourses are ambivalent, this third section tries to examine the woman's position in the fractured discourse of nationalism, an issue hardly broached in *Nation and Narration*. Using the texts of al Haddad and Bourguiba, this section will examine how the Tunisian "Muslim woman"--as the "atavistic and authentic body of national tradition"--came to represent Tunisian nationalism's "conservative principle of continuity," while the "Tunisian man"--as the "progressive agent of national modernity"--came to embody "nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary, principle of discontinuity" (McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race and Nationalism," *Dangerous Liaisons* 92) (1997). This section will focus on three key points: 1) the Muslim woman's" construction as the body of the "*umma*"; 2) the male gendering of nationalist agency; 3) and finally the gender politics implicated in Bourguiba's concept of the "Tunisian personality."

The fourth argument of this chapter is that despite some continuity in their conception of masculinity and femininity, the nationalist ideologies of al Haddad and Bourguiba have produced two different forms of domesticity. Whereas in al Haddad's writings the Muslim woman is the domestic subject of the Islamic *umma*, under the paternalistic authority of Bourguiba, the "Muslim woman"--including feminist organizations like the U.N.F.T. (*Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes*)--occupies a

double position as a subnational subject of the *Shari'a* law and a citizen of the modern state.

Subsequently, this chapter will examine the power politics prevalent in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia. This part argues that it is the privileges of gender, education and in Bourguiba's case class[4] which allow these two nationalist figures to speak on behalf of the "Tunisian woman" and to claim for her a traditional past and a modern future. This part will also focus on the recent laws affecting the lives of Tunisian women in the 1990s. Even though patriarchal and essentialist in nature, these laws had a positive impact on the lives of Tunisian women and granted them rights unequaled in the Arab and Islamic world.

I) Al Haddad and Bourguiba and the Debate over the Woman Question in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Tunisia

Al Haddad was born in Tunis in 1899 and grew up in a very modest family that came originally from the Tunisian South (Al Hamma). His father used to sell poultry at the Marché Central of Tunis. In contrast with Bourguiba who received a French colonial education, al Haddad attended a Qur'anic school where he learned only Arabic. He then attended the theological school of the Zaytuna Mosque[5] from 1911 till 1920 where he earned the *Tatwi'* Diploma that allowed him to work as a notary. Al Haddad also attended the Khaldounia (literary club) conferences and enrolled in law school (Hédi Balegh, *Les Pensées de Tahar Haddad* 13). He quickly became involved in the Tunisian nationalist movement. He joined the Old Destur Party at its inception in 1920, but disenchanted with its methods, he soon left it to found, in 1924, with Muhammad Alî al

Hammi, the first union of the Tunisian workers, La Confédération Générale Tunisienne du Travail (Balegh 13). In 1927, al Haddad wrote his first book, *The Tunisian Workers and the Trade Unionist Movement in Tunisia*, followed in 1930 by his controversial book *Our Woman in the Shari'a Law and Society*. Because of his call for women's emancipation, the Sheiks of the Zaytuna accused al Haddad of heresy and issued a fatwa whereby they revoked his Zaytuna degree, his notary license, and barred him from an exam room (Balegh 7). Isolated and living in poverty, he died of a heart attack on 7 December 1935 at the age of thirty-six.

Although not from the old Tunisian nobility, Bourguiba belonged to the new rising bourgeoisie. He was born in 1903 in the small town of Monastir. Despite Bourguiba's claim that he lived his childhood in utter poverty, the annals of the Tunisian Ministry of Information show that he came from an upper middle class background (Norma Salem, *Habib Bourguiba, Islam and the Creation of Tunisia* 31). His father was an officer in the Bey's army, owned a house, 123 olive trees and was able to send his five sons to school. Bourguiba pursued his high school education at the Collège Sadiki, where he obtained the Brevet Certificate in Arabic, and at the Lycée Carnot where he earned his Baccalaureate degree in 1924. He then went to the Sorbonne to study law. In 1927, he graduated with a dual degree in law and political science. In the same year, he married a French woman Mathilde Louvain. As soon as he returned to Tunisia, he worked as a lawyer and joined the Old Destur Party (1927-34). He wrote articles in many nationalist newspapers such as *La Voix du Tunisien* and *L'Etendard Tunisien*. On 1 November 1932, he started running a new nationalist newspaper *L'Action Tunisienne*. After splitting from the Old Destur Party in the aftermath of the Ksar Hlal Congress (2

March 1934), he served as the General Secretary of the Neo Destur Party. In the middle of the 1930s, under the colonial repression of the Resident General Marcel Peyroutan, he was forced into exile, first to Kébili and then to Borj Leboeuf. He was then permitted to return, but after the bloody incidents of 9 April 1938,[6] he was arrested and sent to a prison in France. After W.W.II., he established contacts with the United Nations and the Arab League to campaign for Tunisia's independence. Collaborating in the early fifties with the French left government of Pierre Mendès France, he was able to obtain Tunisia's internal independence on 3 June 1955 and full independence on 20 March 1956. He remained President till 7 November 1987 and passed away on 6 April 2000.

As in Egypt, the debate over the Muslim woman's emancipation in Tunisia was initiated by the European colonial encounter. Having lived in the same colonial era, Bourguiba and al Haddad were heirs to the modernist and nationalist currents prevalent in Tunisia, the West, and the Middle East in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both of them were familiar with the works of Muslim and secular reformers in the Middle East like Muhammad Abdu, Jamel Addine al Afghani, Qassim Amin, and Kemal Ataturk. Even though al Haddad neither read nor spoke French like Bourguiba, he was exposed to the discourse of modernity and Western thought through translation and contact with the Tunisian literary and political circles such as la Khaldounia (literary club), the Association of the Former Students of the Sadiki College, and *Jama'at Tahta Assour*, a literary circle which included nationalist intellectuals like Abu Kacem Chebbi, Alî Dou'agi, Mustapha Khraif, and Zaine Abidine Snoussi (Zeineb Ben Said Cherni, *Les Dérapages de l'histoire chez Tahar Haddad* 40). He was also influenced by the modernist ideas of Abdel Aziz al Th'aalbi, the leader of the Old Destur Party and by the

Socialist ideas of Said Aboubaker, Hédi La'bidi, Muhammad Noomane, Eve Nohelle, Anne el Dey and Jules Brunet, who wrote many articles in the 1920s against the veil and polygamy in *Tunis Socialiste.* Bourguiba's dual Arabic and French education and his involvement with the nationalist press exposed him to the same modernist currents which influenced the reformist thought of al Haddad.

Started by liberal statesmen in the nineteenth-century, the reformist movement in Tunisia came under the aegis of the nationalist leadership in the twentieth century; namely the Desturian nationalists (al Th'aalbi) and the Tunisian socialists (Muhammad Noomane and Eve Noelle). In the middle of the nineteenth century, Léon Roches, the French consul in Tunisia between 1853-1863, critiqued in his communication with the Tunisian political reformer Ahmed Ibn Abi Dhiaf the condition of the "Muslim woman" in Tunisia. Even though he refuted the colonial premise that Islam is behind the Muslim woman's backward condition, Ibn Abi Dhiaf still believed in men's superiority over women because of man's exclusive powers of "rationality," "prophecy" and "*jihad*" (*Al Mar'a fi al haraka al islahiya min al Tahar al Haddad ila Zine al Abidine Ben Ali* 17). Well-known for his political reforms, Ibn Abi Dhiaf's views on the "Muslim woman" were startlingly conservative. A father, he wrote, could arrange the marriage of his minor daughter without her consent; "because he [knew] what [was] best for her" (qtd. in *Al Mar'a* 17). In his opinion, the wife could not ask for divorce since she became the husband's "property" the day "he paid for her dowry" (qtd. in *Al Mar'a* 18). Condoning polygamy, he stated that besides fitting the strong sexual drive of Arab men, polygamy was a natural "phenomenon" like having "four members, the four seasons, the four heavenly books, the four fundamental bases of the world--administration, commerce,

agriculture, and industry--and the number of elite women--Hagar, Mariam, Khadija, and Fatma (qtd. in *Al Mar'a* 19). Disapproving of women's education and *sufur* ("unveiling"), he wrote that besides encouraging women to mix with men, "a woman's education" and introduction to "the sciences" made her mannish, which was something *makrouh* ("frowned upon") among Muslims (qtd. in *Al Mar'a* 20). Ibn Abi Dhiaf's conservatism, however, was not shared by many of his contemporaries. In 1867, the Tunisian reformist and Secretary of the Bey Ahmed Kheireddine called for women's education to make them good spouses capable of running their households and raising their children (qtd. in Hafidha Chekir, *Le Statut des femmes entre les textes et les résistances: Le cas de la Tunisie* 11).

In 1917, the man of letters Hassen Hosni Abdelwahab wrote in his book *Most Famous Tunisian Women* (*Shahirat Attunisiyat)*: "We today urgently need educated Muslim young women who will take charge of our future" and "awaken the nationalist spirit." Without this "solid national education," he warned, "the remedy would be transformed into ailment, life would turn to nihilism and the consequences would be disastrous. May God protect us!" (qtd. in Cherni 140). The call for women's education was also endorsed by the Old Destur leader and Zaytuna Sheikh Abdel Aziz al Th'aalbi (1874-1944). He too linked the Muslim woman's role as educator with the development of her country. "Woman," he wrote, "has to take her share from life and sunlight at the same level as man. Only then, will the Islamic world witness any change" (qtd. in *Al Mar'a* 28). In his book *The Liberal Spirit of the Qur'an* (1905), Al Th'aalbi stated that the verses about the veil were about Muhammad's wives, not ordinary Muslim women (*Al Mar'a* 27). In the same book, al Th'aalbi denounced the oppressive "weight of traditions

and customs," and argued that "neither gender inequality" nor "veiling" originated in Islam (Chekir 12).

An overview of al Haddad's and Bourguiba's reformist thought reveals both conformity and resistance towards these earlier discourses on the Muslim woman. Their call for the Tunisian woman's education and participation in the building of a modern Tunisia reproduces the earlier discourses of Amin, al Th'aalbi, and Hosni Abdelwahab on women's roles in the project of national regeneration. Of all the above Tunisian and Arab reformers, it is al Th'aalbi who seems to have the strongest impact on the reformist and feminist thought of al Haddad and Bourguiba.[7] Echoing al Th'aalbi's anti-nativist views in *The Liberal Spirit of the Qur'an*, al Haddad claims that Islam has been adulterated not with Western values, as the Algerian Muslim reformist Sheikh Abd el Hamid Ibn Badis claimed, but with local Tunisian customs and traditions. In *Our Woman*, al Haddad claims that there is a discrepancy between woman in the *Shari'a* law and society. Whereas in the first part of his book, al Haddad examines women's rights and status in the Qur'an, in the second, he focuses on the "Muslim woman's" condition in Tunisia of the 1920s. At the end of this second section he concludes that women's oppression is caused not by Islam but by Muslims. Like al Th'aalbi, he claims that "the seclusion we impose on the woman as one of the edicts of Islam, and which takes the form of either her house imprisonment, or the wearing of the veil, is not an easy question to confirm in Islam" (*Our Woman* 34).

Reproducing al Th'aalbi's argument, al Haddad argues that the hijab was imposed only on the Prophet's wives not on all Muslim women (24). In contrast with Fanon's construction of the veil as a neutral or innocent signifier in pre-colonial Algerian society,

the veil for al Haddad points to women's exclusion from social and economic life. Rather than being a symbol of Islamic identity, the hijab for al Haddad is deployed by men to "rob" women from their wealth by forcing them to "rely on the tutelage of men" (184-85).

Against the Maliki Sheikh Abdelaziz Djait and Ibn Abi Dhiaf, al Haddad argues that the veil encourages, male, not female, depravity: "The hijab gave men a private life outside the home that women are not aware of. [Men] spend whatever amount of money they lay their hands on, on prostitution, drunkenness, gambling and everything that would give them fun and entertainment in this separate life from which the wives are excluded." (184). He concludes that putting the veil on a woman's face to prevent immorality is like putting "a muzzle on a dog's mouth so that it does not bite those who pass by" (182).

As a unionist, al Haddad argues that "immorality" is caused not by "unveiling" as the proponents of the veil argue, but by "poverty, which beset us from everywhere" (190). Separating the veil from morality and religion, he discusses it in terms of national and economic survival. While Tunisians are still debating "the positive and negative consequences of unveiling," European clothes are "drowning our kingdom" and "putting an end to [our] traditional textile, wool, silk, *fouta* ("a traditional female garment"), and scarf industries" (188-89). Thus holding "woman" responsible for society's corruption is a surface reading of the real causes which are unemployment, inadequacy of the traditional economic infrastructure to respond to the needs of the family and society in general (190).

In 1897, Muhammad Snoussi (1851-1900) published "Breaking the Chains Over Women's Rights in Islam," a letter in which he urges the "husband to feed and clothe his

wife, and to provide her with servants" (*Al Mar'a* 26-7) to spare her the burden of doing housework and breastfeeding her children. The same idea is reproduced by al Haddad when he writes in 1930 that "raising children is not an obligation [for the Muslim woman], but one of her rights, which she could give up according to Imam Shafi'i and Abu Hanifa. It is the husband's duty to find someone to take care of them unless the wife has to do so" (48).

Reflecting the early twentieth century European patriarchal discourse about the science of rearing children, al Haddad writes: "We need the European woman's knowledge and capacity to bear and raise children, capable of not only engaging in the battle of life, but also of winning the battle, and benefiting from the world resources and peoples" (214). Thus the success of European imperialism according to al Haddad was possible only because of the education and emancipation of the European mother. Just as the French mother is able to create a successful imperial male subject, so should the Tunisian mother and future mothers of the nation; they must create successful nationalist male children. What is important here is not al Haddad's construction of the Tunisian and French woman alike as "creator/lactator,"[8] but his appropriation of the right-wing French imperial construction of womanhood as the basis for a Tunisian nationalist/imperialist project.

Likewise Bourguiba's defense[9] of the veil as a component of the "Tunisian personality" in 1929--one year before al Haddad published his book--reflects the nationalist debate in French colonial Tunisia. For Youssef el Mahjoub, a Tunisian nationalist and student of law and philosophy, "the hijab is our individuality and its distinctive sign." To abolish it means to "change our morality and erode our personality"

(qtd. in Muhammad Noomane, "*A L'Essor*" 1). Following the debate on the veil at L'Essor,[10] there was a long polemic in 1929 between the anti-veil campaign of Muhammad Noomane[11] and Joachim Durel[12] in *Tunis Socialiste* and Bourguiba's pro-veil campaign in *L'Etendard Tunisien*. Although he was "educated in French school" and "expressed himself in an elegant French style" (Durel, "Réponses à quelques jeunes" 1), the young Bourguiba asserted in a speech he gave at L'Essor that the veil is an important component of the "Tunisian personality" ("Le Voile" 2). In 1929, Noomane attacked Bourguiba for defending the veil while being married to an unveiled French woman. "Bourguiba's daughters," Noomane sarcastically observed, "are French citizens and enjoy all the political and social prerogatives of French women including the individual freedom and the right to throw away the "'hijab' to the devil" (qtd. in "La Polémique Bourguiba-Noomane," *L'Action* 17).

Even though he attacks in principle le *feminisme vestimentaire* ("Le Voile" 1), in his fight against the French politics of assimilation, Bourguiba calls Tunisians to "hold on to all the manifestations of the Tunisian personality," even on the "level of clothing" (qtd. in "La Polémique Bourguiba-Noomane" 13). "Veiling," he says is "a custom that has entered into our ethics centuries ago. It is now part of who we are ("Le Voile" 2). In contrast with Durel's claim that there is no "Tunisian individuality," Bourguiba asserts that Islam, the veil and territorial unity are quintessential elements of the Tunisian identity:

> Territorial unity, the Community of Believers, the unity of language, custom, past, the joys felt together, the reversal of fortunes and humiliations experienced in the same way, all of these things do not help create, for Mr. Durel, any tie, any feeling of solidarity, or any patriotic idea among the children of this country. ("Le Voile" 1)

Like al Haddad, Bourguiba links the issue the veil and the *chechia* (traditional male turban) to the issue of economic imperialism. Even though Bourguiba used to wear Western clothes, he accuses Durel of promoting French clothing and therefore of being complicit with the French imperial project of assimilation: "Whereas [Durel] is supposed to represent the interests of the Tunisian workers, he calls for the abolition of the chechia, a major trade item in Tunisia, in favor of the French products" (Bourguiba, "Le Durrellisme ou le Socialisme boiteux," *L'Etendard Tunisien* 1). Bourguiba's discussion of male clothes in economic rather than cultural terms and his silence over his own consumption of Western products indicate how nationalism invents different roles for men and women: only the "Tunisian woman" is bound to be the visible marker of the Tunisian personality; the Tunisian man, is the protector, not the marker, of cultural identity.

In "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon writes: "It is by their apparel that types of society first become known" (35). Much earlier than Fanon, el Mahjoub and Bourguiba presented nationalism as a politics of visibility. For these two male Tunisian nationalists, the "Muslim woman" functions as the "visible marker of national homogeneity." This explains her subjection to "vigilant and violent discipline" as well as "the intense emotive politics of dress" (McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven'" 97) in Maghrebian nationalism.

II) Ambivalence in al Haddad's and Bourguiba's Construction of the "Muslim Woman"

In contrast with Ibn Abi Dhiaf's conservative views on marriage and divorce and Abdel Aziz Djait's sanction of the triple[13] divorce formula (94), al Haddad claims that the "Muslim woman" is not a "man's property" or "slave" even if he paid for her dowry (113). He calls for the establishment of divorce courts (67), the "Muslim woman's" rights to "equal inheritance" (28), to initiate divorce procedure (65), to choose a husband (46), and "to administer her wealth" (20). Perhaps, the most feminist statement in al Haddad's book is his outcry that the Muslim woman is not "a vessel for our penises" (9).

In his argument against polygamy, which he condemns as lust (151), al Haddad does not hesitate to desacralize the persona of Muhammad. If the Prophet married more than one woman, it was not to encourage polygamy, but because of special circumstances" (57), [for] the Prophet is a human being who cannot be exempted from the influence of accidental facts which impact [ordinary] human beings; facts which are not codified by God's Revelation" (57).

Al Haddad was greatly influenced by the "discursive theological framework of the Hanafi school in which *'ijtihad'* was based on arguments, justifications, rhetoric, and approbation" (Cherni 108). In *Our Woman*, al Haddad claims that the Qur'anic and *Shari'a* laws are not eternal, but bound to a historical context. He often investigates the causes of *tanzil* ("the Sura's descent") and examines the different explanations a verse is given by the *fuqaha* ("men of religious science") (23). Because the essence of the Islamic faith is "justice" and "equality between people" (12), polygamy and gender inequality, like slavery, are to be abolished gradually (33). During Muhammad's life, new laws and texts came to cancel earlier texts and laws. Because of historical progress, divine law is not eternal, it has to be compatible with modern times.

Even though he defended the veil in 1929 and remained silent over the fatwa issued against al Haddad in the early 1930s, Bourguiba did implement many of al Haddad's reforms when he enacted The Personal Status Code (PSC) on 13 August 1956. After Tunisia's independence, Bourguiba launched [à la Ataturk] a campaign to abolish the veil. In a post-independent speech delivered on 5 December 1957, the veil shifted from being a sign of Tunisian personality to being "a horrible rag (*torchon*) [which] has nothing to do with religion" ("Coordination des services, respect des individus et libération de la femme," *Discours* 4: 21). Reflecting Bourguiba's anti-veiling policy, the government's official newspaper *L'Action* wrote that the veil was a Persian import. Muslim women remained unveiled till the second year of the Hijra. Because the Qur'an ordered only the Prophet's wives to wear the veil, the "Muslim woman" today must take off the veil (Bahija M., "Le Coran impose-t-il le voile?" 18).

Recalling al Haddad's comparison between the issue of slavery and polygamy in Islam and his argument that the Qur'anic and *Shari'a* laws are subject to historical change, Bourguiba writes in 1960 that polygamy has to disappear because it is anachronistic: "No one can deny that the Qur'an has some dispositions regarding slaves: rights, obligations, trade conditions. But a century ago, social circumstances led everywhere to the abolition of slavery, which was initially legal." The Caliph Umar himself revoked the sentence of cutting the thief's hand because it was "a year of famine" ("2ème Congrès National de L'U.N.F.T.," *Discours* 8: 53).

Like al Haddad who states that polygamy must be abolished because the essence of the Islamic faith is justice (*Our Woman* 55), Bourguiba writes that the "general spirit of the Qur'an is generally directed towards monogamy as indicated in the verse 'in case

you fear being unfair, you must marry one woman'" ("Deux Fondements du Statut Personnel: dignité et cohésion nationale," *Discours* 2: 129). And he adds, not without a touch of sarcasm, that the supporters of polygamy must admit, "in the spirit of just equity, that a woman [must become] polyandrous in the case the husband is sterile and that it would be legitimate for her to marry many men to make sure she has progeny."

Giving voice to al Haddad's outcry against the practice of *al jabr* ("compulsion to marriage"), article 3 of the PSC banned marriage without consent. The PSC also forbade unilateral divorce by according to both partners the right to divorce through the intermediacy of a judge. Heeding al Haddad's call for a "premarital medical screening" to prevent the passing of "genetic diseases" and "alcoholism" onto the children and the wife's entrapment with an "impotent husband" (146-47), Bourguiba implemented the pre-nuptial medical exam in 1962 to prevent "diseases like tuberculosis and syphilis" from being passed to the children and wives ("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 205).

Even though he did not change the Islamic laws of inheritance whereby the male inherits twice the share of the female, Bourguiba dissolved the *habus*[14] system which al Haddad found inimical to the egalitarian spirit of Islam. In *Our Woman*, al Haddad writes that the "custom of *habus* whereby the father restricts his wealth to his sons," whereby "the daughters are provided for as long as they are in their father's house or returned to it," is a way "to break free from the Islamic law that gives women the right to inherit and a return to the Jahilia practice where women could be inherited" (28-9).

The history of the Tunisian nationalist press and the examples provided by al Haddad and Bourguiba undermine Leila Ahmed's homogeneous claim (*Women and Gender in Islam*) that those who advocate women's emancipation in the language of

unveiling and democracy are Western-educated upper and middle class Arab modernists, and those who call for the reform of women's condition in Islamist terms have all received a traditional Arabic education and come from a more modest social background. As a matter of fact, except for *Tunis Socialiste*, the Tunisian nationalist press in French like *L'Etendard Tunisien* and *La Voix du Tunisien* were much more adamant in their opposition to the French colonial government than the nationalist newspapers in Arabic like *Al Nahdha* (*The Renaissance*) or *Al Zahra* (*The Flower*). Even though al Haddad spoke only Arabic and attended the theological school of the Zaytuna, his ideas were more daring and threatening to the Tunisian patriarchy than those of Bourguiba who studied law at the Sorbonne. Besides calling for the abolition of the veil in 1930, he is the only Tunisian or Muslim male reformer who called for gender equality in inheritance. "In its essence," he writes, "Islam does not oppose the principle of equality in all its respects" (32). Because the *Shari'a* law is based on *muruna* ("leniency") and is compatible with "the developments of human life," gender inequality in inheritance has to disappear, following Islam's gradual prohibition of alcohol and slavery. Al Haddad goes so far as to show the ambivalence in the Islamic laws of inheritance. It is well known that the Qur'an gives "the male twice the share of the female" (28), but what is less known, is that women are equal to men in the case of parental inheritance: "The parents of the deceased son shall each receive 1/6 from what he left if he had a son." And the same thing for the siblings' inheritance: "If the deceased leaves behind children and a wife and he has a brother or a sister, each of them shall receive 1/6 of what he left. If they were more than two, they will share the 1/3 of what remains after a will or the

payment of a debt" (28). What the Qur'an said about inheritance was compatible with the Arabs' condition in early Islamic days, not today.

An overview of al Haddad's and Bourguiba's writings reveals a split in their construction of the Muslim woman. For them, the Tunisian Muslim woman exists only within the family, as a mother and a wife. To start with al Haddad, neither Zeineb Ben Said Cherni, Hédi Balegh, Abou Kacem Muhammad Karrou, nor Ahmed Khaled point to the ambivalence in al Haddad's discourse about women's emancipation. Despite his criticism of violence against women, he still places the husband as the wife's teacher and head of the family. Throughout al Haddad's writings, the purpose of a woman's education is not self-fulfillment, but to be "a good spouse" and "helpmate" (*Our Woman* 160). Throughout al Haddad's writings, the Tunisian woman is confined to the patriarchally assigned roles of mother and wife:

> Woman is the mother of humanity, she carries [man] in her womb and arms, and he is conscious of nothing, but of her influence which will later appear in his life. She feeds him with her milk, blood, and heart. She is also the domestic spouse who quenches the hunger of his soul, dissipates his loneliness, and sacrifices her health and peace of mind to provide him with his needs and alleviate the weight of the obstacles he encounters. She overwhelms him with her emotions to reduce the weight of the catastrophes and sadness and rekindles in him the energy of living. (*Our Woman* 5)

The new Tunisian woman must be given a *tha'kafa manziliya* ("domestic culture") (121). To raise healthy nationalist subjects, she must learn hygiene, child nutrition, [and] food conservation" (132). Thus, if the hijab is to be abolished, it is for the purpose of making the Muslim woman a good housewife who is able to "run the household budget and every day life" (158). To be a good mother, the "Muslim woman" must also be given a *tha'kafa 'a'kliya* or "rational culture" (123). The Renaissance of Tunisia is impossible

as long as the Tunisian mother believes in "ghouls" and "the benefits of talismans" (123). For al Haddad, "these superstitions" fill the empty heads of the youth and "leave no room for rational and intellectual thinking." In despair, al Haddad exclaims: "If it is difficult to "remove these poisons from the mind of the young boy [then] let's imagine how difficult this would be for the young girl who has been barred from any educational and social environment" (124) How can she be a good mother after being inculcated these "superstitions and customs"?

Al Haddad's views on the educated Tunisian woman are not flattering either. For him these educated women from the well-to-do classes have misunderstood the concept of modernity and progress: "They are better than their illiterate sisters only in conceit and the imperative to consume to excess the cosmetics [required] in their Western lifestyle, without considering their husbands' budget or what lies in the interest of their marriage" (196). Hence, if al Haddad attacks the educated Tunisian woman, it is because of her possible challenge/escape from her patriarchal duties as mother/wife. In *Our Woman*, the Muslim woman's national contribution is confined to the traditional domestic space. Rather than being a prison, the "home," al Haddad says, "is a job and a dwelling for the woman." If we understand "this illuminating reality, we would realize that it is our duty to educate the girl so that she might run rightly and effectively the affairs of her kingdom" (209-10).

Likewise, Bourguiba's call for women's education in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia is generated by his concern with the project of national regeneration. As he puts it in a post-independence speech:

> Reform of customs and ethics is an element that cannot be dissociated from the fight against colonialism. What made us

> vulnerable to imperialist covetousness was our weak state, born out of the ignorance and superstitions to which we were holding, wrongly believing they were inseparable from religion. ("Libération de la femme et réforme des mœurs: tâche primordiale," *Discours* 4: 184)

The Tunisian woman's emancipation is to be viewed as a strategic nationalist exercise to bring the Tunisian nation back on its feet after years of decadence. Explaining women's mission in postcolonial Tunisia, Bourguiba declares: "Our nation had reached in the past a high degree of civilization and power. Our ancestors, covered with glory, took the torch to Sicily and Egypt. Kairouan, Mahdia and Tunis were in turn a pole of attraction for the entire Muslim world." He then identifies the "inhuman conditions" of Tunisian women--who constitute "half of the Tunisian population"--as the major cause for Tunisia's present decadence" ("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 193-94).

Bourguiba's feminist agenda reinforces values of female subordination and gender inequality. During the Women's March on 1 January 1957, he made a public speech where he reminds the Tunisian woman of her subordinate position[15] at home:

> The Woman must not exaggerate [...] The man remains the head of the family [frenetic applause of the men], and he will always remain so. The woman cannot at any moment seek refuge under "Mr. Habib said." She must know that she has responsibilities to assume and that the man will always have the last word. (qtd. in "Bourguiba fait confiance aux femmes," *L'Action* 13)

In continuity with the earlier Tunisian nationalist literature, the Tunisian nation appears as a mother in Bourguiba's discourses. Just as a dutiful son shows respect and tries to please his mother, "everyone must respect law and those in charge of its application. We are all sons to the same mother, Tunisia, and every one has to contribute to her happiness" ("Nous sommes tous fils d'une même mère," *Discours* 2: 242).

III) On the Gendered Discourse of Tunisian Nationalism: The Female Body of the Nation and the Male gendering of Nationalist Agency

In *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality*, George Mosse describes how the nineteenth century bourgeois concept of "respectability" constructed men as active agents of the nation through their "self-control" and sublimation of their low passions, and invented women as shallow and frivolous creatures to be constantly watched (Mosse 17). Whereas the former are seen as the producers of culture/tradition, the latter are assigned the role of "guardian[s] of morality." In Tunisian nationalism, the Tunisian woman's identity also lies in her unpaid services and sacrifices to the *umma* ("nation") through her dedication to her husband and children. Whereas Tunisian men embody the political and economic agency of the *umma*, women are the keepers of Islamic tradition and the *umma*'s moral and spiritual mission. However, in contrast with Mosse's claim that only "women" embody the nation's respectability (90), in the nationalist discourses of al Haddad and Bourguiba, men too are subjected to the ideals of respectability. As a matter of fact, al Haddad denounces the widespread sexist mentality that allows man to be adulterous in many ways and holds woman responsible for the spread of immorality (189). Like al Haddad, in his post-independence speeches, Bourguiba strips the veil of any moral significance and places the moral burden on both genders, not just women. "By the knot around the woman's neck," he writes, "we pretend that we are avoiding shamelessness: however, for shamelessness to exist, there must be two people; but we refrain ourself from applying the same principles to the man, the second partner" (qtd. in "Bourguiba fait confiance aux femmes," *L'Action* 13).

Pointing to the alliance between European nationalism and bourgeois morality, Mosse explains how "homosexuality became the antithesis of respectability" (37). Hence, if French, German, and British nationalism criminalized homosexuality, it was because homosexuality constituted a challenge to the bourgeois construct of the family (28). Like European nationalism, Tunisian nationalism is produced from a heterosexual and bourgeois point of view. In his attempt to undermine the claim that the hijab is the symbol of Islamic identity, al Haddad argues that the veil leads to "homosexuality, lesbianism, and masturbation" (*Our Woman* 185). Like al Haddad, Bourguiba conceives of gender only in heterosexual terms. Woman remains subordinate to man and exists only inside the family unit. Tunisian law recognizes only the family unit: the PSC of 1956 is silent on the status of single mothers and the Tunisian judicial system criminalizes same sex relationships. In "Les Missions des femmes," Bourguiba shows aversion and repulsion towards the woman who does not fit into the patriarchal mold of womanhood. For him "the woman [must remain] woman, and the man a man. A woman's respect for her husband, her devotion and her softness can only make her more lovable and respectable." He is "horrified," he adds, "by the tomboyish type of women, and [he has] nothing to do with their arrogance" (*Discours* 10: 201-02). Thus the "Tunisian woman" does not exist as a single mother, or a lesbian, she has rights only as a mother and a wife.

a) The Muslim Woman as the Body of the Umma

In Arabic, the word *um* ("mother") is closely tied in with the notion of identity and origin. Indeed, the words *um* and *umma* (nation) come from the same etymological

root.[16] The expression *al nuskha al um* ("mother copy") means the original copy of the book. *Ummu al kitab* ("the mother of the book") is the Fatiha. *Ummu al watan* (mother of the country) is the capital. In Islam, the word *umma* refers to the followers of Muhammad. Someone who has no *umma* means she/he has no religion. As the above examples show, the function of the mother as the symbol of the nation is deeply rooted in the Arabic language. In *Our Woman*, the "Muslim woman" often appears as a symbol for the Islamic nation. "She is half of humanity and half of the nation in kind, number and means of production. Were we to ignore and not care about her decline and misery, that would only reflect the scorn" (5) we harbor for ourselves.

Al Haddad's writings show not only the tendency to effeminize but also to racialize the *umma*. In the *Shari'a* law, the "Muslim woman" cannot marry a non-Muslim man for fear her children would not be born into the Islamic faith. Al Haddad uses this same justification to condemn the Muslim man's privilege to marry Christian and Jewish women:

> The European woman is not born for us and is not prepared to be adapted to us. We can only marry women from *our race*. And if they lack the required qualities of perfection, the solution is not to marry foreign women and leave [our women] as spinsters, but to emancipate them and protect them from the dangers of this progress. *They are for us and we are for them and from us all is born the nation*. But where are those wise people who understand? ([My emphases] 179)

Al Haddad's attack on the privileges of the Muslim man is a nationalistic response to the French politics of assimilation.[17] In Early Islam, the marriage to Christian and Jewish women meant an increase in the number of the *umma* and decrease in the other nations (53). However, with the establishment of colonial authorities, these marriages do not lead to the consolidation of the *umma,* but to the loss of Arab identity. The education of

the Muslim woman serves not only to fight French colonialism, but also to ensure the survival of the Arab race. What is subversive here is al Haddad's view that the task of preserving the nation's racial stock, even though remaining a male prerogative, involves the control of both the male and female fields of reproduction, not just the Muslim woman's womb. In post-independence Tunisia, Bourguiba too tried to control male and female sexuality through his family planning campaign in the 1960s and 1970s("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 203). Encouraging men to use birth control, Bourguiba reassured them that birth control does not affect a man's virility. To the general shock of the Tunisian population, he used to explain how having one testicle did not prevent him from having a son and from enjoying a healthy sexual life. Thus, in contrast with European nationalism, the Tunisian nationalism of Bourguiba and al Haddad subjects to patriarchal control both the male and female reproductive systems.

b) Necrophilia or the Male Gendering of Nationalist Agency

An overview of *Our Woman* reveals a constant opposition between male wisdom and discipline, and female irrationality and frivolity. Condemning domestic abuse, al Haddad explains that the Qur'anic verse that gives the husband the right to educate/punish his wife for her disobedience, "is reserved [only] for the 'uneducated ignorant wife'" who is "lazy and negligent towards, herself, husband, and home" (59). Besides, "the *fuqaha* say that 'hitting' does not mean severe punishment, but a symbolic act like throwing a cloth at her so that she "comes back to her senses." He concludes that either the wife takes her case to court or we trust the ability of the "husband's wisdom" to "cure" and "discipline" his uneducated wife for the sake of "conjugal life" (60).

This opposition between female irrationality and male responsibility is extended by al Haddad to the project of national regeneration. In "The Birth and Being of the General Renaissance," an article published in the *Al Umma* newspaper on 18 April 1922, al Haddad presents civilization and progress as male, and darkness and backwardness as female: "God," he writes, "may create for the nation in adversity a man or many men who will try to rescue her from this darkness." The nation will "listen to them as a patient listens to his doctor [while] he explains to him/her the disease and shows him/her the cure" (*Tahar al Haddad: Al a'maal al kaamila* 199) (1999). In the same article, only the "Tunisian man" is presented as the producer of Tunisian history and culture:

> Oh Tunisian Man, remember that you are the son of these noble fathers who have entered history [...] The *umma* is perfectly ready for the true renaissance [...] It is up to her wise children now to show their good faith towards her through their "[guiding]" efforts to show her the right way where "she can safely walk, unafraid of falling in decadence." (201-02)

This patriarchal image of the *umma* as a mother/"minor" in need of "discipline"/"cure" by a wise husband/male children is a recurrent trope in the Tunisian nationalist cartoons of the 1930s. A political cartoon published by the newspaper *Al Shabab* on 19 November 1936 presents Tunisia as an unveiled bed-stricken young woman. On the forehead, she is wearing a crescent, an Islamic icon decorating Tunisia's national flag today. On her right side stand two middle-aged men in Western clothes, a doctor and a pharmacist. The doctor says to the pharmacist: "Give her this medicine and God willing she will be cured." On the prescription, the doctor wrote: "A respected National Parliament ... a fully responsible Ministry." The two men in question were Mahmoud Materi and Ali Bouhajeb, a real Doctor and a real pharmacist who joined the Tunisian nationalist

movement. The first became in 1934 the President of the Neo Destur Party and the second a member of its executive committee. Whereas the two wise men were wearing glasses--symbol of male wisdom--Tunisia--as the young woman closing her eyes--seems blind and helpless. Only these two men can save her life. The belief that nationalist redemption/agency is a male prerogative can be deduced from the absence of other women at the young woman's bedside. Whereas the Tunisian woman is the embodiment of tradition, it is the Tunisian man who takes upon himself the active task of redeeming/producing Tunisian tradition.

In his 1930 article "Le Voile," Bourguiba focuses only on the male interlocutors at L'Essor and ignores the feminist intervention of Habiba Menchari, the first Tunisian woman to speak unveiled and in public on behalf of her secluded sisters. Bourguiba quickly dismisses Mrs. Menchari as a "charming young woman" who came to "soften us on the unfortunate lot of her sisters deprived of light" to focus only on the male allocutions of Mr. Noomane, Mr. Durel and M.P. Laffitte. Because of her charm and softness, which Bourguiba constructs as female biology, this "Tunisian woman" is disqualified as a speaker. Mrs. Menchari can be spoken for, but she can never speak on behalf of the Tunisian women.

In Bourguiba's post-independence speeches, women are still barred from "power" politics; only men can truly "[devote] themselves" to the business of governance ("Deux fondements du statut personnel," *Discours* 2: 135). "When we reestablish the woman's rights," Bourguiba announced, "we don't make her man's equal in all fields. We acknowledge, however, her equal right to dignity" ("2ème Congrès National de l'U.N.F.T.," *Discours* 8: 59). Bourguiba's speech shows that even though Tunisian

women are being made citizens, they are not full or equal citizens. Bourguiba's "we" designates the "Muslim woman" as an object for "hommoerotic exchange" (Irigaray); she is not only spoken for by the male nationalist elite, but also excluded from the political process impacting her life. For Bourguiba, running the government is a male not female prerogative. In the early 1960s, the Tunisian woman can be a nurse ("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 200), a teacher (200), a seamstress (201), a subordinate U.N.F.T. official, but never Bourguiba's equal in leading the nation. The woman's role in the nationalist project is determined and conditioned by her biological function as a caring mother and wife.

In *Our Woman,* al Haddad draws a significant opposition between male activity and female passivity. Whereas the Tunisian men "toil" and "breathe life" into the family "through the woman" (218), the latter remains dead, passive and inanimate. This rescue fantasy is significant not just because it underscores the masculine character of nationalist agency, but also because it underscores the necrophiliac desire of the nationalist male subject to resurrect/possess the lifeless female body of the nation.

Similarly, in his frequent addresses to the "Tunisian woman," Bourguiba often presents himself as a twentieth century Pygmalion fashioning, modeling, and bringing to life the new Tunisian woman: "Little by little, you will get used to your new rights as we get used to pure air. Little by little you will become real human beings and our Nation, God willing, an exemplary Nation" (qtd. in "Bourguiba fait confiance aux femmes," *L'Action* 13).

In the writings of Bourguiba and al Haddad, both the female body and the domestic space of the family appear as the site where the nationalist war of

decolonization is waged. Just as the French colonizer sought to dominate its North African colonies by attacking the Bastille of the Muslim family/home, North African nationalists reappropriated the family as the site of nationalist resistance. In French colonial Tunisia, the "Muslim woman" in the nationalist discourses of Bourguiba and al Haddad served thus as a metaphor for the dislocation of home, language and history caused by colonialism.

c) Bourguiba and the Invention of "La Personnalité Tunisienne" Before and After Independence

Bourguiba's concept of "Tunisian personality" refers to the specificity of an imagined community living within Tunisia's national borders and sharing a common set of social practices believed to derive from Islam and Arab culture. Whereas al Haddad's concept of *umma* has an Islamic etymology, Bourguiba's concept of "personality" originates in French psychoanalysis and jurisprudence. Even though this term is used sometimes by Bourguiba to signify the *umma* ("Islamic nation"), the word is deeply rooted in French semantics. The French word *personnalité* ("personality") derives from the Latin word "persona," which means the mask or the voice that a character takes on in a theatrical performance (Salem 135). In the field of law, *la personnalité juridique* refers to a person who "has the capacity to participate in judicial life" (Salem 136). Then the word started to be applied to the *personne morale*, who was the legal actor in French legal literature. In the field of psychology, the term refers to "a unified integrated subject constituted by a hierarchical set of biological, psychological, cultural, and social factors which give him or her "distinctive" identity (Salem 136). Having studied law and

psychology in Paris, Bourguiba was familiar with the legal and psychological meanings of this term. As a male lawyer, he was defending the Tunisian personality from being eroded by France's policy of assimilation. As such, Bourguiba personified the *personne juridique* or *personne morale* who spoke on behalf of Tunisia, which was itself presented as an illiterate female judicial subject. The split in Bourguiba's nationalist narrative is seen in his reliance on a French concept derived from French jurisprudence to defend the veil as a component of Tunisia's Islamic personality.[18]

After independence, however, Bourguiba launched à la Ataturk a campaign to abolish the veil. Whereas in colonial Tunisia, the veil for Bourguiba was a symbol of Tunisia's Arab-Islamic identity, in 1956 the veil became in the government's press a foreign "custom" and in Bourguiba's 15 December 1961 speech "a misunderstanding of the Qur'anic Verses" (qtd. in Khaled, *Adhwa' Mina al Bi'a al Tunusiya 'alaa al Tahar Haddad wa nidhalu jil* 398). Reflecting the anti-veil politics of the new government, the official newspaper *L'Action* issued on 2 August 1958 an article entitled "Pin-up d'hier et d'aujourd'hui." The article showed two pictures of Tunisian women. The picture on top, "Romaine au Musée du Bardo," is a mosaic showing a nude Roman woman brushing her long hair while contemplating herself in the mirror. The picture on the bottom, "Pin-up à la plage" shows the upper body of a modern Tunisian woman wearing a swimming suit. The anonymous author of the article wrote:

> Our ancestors the Carthagenians had most often Phoenicians as grandmothers on the paternal side. [Our grandmothers] had a strong taste for lipstick, painted eyelashes, and indecent draperies. They had an arsenal of beauty creams and ointments that would embarrass Miss Elisabeth Arden herself, by their complexity and efficacy. (*L'Action* 20)

The article in question mentions the debate over the veil in Tunisia and Bourguiba's fight against the backward male mentality that is intent upon possessing and controlling women. The draperies covering the back and legs of the Roman nude and the "indecent draperies" of our Phoenician grandmothers, not only imply that the veil is a foreign custom brought by the Arab invaders, but more importantly, it underscores an originary Tunisian identity located halfway between the Orient and Occident. Unveiling, rather than being a European import brought about by colonization and European modernity, becomes a means of renewal with past traditions. The reinvention of the authentic Tunisian woman as unveiled shows not only that tradition is negotiated in the present, but also the power of the male nationalist elite to claim a past and a present for the Tunisian woman. As a matter of fact, the location of Tunisian identity between Rome and Phoenicia reflects Bourguiba's foreign policy of "Arab fraternity and collaboration with the Occident"[19] ("Fraternité Arabe et collaboration avec l'Occident," *Discours* 3: 288). In another speech, Bourguiba states that Islam and Arabism are only parts of the Tunisian personality and that owing to its geography Tunisia is a bridge between East and West, "two great civilizations of which all humanity would be proud" (qtd. in Salem 156). In his 1960s speeches, Bourguiba often called for the study of pre-Islamic Berber history to prove the unique character of the Tunisian personality. "The interaction between the native Berbers and the Phoenician settlers," he claimed, "created the Punic culture, a specifically Tunisian variant of the Phoenician civilization" (Salem 150). In his assertion of an originary Tunisian identity, Bourguiba claimed to retrieve a Punic patrimony that had not been sullied for more than two thousand years. This originary mythical Punic past illustrates the paradox Bhabha finds between "modern territoriality,"

and "the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism" (*Nation and Narration* 300). In postcolonial Tunisia, the unveiled body of the Tunisian woman serves as the visible marker of the nation's modernity. Masquerading as a past Phoenician tradition, Bourguiba's anti-veiling policy paradoxically serves to unmark or make less visible in the modern nation state the male privileges protected by the *Shari'a* law and Islamic tradition.

IV) The Muslim Woman as Subject of the *Umma* and Citizen of the Modern State

Whereas in al Haddad's reformism the Tunisian woman appears primarily as a subject of the Islamic *umma*, in Bourguiba's modernist project, the Tunisian woman occupies a double position as a subject of the Islamic *umma* and citizen of the secular state. There is no doubt that the French colonial experience, the introduction of Western capitalism, and industrialization have in the long run destabilized the old structures and created the need for female labor, a wage system, and urbanization. After independence, the modern concept of citizenship has been substituted for the traditional family unit (*Al Mar'a* 78). Because of the ethnocentrism[20] underlying the French colonial education, al Haddad constructs the Tunisian "Muslim woman" not as an individual, but as a subject of the *umma*. The Tunisian Muslim woman must be educated to transmit the history of her religion, country and race to her children:

> She must learn the principles and history of her religion, her people's language, the history of her country and race, in a way that restores her back to life and to her past glory [...] And from there, she will be for her children the source of the nationalist spirit that urges them to arm themselves with virtues and go forward towards the glory of life. (206)

Unlike the dichotomy Ahmed observes in Egypt between the campaign for women's rights "in Islamist terms" (Zeinab al Ghazali and Hasan Ismael Hudaybi) and "the language of secularism and democracy" (Doria Shafik and Ahmed Amin) (196), there is no clearcut distinction between the language of secular nationalism and religious reformism in Bourguiba's modernist project. Even though he is known in the Muslim world and the West as one of the greatest secular modernists in the Arab world, Bourguiba's modernist thought is deeply steeped in Islamic theology. As a matter of fact, the PSC finds its sources in both French jurisprudence and the *Shari'a* law. The Napoleonic Code[21] concerning the *crime de passion* was in effect in Tunisia from 1956 till it was repealed in 1993. Also, reproducing article 340 of the French penal code, article 18 of the PSC states that the crime of polygamy occurs when two essential unions are contracted, i.e., when one marriage is not dissolved and another is contracted even outside the legal norms (Chekir 129). Also, Tunisia is the only Islamic country to introduce adoption laws in 1956; adoption still remains illegal in other Arab-Islamic countries because it does not conform to the *Shari'a* law.

Rather than being a secular leader as the West and the Islamist groups perceive him, Bourguiba's feminist and reformist agenda is not free from the dictates of the *Shari'a* law. Bourguiba did not eliminate the Arab Islamic heritage of Tunisia, but used Islam and Arabic--the two components of the "Tunisian personality"--as a source of political legitimation. Even though Bourguiba closed the Zaytuna Mosque, forced women to unveil, and urged people to stop fasting in Ramadhan--to cultivate the full energy and potential of the new modern state--many articles in the PSC are based on the Shar'ia law. According to the official government newspaper *L'Action*, Bourguiba "seeks to cure and

insert [Islam] into modern life" ("Le Code va-t-il à l'encontre de la religion?" 3 September 1956: 1), rather than fight it like Ataturk. According to Bourguiba, the Turkish leader's attempt to eradicate Islam was a failure: "Kemal Ataturk proclaimed his country to be laic, but the people did not change" (2ème Congrès National de l'U.N.F.T.," *Discours* 8: 61). Rather than combating Islam, Bourguiba, on the contrary, tried to take into account "l'âme du peuple" in his construction of post-independence Tunisia (qtd. in Salem 126).

On 3 August 1956, the Tunisian Department of Justice issued a letter in which they stated that the PSC "is compatible with the times and does not contradict the principles of the Islamic faith" (*Al Mar'a* 80). The PSC was promulgated on August 13 1956 and became effective only on 1 January 1957. The Zaytuna Sheikhs rejected the PSC for its content and social implications. In the conservative newspaper *Istiqlal*, Muhammad Moncef al Monastiri attacked in particular the creation of divorce courts: "For Muslims to be living under the same roof while waiting for the judge to pronounce divorce is living in adultery" (*Al Mar'a* 84). Even Muhammad al Aziz Djait who participated in the drafting of the PSC asked the government to revise certain articles which do not go along with the Shar'ia law; namely the prohibition of polygamy and unilateral divorce, the creation of divorce courts and adoption laws, and the new law forbidding the Muslim man the right to marry a woman he had three times divorced in the past (*Al Mar'a* 88). The PSC was also criticized for not explicitly forbidding the Muslim woman's right to marry a non-Muslim man and for not mentioning all of the impediments to inheritance. A fatwa was published on 11 September 1956, in the *Istiqlal* condemning the PSC as inimical to the spirit of the Qur'an and the *Shari'a*. Tension grew between the

religious institution and the government. Djait resigned. The Members of the civil court also resigned and went back to teach at the Zaytuna. Following the modification of some articles in the PSC, the Minister of Justice stated in a press conference on 28 February 1964 that he was relying on Islamic, not foreign, law: "We don't need to resort to foreign judicial systems to organize marriage. We must return to the sources of Islam and the fikh" (qtd. in Chekir 127). This position has been retained by later judges to disallow the marriage of the Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man. The Ministry of Justice explicitly condemned this kind of marriage in a decree published on 5 November 1973.

The PSC dissolved the colonial confessional courts for Jewish, Hanafi, and Maliki populations, and put family law under the aegis of the state. The bifurcation of Tunisian jurisprudence into civil/Shari'a law and positive law captures the dichotomy between authenticity and modernity in Bourguiba's post-independence nationalist discourses. Whereas family law designates the Tunisian woman as a member of the "Muslim nation," positive law such as the right to find a job, the right to vote,[22] and the right to equal pay makes her a citizen of the modern state. As a citizen of the modern state, the Tunisian Muslim woman is entitled to a remunerative activity. She is encouraged to work as a nurse, teacher and social assistant--professions deemed "consistent with [her] natural aptitudes" ("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 199). Rather than being "consistent" with female nature as Bourguiba claims, the choice of vocations the Tunisian woman is offered reflects Tunisian patriarchy's construction of women as caring mothers and devoted wives. Reflecting the laws of Islamic patriarchy, the PSC of 1956 also stated that only Tunisian men could give Tunisian citizenship to their children. Even

though the nation is perceived as female, citizenship is viewed as male since it is bestowed through the father, not the mother.[23]

In "Le Statut des femmes," Chekir notes that "as soon as the principle of gender equality is mentioned, resistance appears in the name of authenticity, universality, calling at times even for its negation in the name of cultural or civilizational specificity." Such specificity she writes, is "detrimental to women's rights" as it conveys "a discrimination against women and conveys patriarchal and masculine supremacy" (Chekir 92-3). For instance, out of the 24 international conventions adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly, only 18 have been ratified by Tunisia. Tunisia ratified the international laws against gender discrimination in education (1969), but refused to ratify article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the New York Convention of 10 December 1962, which stipulated women's right to marry someone outside their faith (Chekir 64). The Tunisian government also held reservations towards other international laws outlawing gender discrimination in inheritance. Tunisia refused to ratify the international laws in contradiction with the Islamic laws of the PSC. Thus, in post-independence Tunisia, Bourguiba's concept of "Tunisian personality" and its implication of cultural specificity reinforced patriarchal rule and privileges and reduced the Tunisian woman to an inferior legal status. Parallel to the judicial inequality founded on the Shari'a law, the dominant male order also granted the "Tunisian woman" an egalitarian judicial status in certain cases like those involving employment, wages, and education. It is this split which characterizes the construction of the "Muslim woman" in Tunisia since Bourguiba's promulgation of the PSC in 1956.

Under the centralized government of Bourguiba in post-independence Tunisia, there was a shift from family to state patriarchy. In Bourguiba's own words, "the family is no longer limited to the circle of parents. It extends to the village, the country, and beyond the frontiers, to encompass the Greater Maghreb, the Arab community, the entire continent" ("Les Missions des femmes," *Discours* 10: 207). In contrast with her function as a metaphor for the dislocation of home during the colonial period, after independence, the Tunisian woman became a metaphor for reterritorialization beyond the boundaries of nation, language, culture, and race. As such she is both a promise and a threat to the Tunisian nationalist male elite. As the patriarchal concept of the family is extended beyond the borders of nation to encompass the whole African continent, the body of the "Tunisian woman" with its association of home/family/*umma* poses a danger to the very concept of Tunisian identity. Like the African myth of the devouring mother[24]--the threatening figure for that which encompasses all the cultures, races, religions, and languages of Africa--the "Tunisian woman" as the body of the nation could also consume/devour what Bourguiba calls "the Tunisian personality"; hence, the need to control her destructive sexuality by preventing her from marrying non-Muslims, and denying Tunisian citizenship to her children from a foreign father.

In this era of state patriarchy, the protective power of the veil found a substitute in the *haçana* ("shield/immunity") of education. In a 1958 speech, Bourguiba stated: "The veil does not prevent" the abuses against a woman's virtue, but education does ("Libération de la femme et réforme des mœurs: tâche primordiale," *Discours* 4: 186-87). The idea of education as a shield to protect a woman's virtue dates back to the Islamic reformism of the Egyptian man of letters Rif'at al Tahtawi (1801-1873) who, despite his

defense of the veil, believed that education was the best guarantee to protect a woman's virtue (*Al Mar'a* 29). The same idea was taken up by al Haddad when he insisted that handicraft skills were the best *hisn* ("citadel") for the married woman and her children. Families with no such skills could expose their daughters to sexual exploitation when they sent them to work as maids. The latter risk losing "their virtue" (120) by becoming prey to the male predators or "wolfs" (121).

The dominant male power of the modern state is best expressed in Bourguiba's warnings to those who attempt to rob a "Tunisian woman's of her virtue." In a speech delivered on 5 December 1957, Bourguiba stated that "justice [had] been done in all those cases [his government] knew of" and [warned] that "the magistrates [would] not fail to severely punish anyone who tries to violate a young girl's virtue" ("Coordination des services, respect des individus et libération de la femme," *Discours* 4: 21).

Whether they are high school girls or members of the U.N.F.T., all Tunisian women have been given reassurances that they could count on the protection of Bourguiba. To avoid the harassment of unveiled female students, Bourguiba passed an order "to close down the cafés, and placed police units in front of schools to intercept and arrest these young delinquents" ("2ème Congrès National de l'U.N.F.T.," *Discours* 8: 60). In the same speech, he promised to punish those "criminal" fathers who did not allow their daughters to go to school.

Even though the Tunisian State offers its female citizens police and legal protection, the latter must abide by the rules of Bourguiba, the Father of the Nation. As he himself put it in 1958: "Some measures have been taken to protect the *girls* when they leave their all girls' schools. On the other hand, the *woman* [my emphasis] must, by her

behavior, impose respect" ("Libération de la femme et réforme des mœurs: tâche primordiale" 187). Bourguiba's distinction between "girl" and "woman" is quite significant here. In the first part of the sentence, the word "girl" denotes female innocence and underscores a need for patriarchal protection. In the second part of the sentence, the word "woman" is used to suggest woman's sexual power or *fitna* and to remind her of her need to subject herself to patriarchal authority, not to seek its protection.

Created by Bourguiba in 1956, the U.N.F.T.[25] "counts [primarily] on the support of the governors and the delegates, on the authority of the State, and on its financial help" ("2ème Congrès National de l'U.N.F.T." 59). As an extension of the State, the U.N.F.T. was created to teach the masses of Tunisian women their rights and duties in the new modern Tunisia. In "Les Missions des femmes," Bourguiba states that the purpose of the U.N.F.T. is to explain to women "their new rights," "the way in which they are to be used," and the "limits women must not trespass," to avoid a situation "as harmful as the old one" (195). The relation between Bourguiba and the U.N.F.T. is based on a gendered division of labor. Whereas Bourguiba's government sponsors the U.N.F.T. and provides it with financial assistance, the U.N.F.T. assumes the traditional female roles of feeding and clothing the needy and inculcating hygiene, nutrition and morality to the children of the new modern state (Ilhem Marzouki, *Le Mouvement des femmes en Tunisie au XXème siècle: Féminisme et politique* 189). Unlike the Moroccan and the Egyptian feminist movements, the Tunisian feminist movement in the Bourguiba era had no history of political mobilization and militancy. It had been contained from the beginning by the state. One of the responsibilities of the U.N.F.T. is to fight immorality: it must not only

teach women that sexual needs cannot be satisfied outside the institution of "marriage" (qtd. in Marzouki 161), but also warn them against the dangers of neglecting their families that their work outside the home could incur. The U.N.F.T. must make them "aware" of their "responsibilities" as wives and mothers to prevent the breakup of the family. As Radhia Haddad, the President of the U.N.F.T. once put it: her mission was to explain to the women "that the rights that [they had] obtained must not bring a revolution in the families" (qtd. in Marzouki 173).

What does a modern Muslim woman mean to Bourguiba and the U.N.F.T.? A modern Tunisian woman is a "nationalist subject," who is "responsible" rather than "liberated." Rejecting what she perceives as "the western model" of female emancipation, Radhia Haddad observes that "the modern woman who wakes up after midday after the tumultuous evenings she spent in salons, joking, smoking cigarettes, and playing cards to kill boredom," has no place "in our country." Similarly, the modern Tunisian woman must discard the "backward religious practices" such as visiting Saints and keep only the norms of Islamic "morality" and "rationality" (qtd. in Marzouki 177). Thus, the modern Tunisian woman occupies an ambivalent position between authenticity and modernity.

V) Power Politics and the Reception of al Haddad's and Bourguiba's Reformist Thought

According to Bhabha, there is a split "in the production of the nation" between the "accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (*Nation and Narration* 297). This split in the process of writing the

nation is best illustrated in Bourguiba's shift in his attitude towards the veil. If Bourguiba defended the veil in 1929, it was because unveiling entailed not only the loss of Tunisian identity, but also the "Tunisian woman's" escape from her patriarchal role as mother and wife. "In following the fashion of the moment," Bourguiba wrote retroactively in 1960, "the woman [risks] being distracted from her milieu, cutting her ties with the past, and losing herself in an alien community." This "adventure into Francisation" means "scoff[ing] at her own mother and family." Letting France "lead our social evolution" means falling from the "Charybdis" of decadence to the "Scylla" of assimilation, as we concede "our fusion with the heart of French collectivity" ("2ème Congrès National de l'U.N.F.T.," *Discours* 8: 50). As a nationalist narrative, Bourguiba's speech seems split at the level of performance: while defending the Islamic veil as a symbol of Tunisian identity, Bourguiba relies on a Homerian/Western metaphor to convey the uniqueness of the culture he is defending (4).

This split at the site of enunciation is often tied to a particular socio-historical context. As he tries to negotiate a position from which to speak, Bourguiba often falls into contradictory positions. On the 40th anniversary of al Haddad's death, Bourguiba delivered a speech where he justifies his 1929 position on the veil. In this speech, Bourguiba states that the Zaytuna Sheikhs used al Haddad as a scapegoat for their own participation in and silence over the Eucharist Congress that took place in Rue de la Montagne on 7-11 May 1930. The Catholic participants were "dressed in the costume of the crusaders" holding flags on which was written "The ninth Crusade." The "statue of the Cardinal Lavigerie was erected at the entry of the Medina holding the cross." "I felt provoked," Bourguiba writes; "[the Cardinal] intended to thrust the cross into this land,

according to the doctrine they were professing in Algeria" ("Tahar El Haddad, Vengé de ses détracteurs" 22-3). The Eucharist Congress was followed in 1931 by the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the French colonization of Tunisia and the centennial of the French conquest of Algeria. Because of these events, Bourguiba remained silent over al Haddad's book even though he shared his views on the veil.

Even though after independence Bourguiba abolished the veil, polygamy, and the *habus* system, he did not implement al Haddad's call for gender equality in inheritance. Given the rivalry over the leadership of Tunisia between Bourguiba and Salah Ben Youssef,[26] Bourguiba had to cater to the Tunisian male clergy of the Zaytuna Mosque, most of whom were supporters of Bourguiba's political rival Ben Youssef.

Identifying with al Haddad, Bourguiba claims that he and al Haddad had common enemies: the colonial powers, the Old Destur, and the Zaytuna Sheikhs. According to Bourguiba, the controversy was created by "les archéos" and "les enturbannés" of the Old Destur leadership--Ahmed Essafi, Salah Farhat, Mohieddine al Klibi--who wanted to get their revenge on al Haddad for denouncing their role in the failure of the union of Tunisian workers (C.G.T.T.) and the exile of Muhammad Alî al Hammi in 1925 ("Tahar El Haddad, vengé de tous ses détracteurs" 3-5).

Even though he encountered resistance from the Zaytuna Mosque, Bourguiba's political power, class and educational privileges allowed him to implement his feminist reforms. As al Haddad was a powerless and poor man of letters, his reformist ideas were conversely doomed to failure. In Tunisia, al Haddad's harshest critics were Muhammad Salah Ben Mrad who wrote *Al Hidad 'ala Imraat al-Haddad* (*Mourning over al Haddad's Woman*) (Khaled 337), and Amor Ibn Ibrahim El Barri El Madani who wrote a long letter

entitled "*Sayf al 'haq 'alâ man lâ yarâ al 'haq*" ("*The sword of Justice on he who does not See Justice*") (Khaled 332). Both authors attacked al Haddad on his evolutionary conception of the Qur'an and for threatening their male privileges deriving from the Islamic laws of inheritance and the *habus* system. In the Islamic world, both the Egyptian newspaper *Al Ikhaa* (Khaled 318) and the Algerian newspaper *Al Shihab* (qtd. in *Al Nahdha* 30 November 1930) accused al Haddad of apostasy and madness.

In addition to the colonial context, which turned the veil into a symbol of Tunisian identity, there was also a generational and class conflict between al Haddad and his opponents. The Old Zaytuna Mosque was led by the powerful and conservative aristocratic families of Tunis like Neifar, Ben Mrad, and Ben Achour who were working in tandem with the French colonial authorities (Cherni 67). The reformist movement of the 1920s and 1930s was led by people from a humble origin like al Haddad and Chebbi (Marzouki 32). The latter, with the new rising bourgeoisie of the Sahel, often criticized the dogmatic teaching at the Zaytuna Mosque. Similarly, if Mohieddine al Kelibi, the leader of The Old Destur Party chose to attack al Haddad and repress the popular unionist movement of Muhammad Alî al Hammi, it was because the Old Destur was a conservative party which collaborated with the French authorities (Cherni 85-6).

In "'No Longer in a Future Heaven,'" McClintock argues that in "bidding women to hold their tongues until after the revolution," male nationalists are in fact using "a strategic tactic to defer women's demands." "The lessons of international history," she says, show that "women who are not empowered to organize during the struggle will not be empowered to organize after the struggle" (*Dangerous Liaisons* 109). The case of Tunisia provides a counter example to McClintock's argument. Bourguiba's defense of

the veil in 1929 did not prevent him from enacting after independence the PSC, which despite its limits, granted Tunisian women rights unequaled in the rest of the Muslim world. Even though of a qualified patriarchal nature, the reformist thought of al Haddad and Bourguiba suggests that despite the essentialism, the changes encoded were still liberating for Tunisian women. In the 1990s, Tunisian feminists participated in many of the international conferences on women's rights in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East such as the Beijing Conference in September 1995. The law of 5 April 1996 allowed the spouses to have a pre-marital agreement where they decide to have a joint ownership of the properties acquired after marriage. Unlike the PSC of 1956, which recognized woman's rights only as mother and wife, article 74 in the reforms of 1998 allowed the single mother to use a paternity test to sue the biological father for child alimony. However, the natural children are given the right to claim only the father's name. The single mother cannot use her own name to get welfare from the State (*Al Mar'a* 128-29). Still today international laws regarding gender equality in inheritance and sexual orientation are not recognized in Tunisia because they are deemed incompatible with the "country's religious and cultural heritage" (*Al Mar'a* 141).

The history of Tunisian nationalism shows not only the political deployment of the "Muslim woman" in the nationalist effort to resist the French politics of assimilation, but also her exclusion from the debate over women's role in the anti-colonial struggle. As the nationalist newspapers of the time attest, most[27] of the discourses on the "Muslim woman" in Tunisia were produced by men and for men. Like the Islamic feminism of Mernissi, the female Orientalism of Eberhardt, and the psychoanalytic and feminist French theories of Fanon, and Cixous, the discourse of Tunisian nationalism on the veil

and the "Muslim woman" is quite ambivalent. A symbol of Islamic identity in Bourguiba's speeches during French colonial Tunisia, the veil became the symbol of backwardness in postcolonial Tunisia. This shows that rather than being static, the veil is a historically situated signifier. Similarly, in contrast with her function as a metaphor for the dislocation of home and language in French colonial Tunisia, the Tunisian woman came to embody the split between modernity and tradition in postcolonial Tunisia. While unveiling, work, and education were synonymous with an inevitable social progress, the *Shar'ia* laws came to stand for an unchanging Tunisian essence that has to be jealously protected from the erosion of Western culture.

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[1] *L'Action* is the Tunisian government's official newspaper after independence. Quoted from an article written by Leila, the feminist editorial in *L'Action*, "Quoi de neuf pour les femmes?"

[2] All the translations from the Arabic and French in this chapter are mine except the quotations from Norma Salem's *Habib Bourguiba, Islam, and the Creation of Tunisia.*

[3] In his criticism of Bhabha, Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues that in providing a psychoanalytic explanation for the split within the nationalist subject, Bhabha leaves out the role of history in the production of culture ("Critical Fanonism"). Gates's criticism, however, seems based on the premise that the symbolic is a universal sign situated outside history. As a matter of fact, Bhabha does not deny the impact of history on the construction of the nationalist subject as Gates claims. Bhabha clearly states that he does not "wish to deny" the "specific historicities" of "the cultural construction of nationness" ("DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" *Nation and Narration* 292). Gates's criticism of Bhabha betrays a view that holds history to be divorced from human agency. Even though it takes into account the weight of history, this chapter argues that there is no history without agents of history, and no agents of history without discourse.

[4] The concept of class in Tunisian society is somewhat problematic. In Tunisia, class is defined not just by money as in the USA, but also by ethnic and family history. My understanding and use of this term are therefore quite limited given the scarce research on this subject.

[5] In 1911, the Zaytuna Mosque provided primary, high school, and higher education. Al Haddad did not study beyond the *Tatw'i* Diploma, which he received as the end of his high school education. For information about the educational system in the Zaytuna Mosque, see Ahmed Khaled, *Adhwa' Mina al Bi'a al Tunusiya 'alaa al Tahar Haddad wa nidhalu jil* (Tunis: Al dar al tunusiya li al nashr, 1985): 26-41.

[6] Following the arrest of the Tunisian nationalist leader Alî Balhouane, there was a large demonstration in the capital. The French army opened fire on the unarmed Tunisian demonstrators. Dozens were killed, hundreds were wounded, and three thousands were arrested. The French colonial government dissolved the Néo Destour Party, executed many nationalist leaders and sent many others to jail in Fort Saint Nicolas in Marseilles.

[7] Bourguiba's attack on al Th'aalbi as an "archéo" and a "larron" after independence ("Al Haddad Vengé de ses détracteurs" 15) is caused by the political rivalry between the members of the Old and the Neo Destur as well as by Bourguiba's appropriation of the sole title of "*Le Libérateur de la femme Tunisienne.*" As early as the 1910s, al Th'aalbi, a Zaytunian Sheikh like al Haddad, was calling for women's unveiling and education. The history of Tunisian feminism and nationalism till the late 1980s was centered around the personal cult of Bourguiba, "Le Combatant Supreme."

[8] I am borrowing Eric Grekowicz's words in *Hybridity and Discursive Unrest in Late Colonial ANglophone Prose of South Asia* (1880-1950)," diss., Michigan State University, 2001.

[9] I shall return to this point later when I discuss the shift in Bourguiba's attitude towards the veil in terms of the power politics in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia.

[10] A cultural club frequented by the Socialist Party.

[11] A Tunisian socialist lawyer who wrote against the veil in *Tunis Socialiste.*

[12] Joachim Durel was the leader of the Socialist Party and the General Secretary for the French workers' union in Tunis.

[13] In the Maliki school of Islam, the husband can divorce his wife simply by saying three times that she is divorced.

[14] A land which is *habus* is a land which cannot be bought or sold. This system prevents not only the splitting up of property, but also the daughter's inheritance as the land is kept under the management of her brothers or uncles.

[15] The Article 23 of PSC that stipulates that the wife be obedient to her husband has been revoked only in 1993.

[16] I am using the Arab-Arab dictionary of Hasan Said al Karmi, *Al hadi ila lughati al 'Arab: Qamus 'arabi-'arabi* (Beirut: Dar lubnan li attiba'a wa al nashr, 1991).

[17] In a 1975 speech entitled "Tahar El Haddad, Vengé de ses détracteurs," Bourguiba makes the claim that al Haddad remained silent over the issue of naturalization in the early 1930s. Bourguiba's claim is inaccurate for al Haddad did talk about the issue of naturalization in "Naturalization is a Breach of the Protectorate Treaty," an article he published in the *Al Umma* newspaper on 13 November 1923. If the issue of naturalization came to the fore in the 1930s, it was not because there were no naturalization laws prior to that date, but because of the impact of the 1929 economic crisis and the introduction of the *tiers colonial*, which gave French citizens a monetary incentive to immigrate to the colonies.

[18] According to Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, the Tunisian nation "came into being as a result of Bourguiba's action" (Salem 183). In contrast, Hichem Djait made a distinction between a "national political personality" and a "cultural and ideological Tunisian personality" (185). It is the second personality, based on an imaginary civilizational, religious, and linguistic affiliation with the Muslim middle East that was used by Bourguiba to legitimize his power and "the national political personality" (188). Neither the Tunisian men of letters Bouhdiba and Djait, nor Norma Salem, however, tried to examine how Bourguiba's concept of "personality" is implicated in the gender politics in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia. See Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *A la recherche des normes perdues* (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne de l'Edition, 1973): 18-9. Also see Hichem Djait, *La Personnalité et le devenir Arabo-Islamique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974): 52-3.

[19] Even though there was an infusion of non Arabic people who came to Tunisia after the first Islamic conquests, the mythical Tunisian identity that Bourguiba constructs does not include the Turks, the Andalusian Jewish and Muslim immigrants, the Europeans, and the Black Africans who came to Tunisia after the seventh-century A.D., through conquest, exile, and slavery.

[20] According to Jean François Martin, the history of Tunisia and North Africa was revised in 1904 in French school manuals to emphasize the progress of French civilization and backwardness of the Arab-Islamic civilization. A French textbook published in 1916 stated: "At the moment of the French intervention, anarchy and chaos ruined Tunisia. Its land so fertile in the past became largely barren. The rural lands were ravaged by wars, and the poor inhabitants were under the pressure of the functionaries. France succeeded in establishing the reign of peace and order; it brought the country back into prosperity; and dedicated itself to give the indigenous population the tools to improve their own conditions" (*Histoire de la Tunisie Contemporaine: De Ferry à Bourguiba 1881-1956* 99).

[21] Article 207 of the PSC whereby the husband was liable only to a five-year imprisonment for the murder of his wife or accomplice caught in the act of adultery was repealed only in 1993 when new reforms were introduced to curb domestic violence.

[22] Tunisian women obtained the right to vote on 14 March 1957.

[23] In 1993, the Tunisian woman obtained the right to give Tunisian citizenship to her children from a foreign father, though born abroad. However, this right is null and void without the father's consent.

[24] See the myth *bété* in Denise Paulme, *La mère dévorante: Essai sur la morphologie des contes Africains* (France: Gallimard, 1976) 278.

[25] In French colonial Tunisia, there were many other feminist organizations: L'Union Musulmane des Femmes de Tunisie created in 1936 by Bchira Ben Mrad, the daughter of Muhammad Salah Ben Mrad who fiercely attacked al Haddad's book; La Section Féminine de L'Asscociation des Jeunes Musulmans (1944) directed by Mrs. Souad Khattech, wife of the President of this association Sheikh Muhammad Salah Ennaïfer (Marzouki 36); l'Union des Femmes de Tunisie (UFT) created in 1944 by the Tunisian Communist Party; l'Union des Jeunes filles de Tunisie at the end of WWII which tried to cut across distinctions of race, religion, and political opinion" (97); and Le Club de la Jeune Fille Tunisienne in 1954 presided by Tawhida Farhat (36). After independence, these organizations slowly lost their political activism, as the state monopolized and thus controlled the Tunisian feminist movement by creating and sponsoring the U.N.F.T. in 1956 (157).

[26] He challenged Bourguiba's leadership in two major ways: first, by claiming an Arab-Islamic identity rather than a specific Tunisian personality as Bourguiba did, and second, by rejecting the internal autonomy accords sanctified by the New Destur and supporting instead an independent and united Maghreb.

[27] There are few exceptions such as Habiba Menchari, the first Tunisian woman to speak unveiled in public, and Eve Nohelle, who wrote for the communist newspaper *Tunis Socialiste*.

Chapter Five: Reinventing Domesticity and the Sacred: The House of the Prophet as a Technology of Power

Whereas the previous chapters studied the ideological production of the "Muslim woman" in the discourses of Orientalism, feminist theory, and Tunisian nationalism, this last chapter excavates the domestic politics underlying the House of the Prophet in *The Epistle of Forgiveness* (1032) by the Abbasid poet Abul Alâ al Ma'arri (973-1057), *Al Tawba* (The Redemption) (1992) by the Tunisian novelist Aroussia Naluti (1952-), *Loin de Médine* (1991) by the Algerian writer Assia Djebar (1936-), and *The Satanic Verses* (1988) by Salman Rushdie (1947-). If this chapter focuses on this symbolic, it is because in many parts of the Islamic world, the model of domesticity provided by the House of the Prophet is deployed as the final authority in promulgating laws affecting the lives of Muslim women. This explains why this powerful symbolic is being claimed today not only by the Islamists to justify women's seclusion, but also by those who are on the margin of the dominant discourse of Islamic patriarchy; namely, those Muslim feminists who want to advance women's rights in Islamic societies. The major argument of this chapter is that the House of the Prophet is a technology of power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 24) that is constantly changing its significance as it is being deployed and appropriated by different groups for various political reasons. Deployed as an instrument of political legitimation during the Abbasid dynasty, this powerful Muslim symbolic became a metaphor for corruption and political absolutism in al Ma'arri's divine comedy, a critique of social disparities in postcolonial Tunisia in Naluti's *Al Tawba*, the symbol of Islam's sexual oppression of women in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and a means of self-empowerment in Djebar's feminist novel *Loin de Médine*.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first examines the House of the Prophet as a technology of power in Islamic memory. The second section focuses on al Ma'arri's divine comedy. Even though it is told from a male viewpoint, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* displays resistance towards Abbasid gender ideology. In contrast with the Abbasid rulers' manipulation of this Muslim symbolic, al Ma'arri rejects the House of the Prophet as a technology of power and reconstructs it as a metaphor for social corruption and political absolutism. This second section also examines the reinvention of Muhammad's household in *Al Tawba* (*The Redemption*), a 1992 readaptation of al Ma'arri's divine comedy by the Tunisian novelist Aroussia Naluti.

The third section of this chapter focuses on Assia Djebar's feminist reconstruction of *Ahl al Beit* ("Muhammad's household") in *Loin de Médine*. This section starts by examining Djebar's subversive reading of the earlier discourses on the House of the Prophet. The central reading here holds that Djebar is reinventing Muhammad's household through the lens of both écriture féminine and Islamic feminism. Djebar's feminist construction of this sacred symbolic constitutes an act of self-empowerment allowing her--as the other within--to respond to the mental and physical violence perpetrated against Algerian women in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the Islamist groups such as the Islamic Salvation Army (FIS) and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The last part of this chapter will briefly compare Djebar's feminist project in *Loin de Médine* to Salman Rushdie's postmodern invention of the House of the Prophet in *The Satanic Verses*. This section will also examine Djebar's construction of a "liberal" or "spiritual" Islam versus an eternally repressive Arab culture.

I) Excavating Islamic Memory: The House of the Prophet as a Technology of Power

In *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault states that archaeology, rather than being a search for inventions, is to question and "uncover the regularity of a discursive practice" (145), without postulating an "original discourse" (148). It is from this Foucauldian perspective that this chapter examines the discourses on the House of the Prophet. Rather than postulating an authentic or a retrievable true model of Muhammad's life, this chapter examines the House of the Prophet as a semiotic object. As a sign, the House of the Prophet is tied to three levels of discourse: theological, etymological and vernacular. In Islamic tradition, the expression *ahl al beit* ("People of the House") designates Muhammad's family. Even though it refers to the domestic/private self of Muhammad on the literal level, this expression is not separate from Muhammad's public self, for the second source of legislation in Islam after the Qur'an is the hadith, which is composed of Muhammad's statements and actions as reported by his wives or the *Sahaba* ("his disciples"). On the etymological level, the words *haram* ("sanctuary"), *harâm* ("sin"), *harîm* ("harem"), come from the same root "*h*r*m*," meaning sacred, and inviolable. In the North African vernacular, the word *dar* or *beit* ("house") is a synecdoche for family. "How is your house?" means "how is your wife/family?" In this sense, the House of the Prophet becomes a liminal or sacred space where the public and the domestic are conflated. This is why this chapter examines the House of the Prophet at the axes of gender, space, and temporal and spiritual power.

An overview of early Islamic history reveals that the House of the Prophet has always been used as an instrument of political legitimacy. In a speech he has delivered at the Battle of Kerbala (Iraq)--just before being killed by the Umayyad troops--al Hussein,

the grandson of Muhammad, according to the Muslim historian Tabari, claims his right to divine and political authority through his blood ties to the Prophet's household:

> People of Koufa, I know that my words will not save me; but I want to speak, to establish your responsibility before God and my own innocence before the battle starts. You all know [...] that I am the son of Fâtima, daughter of the Apostle of God, and son of 'Alî, cousin of the Prophet and the first believer. Dja'far with the two wings was my uncle, 'Hamza the prince of martyrs, was my father's uncle, and Hassan was my brother, who, according to the Prophet, will rule over the inhabitants of Paradise. If you believe in God and the mission of my grandfather, the Apostle of God, tell me what crime I have committed so that you attempted to take my life. Can't you see how the Christians venerate even the shoe of Jesus's donkey and the Jews everything that remains from Moses, and how all nations honor their prophets and their families? (Tabari, *Chronique* 5/6: 42-3)[1]

Perhaps even more than the Umayyad, the Abbasid Caliphs justified their political and divine authority as members of the Prophet's family through Muhammad's paternal uncle al 'Abbas. Because the descendants of Alî[2] and their Shi'i supporters also presented themselves as heirs to Muhammad's spiritual and temporal heritage, the Sunni Abbasid rulers massacred almost all of the male descendants of Fâtima and Alî.[3] Today, in the face of unemployment, inflation, and poverty, the House of the Prophet is being deployed not only by the Islamists to justify women's economic and social oppression, but also by feminists such as Mernissi (*The Veil and the Male Elite*), Ahmed (*Women and Gender in Islam*), and Djebar (*Loin de Médine*). Whether they rely on the science of the hadith, écriture féminine, or a Marxist approach, in excavating the archeology of the House of the Prophet, these Muslim feminists claim that they are resurrecting a spiritual Islam/a feminist revolution, which has been strangled in its cradle by Orthodox Islam.

II) Reinventing the House of the Prophet: A Study of Domestic and Power Politics in al Ma'arri's Shi'i Paradise

a) Abul Alâ al Ma'arri and his Garden: An Introduction

Born in 973 in Ma'arrat al Nu'mân, a small village between Aleppo and Damascus during the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258), Al Ma'arri lost his sight at the age of four after contracting smallpox. Even though poor, his family held education in high esteem. His grandmother was recognized as a hadith transmitter. He was trained in Arabic lexicography, hadith transmission, Qur'anic recitation, and Arabic literature (Tahar K. al Garradi, *The Image of Al Ma'arri as an Infidel Among Medieval and Modern Critics* 12) (1987). His literary career was quite prolific, he wrote many collections of poems such as *Saqt al Zand*, the *Luzumiyat*, *Al Fusul wa al Ghayat* as well as a book entitled *Zajr al Nabih* where he explains some misinterpreted verses in the *Luzumiyat.* He also wrote personal letters and epistles, like *Risalat al Hana* (*The Epistle of Happiness*), *Risalat al Mala'ika* (*The Epistle of Angels*), and *Risalat al Ghufran* (*The Epistle of Forgiveness).* He lived during the reign of Caliph al Hakim bi Amr Illah, an eccentric Fatimid ruler who encouraged the spread of mystical ideas such as the doctrine of immanence (*al Hulul*) (*The Epistle of Forgiveness* 7).[4] Al Ma'arri resided in Baghdad for a short period of time (1009-1010) where he visited its famous library *dar al 'Ilm* ("The House of Knowledge"). He soon retired to his home in Ma'arrat al Nu'mân after being publicly humiliated in the *majlis* (literary salon) of Abu al Qasim Alî al Sharif al Murtadhâ. Al Ma'arri was dragged by his leg from the house of al Murtadhâ for defending the Abbasid poet al Mutannabi whom al Murtadhâ hated and despised (Edouard Amin al Bustani, *Abu al Alâ al Ma'arri:*

Muta'amil fi al dhulumat 19-21). After this incident al Ma'arri turned to asceticism and secluded himself for almost fifty years.

In his divine comedy,[5] al Ma'arri brings together poets from the Jahilia period and Islam, not just to offer lessons in literary criticism, but also to denounce the predicament of the man of letters reduced to composing panegyric poetry for the Abbasid Emirs and Viziers. Al Ma'arri's work comes in fact as a response to a letter from the panegyrist poet Ibn ul Qârih Alî Ibn Mansùr,[6] in which he apologizes for losing a letter he was charged to deliver to al Ma'arri. In his letter, Ibn ul Qârih explains how all of his belongings--including al Ma'arri's letter--were stolen and complains about the loss of morals. *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is an ironic response to the contrived literary style and the self-righteousness Ibn ul Qârih exhibits in his letter to al Ma'arri. In his letter, al Ma'arri tells Ibn ul Qârih that he cannot have access to heaven through panegyric poetry as he used to do on earth. Using Ibn ul Qârih's hypocrisy and corruption as example, al Ma'arri's divine comedy provides a social critique of Abbasid society and displays cynicism towards Islam's orthodox beliefs in hell, heaven, and redemption, through a literal presentation of the imagery of hell and paradise found in the Qur'an and Arabic poetry.

Al Ma'arri's attitude towards religion in *The Epistle of Forgiveness* cannot be understood without examining the political and religious strife that tore the Islamic world open in the tenth and eleventh century. In al Ma'arri's lifetime, many Caliphates appeared in Egypt, Baghdad, and Aleppo. They all used religion as a tool to justify their rise to power. Like the Abbasid dynasty, whose rulers claimed divine sovereignty through Muhammad's uncle, the Fâtimid, rejected the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, and ruled over Egypt and Aleppo by claiming direct descendency from Fâtima Azzahra, the

daughter of Muhammad. In Baghdad, political power shifted hands from the Sunni Abbasid Caliphs to the Shi'i Buwayhid family, who were their Persian military commanders. Even though both the Buwayhid and the Fâtimid were Shi'iah, they were enemies. As Twelver Shi'is ("Twelve Imams"), the Buwayhid were happy to serve the Sunni Caliphate in opposing the conservatism of the Fâtimids, who were from the Isma'ili branch of the Shi'ah. In his *Luzumiat*, al Ma'arri reports the dispossession of Muhammad's descendents by the Abbasid dynasty, the weakness of the Abbasid ruler al Mansùr, and the rise to power of the Persians: "In the Wilderness were exiled Banu Hashim/And onto the hands of the *Daylam* [Persians] passed power" (II: 472).

b) The House of the Prophet Between Continuity and Resistance: A Shi'i Heaven and a Monogamous Muhammad

An overview of al Ma'arri's Edenic garden reveals both conformity and resistance towards the Abbasid gender ideology and the earlier discourses on the House of the Prophet. Whereas Alî (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law), Ibrahîm (Muhammad's son), and Hamza (Muhammad's uncle) ride their horses and walk around freely on the Day of Reckoning, Fâtima is secluded[7] in her heavenly "abode" and comes out only once every "twenty-four hours of earthly time to greet her father Muhammad" (*The Epistle of Forgiveness* 83). Fâtima is not to be seen: whenever she exits God's courtroom, a clerk "call[s]out to the people there to lower their eyes" (83) until she passes. Even though she has the power of redemption, she runs her errands in Paradise only when chaperoned by her little brother Ibrahîm:

> Fâtima then said to her brother Ibrahîm (blessings on him) "Here is the man" [Ibn ul Qârih]. "Hang on to my horse" said he, and the

> horses of the company proceeded to pass through the throng, all nations and kindreds making way for them; and when the press became too close, they flew into the air, with me hanging on to the horse. (84)

During her intercession to Muhammad on behalf of Ibn ul Qârih, Fâtima does not fly alone with the latter: she first introduces him to her brother, and then they all fly together to see Muhammad. Reflecting the Abbassid segregation of the sexes, Ibn ul Qârih flies hanging from Ibrahîm's horse, not Fâtima's.

As in the eighth and ninth century chronicles of Tabari, Ibn Saad, and Ibn Hisham, in al Ma'arri's afterlife, Fâtima and Khadija are trapped within the patriarchal roles of motherhood and wifehood: Fâtima as wife of Alî and mother of the two martyrs Hassan and Hussein, and Khadija as the Mother of the Believers and the mother of Muhammad's sons who died in infancy. Describing the House of the Prophet in the afterlife, Ibn ul Qârih observes:

> There was among them Alî the son of Husein and his two sons Muhammad and Zaid with others of the righteous and devout. With Fâtima (peace be upon her) was another woman equal to her in honor and dignity. They were told in answer to their enquiry that it was Khadijah the daughter of Khuwailid Ibn Asad Ibn Abdel Uzza. With her were youths riding on horses of light, and they were told they were Abdallah, Qâsim, Tayyib, and Tâhir, and Ibrahîm--sons of the Blessed Prophet. (84)

On the Day of Reckoning, Ibn ul Qârih is saved from hell only because Fâtima has interceded with Muhammad on his behalf. The idea that Fâtima could save someone from the flames of hell through intercession with her father is a common belief among the Shi'ah, who also believe that her two sons Hassan and Hussein murdered by the Umayyad, are the only legitimate heirs to Muhammad's temporal and spiritual heritage. The idea that Fâtima would not save those who murdered her children and grandchildren

was not unheard of in Abbasid society. About two centuries before al Ma'arri, the first chronicler of Islamic history Tabari Abu Djafar Muhammad ben Djarîr Ben Yezîd (839-923) reports a story Mousa Ibn 'Habib told him after the murder of Zaid: [8]

> A woman [told him] the following story: "On the night of the third day following Zaid's death, I saw in a dream a group of persons dressed in bright clothes and descending from the heavens who were gathered around Zaid, beating their faces, weeping and screaming, like our women do when they gather to cry over a dead person. One of them wearing a splendid garment shouted: 'O Zaid, they have killed you! O Zaid, they sent you to the gallows and exposed your nakedness! Definitely, they won't have the intercession of your grandfather on the Day of Resurrection!' I asked then one of her companions who that woman was. She told me: 'It is Fâtima, the daughter of the Prophet, the wife of 'Alî.'" (*Chronique* 5/6: 264-65)

In al Ma'arri's divine company, the preeminence of the House of the Prophet in the afterlife stands for the restoration of their divine rights. This is why on the Day of Resurrection, only Muhammad's first wife, his daughter Fâtima, his five sons who died in infancy (Qâssim, Tâhar, Tayyib, Abdallah, and Ibrahîm), his grandson Hussein,[9] his great great-grand sons Muhammad and Zaid, his son-in-law Alî, his paternal uncle Hamza who died a martyr at the Battle of Uhud, and the Elect (other chosen members of his family), go back and forth between Heaven and God's courtyard, where the resurrected are fearfully waiting God's judgement.

In this afterlife family reunion, Muhammad's other wives are all absent, including his favorite wife Aïsha. Also striking is the absence of his other daughters from Khadija: Zeineb and Ruqayya and Um Kolthum. If these three daughters are absent, it is because from a Shi'i standpoint only the sons of Fâtima and Alî are Muhammad's legitimate heirs. Besides, Zeineb and Ruqayya were both married to Uthman Ibn Affan (644-56), [10] the

third Muslim Caliph who gave power to his kinsman Mu'awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, who fought against Alî in the Battle of Siffin, and persecuted the Prophet's grandsons Hassan and Hussein.

It is also the Elect who introduce Ibn ul Qârih to Fâtima, Alî, and Hamza. Describing the "Elect," Ibn ul Qârih states that they are "many members of the family of Abu Talib of both sexes, who had never touched wine or known doing wrong" (83). It is significant here that Muhammad's family is referred to as the "family of Abu Talib," who is Muhammad's uncle and father of Alî, and not as "the family of Abdul Muttalib," after his paternal grandfather, or "Beni Hashim," after the name of his clan. This is significant because the Abbasid rulers also presented themselves as the legitimate blood heirs to Muhammad's legacy. As a matter of fact, the Abbasid--who are the descendants of Muhammad's paternal uncle al 'Abbas son of Abdul Muttlalib son of Hashim--denied the political legitimacy of Alî Ibn Abi Talib through his marriage to Fâtima. Even though he was the father of Muhammad's only two grandsons (Hassan and Hussein), Alî and his descendants were denied legitimacy because inheritance, the Beni Abbas claimed, follows the father's line not the mother's. In his *Chronicle*, Tabari reports a correspondence between the Abbasid ruler Abu Ja'far al Mansur and Muhammad Ibn Abdallah (one of the descendants of Alî) where both lay claim to Muhammad's spiritual and temporal heritage. In the letter where he responds to the Abbasid ruler's promise to grant him his royal pardon "were he to give up his weapons and surrender" (344), Muhammad Ibn Abdallah writes:

> You are offering me the *aman* ("pardon") whereas it is me who should give it to you, because I am the legitimate Imam and you are the rebel. We are the descendants of the Prophet, and we have inherited the Imamat; because the prophet, on his deathbed,

left a daughter, who is Fâtima, and a nephew, who is 'Alî, and we are his heirs. If the right to power is based on heritage, Fâtima is the principal heiress; if it is founded on testamentary disposition, it is 'Alî who has been designated the successor. What are your titles and your rights since the descendants of the Prophet are still living? You are the descendants of 'Abbas, you used our family name to steal power and it is in the name of Muhammad that you have conducted your propaganda and found partisans [...] If you are seeking your nobility titles in the history of Islam, I will tell you that 'Alî was the first of all men to adopt the Islamic religion [...] Your father 'Abbas was among those who embraced Islam under constraint, he was afraid of the sword of 'Alî, who made him a prisoner at the Battle of Bedr. It is the same for our nobility titles in the era of paganism, where we occupied the first rank; for the chieftancy of the Quraischite of Mecca belonged to Abdou'l Mottalib and after him Abu Talib [...] 'Abbas had never been found a chief by two people.

[...] As for the nobility on the women's side [...] we descend from Khadija bint Khowailid and Fâtima, daughter of the Apostle of God. The mother of 'Hassan ibn 'Hassan was Fâtima bint Hussein, and my own mother was Um Is'haq bint Talha. All of you, old and young, are born from slave women (the mother of Mansour was a slave called Salama), and God knows what these women did before they belonged to your fathers. The kinship between you and Beni Hashim that you are boasting about exists only on your father's side, whereas we are related to the Beni Haschim on both our maternal and paternal side. (Tabari, *Chronique* 5/6: 344-45)

To this claim, Al Mansùr responds that the descendants of al 'Abbas are the real heirs because inheritance has always been patrilineal, not matrilineal:

Know at first that the nobility of origins does not get transmitted by women, but through men; it is the fathers and the uncles that we boast about; because God placed the uncle in the same rank as the father [...] Your kinship to the Prophet derives from Fâtima, his daughter. The daughters, mind you, receive only a small part of the paternal heritage, as for the temporal and spiritual power, they don't inherit any part of it, and consequently, they cannot transmit it to their descendants...

The Prophet addressed his four uncles, two of whom, Abbas and Hamza, welcomed his predication and believed in his mission; the two others, your ancestor Abu Talib and Abu Lahab, refused to believe. In addition, 'Abbas was the uncle of the Prophet, and 'Alî was only his cousin.

> When you say that Haschim is your ancestor on both the paternal and maternal side whereas we are his descendants only from the paternal side, know that we are content with the nobility of the origins the Prophet himself had; the nobility of the fathers are enough, that of women is insignificant. (346-47)

Thus, the absence on the Day of Reckoning of Beni al 'Abbas and the political power granted to Alî, his son Hussein, his grandson Alî, and his two great grandsons Muhammad and Zaid (84) reflect the Shi'i belief that only Alî and his two sons Hussein and Hassan are Muhammad's legitimate heirs.

Even though Muhammad's favorite wife Aïsha is excluded from al Ma'arri's Shi'i afterlife, there is a hint concerning her alleged affair with Safwan ben el Mo'attal.[11] In Paradise, Ibn ul Qârih meets the Prophet's poet Hassan Ibn Thabit, who tells him that he entered heaven because he married Sirîn, the sister of Maryam the Copt, Muhammad's only concubine and mother of his son Ibrahîm. Even though Ibn Thabit was flogged with the slave Mistah for spreading lies about Aïsha's reputation, Muhammad saved him because of the blood ties between the poet's son Abdul Rahman and the Prophet's own son Ibrahîm:

> The Prophet interceded for al A'asha after he had satirised him on many occasions. No man more generous than he was ever heard of, for when [I did shame] he flogged me together with my friend Mistah, and then gave me the sister of Maryam,--by whom I had my son Abdul Rahman,--she being the aunt of Ibrahîm (The Prophet's son by Maryam). (66)

The story of Ibn Thabit's salvation shows that redemption is bestowed rather than earned. By making hypocrites like Ibn Thabit or profligate poets like al A'asha enter Paradise because of their kinship with the House of the Prophet or Muhammad's generosity, al

Ma'arri is critiquing the Shi'i belief in the absolute power of the House of the Prophet on the Day of Reckoning.

In this Shi'i paradise, Aïsha is excluded not only because of her alleged affair with Safwan ben el Mo'attal, but also because she sided with Mu'awiya (founder of the Umayyad dynasty) and fought against Alî--the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law--in the Battle of the Camel. Aïsha's participation in the first war where Muslim blood was shed caused many to blame her for creating *al fitna* ("chaos")[12] between Muslims. Besides this, the Shi'iah never forgot how she refused to let the corpse of Hassan be buried near the tomb of the Prophet. Aïsha claimed that the land where Muhammad's body was buried belonged to her. Because of this the body of Hassan "was buried in the cemetery of Baqî" (Tabari, *Chronique* 5/6: 17), not near his grandfather.

Al Ma'arri's divine comedy shows a departure from the earlier discourses on the House of the Prophet. For instance, the absence of the nine wives[13] Muhammad took after Khadija's death does not merely reflect the Shi'i belief that only the Prophet's descendants from Fâtima (daughter of Khadija) are his true legitimate heirs, but more importantly al Ma'arri's own opposition and rejection of the institution of polygamy. In his invention of the House of the Prophet as a monogamous household, al Ma'arri makes Ibrahîm appear, not with his real mother, Muhammad's concubine Maryam the Copt, but with Muhammad's first wife Khadija and her sons Abdallah, Qâsim, Tayyib, and Tâhir (84). Many Arab critics present al Ma'arri as a woman hater[14] for his portrayal of women in his *Luzumiat* as snakes (II: 81), irrational (I: 196, 298) and dangerous seductive creatures (I: 63). It is true that al Ma'arri has often expressed his hatred for women and procreation,[15] but he is also the Abbasid poet who has criticized polygamy and attacked

Islam's holy wars for causing the enslavement and dishonoring of Arab women. In the *Luzumiat*, al Ma'arri makes sarcastic remarks about polygamous men: "Be content with the fourth of me he told his first wife after taking three others/ He rewards her if little satisfies her and stones her if she takes a lover/ He who marries two women can never reach the fifth or fourth of justice's pathway" (II: 140). Al Ma'arri's criticism of polygamy is not unheard of in Abbasid times. As Ahmed demonstrates in *Women and Gender in Islam*, the Qarmatians, for instance, challenged the views of establishment Islam by rejecting polygamy, concubinage, and the wearing of the veil (66). In the *Luzumiat*, al Ma'arri attacks all religions for turning people into "the bitterest of enemies" and wonders whether it "was not the Prophets' teachings, which permitted the enslavement and dishonoring of women among Arabs" (I: 228). This is quite subversive given the fact that Muhammad's concubine, Maryam the Copt, was given to him as a gift. Muhammad's slave Selma was also a war captive. She was enslaved when her father Malik, head of the Beni Ghatafan rebelled against Islam. Muhammad gave her as a gift to Aïsha, who later emancipated her.

Even though *The Epistle of Forgiveness* reproduces Muslim beliefs in the afterlife and in particular Shi'i beliefs in the divine authority and legitimacy of the House of the Prophet, al Ma'arri's description of resurrection and the House of the Prophet's absolute power of redemption borders on sarcasm and cynicism. An overview of *The Epistle of Forgiveness* shows that the House of the Prophet is a metaphor for social corruption and a satire of the absolute power of the Abbasid ruler. A corrupt and degenerate poet in his lifetime, Ibn ul Qârih gains access to heaven, not through his good deeds, but thanks to his *pistons* ("personal acquaintances") and his talent as a panegyric poet. On the Day of

Reckoning, Ibn ul Qârih loses his Repentance Pass and tries to enter Paradise by bribing the angels guarding its gates with praise poetry. Plagiarizing the poetry of Imru' ul Qais, he composes verses "in praise of Radwan in the metre of the well-known verse: 'Rise ye two and let us weep for the memory of Habib and 'Irfan'" (75), and he substitutes Radwan, the name of the door-keeper of paradise, for 'Irfan. When Radwan refuses, he tries to bribe another guardian of heaven called Zufar with "some verses rhyming in his name in the metre of Labid's verse" (77), but in vain. He then composes a eulogy to Muhammad's uncle Hamza. Even though he does not save him, Hamza sends him to his nephew Alî (80) who summons the Judge of Aleppo to testify that Ibn ul Qârih has repented at the end of his life. Alî turns down his request of salvation and asks him to wait for his turn to see Muhammad like everyone else (82). But Ibn ul Qârih does not give up:

> I then approached the noble family of the elect and said: "When I was in the mortal world I wrote a book at the conclusion of which I added these words: 'The blessing of Allah be upon our Lord Muhammad the seal of the prophets, and upon his family of elect and excellent persons.' These words must give me sanctuary (*hurma*) and the right of way (*wassila*)." (82-3)

As the above passage shows, Ibn ul Qârih wants to enter heaven not through his good deeds, but through the panegyric poetry he composed on earth in honor of Muhammad and his family. In Arabic *wassila* means "instrument" or "means." The juxtaposition of the two words *wassila* and *hurma* ("sanctuary" and "sacred") reveals how through Ibn ul Qârih, al Ma'arri is denouncing the subjection of the sacred to ideological and political manipulation during the Abbasid dynasty. Just as the Abassid Caliphs used religion as a

tool of political legitimacy, Ibn ul Qârih is using religious formula to have access to heaven.

At the request of Ibn ul Qârih, the Elect--to spare him the hardships of the long waiting line on Judgment Day--ask Fâtima to intercede with the Prophet on his behalf:

> This company to whom I appealed said to Fâtima: "This is a sincere client of ours whose repentance has been accepted and who is certainly among the dwellers in Paradise, and he begged us to introduce him to you (peace be upon you) in order to be relieved from the horrors of waiting and to gain his wish of proceeding into Paradise without delay." (84)
>
> When Fâtima reached the Prophet she stopped. He asks her "Who is this stranger?" She answers: "He is a man who has been interceded for by so and so [...] a number of righteous imams." And he said: "Let his works be enquired into." So he enquired into my works and found them recorded in the Book of Fate. They were sealed with the mark of repentance, so became my mediator and I was granted permission to enter. (85)

Ibn ul Qârih's entry into heaven is ludicrous. As he was unable to keep his balance while crossing the purgatory, Fâtima "[orders] one of her handmaidens to help [him] across" (85) by carrying him piggy-back. At the gate of heaven, Radwan the porter refuses to let Ibn ul Qârih in because he does not have his Repentance Pass with him. So, Ibrahîm the son of Muhammad comes back to his rescue and kicks him "with a single motion into Paradise" (87). In heaven, Ibn ul Qârih finally enjoys the blessings of heaven: fish sporting in pools of honey (29); the rivers of wine, honey, and milk (28); the jeweled pages (31), heavenly houris springing from apples and pomegranates (103), etc.

Throughout his divine comedy, Al Ma'arri's irony subverts the political machinery underlying the House of the Prophet and turns this Muslim symbolic into a metaphor for injustice and political absolutism. According to Aws Ibn Hajar, one of the poets Ibn ul Qârih visits in hell, there is no difference between the absolute power of the Abbasid

King on earth and the House of the Prophet's absolute power of redemption in the afterlife: "People wickeder than I have entered Paradise, but the distribution of forgiveness is nothing but a lottery like the distribution of wealth in the world" (136).

An ascetic and a cynic, al Ma'arri engages in the hegemonic discourses of the Abbasids and the Fâtimids only to mock them. Rather than deploying the House of the Prophet for some personal or political ends, al Ma'arri deploys this Muslim symbolic only to reveal its corruptive power as a tool of ideological manipulation. In his lifetime, al Ma'arri opposed not only the corruption of the Abbasid rulers in Baghdad--as his public humiliation at the salon of al Murtadha attests to--but also the Fâtimid regime in Egypt and Aleppo. Because al Ma'arri was a threat to the Fâtimid presence in Aleppo, the Isma'ili preacher Da'i al Du'ah started a correspondence with al Ma'arri asking him metaphysical questions and soliciting answers which could be used to give al Ma'arri the reputation of a "heretic" or "unbeliever" (al Garradi 52). A poor, yet proud man of letters, al Ma'arri refused Da'i al Du'ah's offer of financial assistance, in the same way he turned down the other "Fâtimid attempts"[16] to bribe/control (al Garradi 153) him. In his *Luzumiat*, al Ma'arri attacks the Shi'i belief in the "*imamah*" (clergy), by stating that "there is no imam, but the mind" (I: 66).

In his nihilistic worldview, al Ma'arri sees mankind as incurably corrupt: only sterility, castration, or floods can cleanse the world of their evil. Even though he opposes polygamy and women's enslavement in Islam's holy wars, al Ma'arri's reproduction of the traditional Islamic image of Fâtima and Khadija as Mothers of the Believers reflects Abbasid patriarchal ideology. Finally, if al Ma'arri was able to reject the power politics underlying the House of the Prophet and live in seclusion, it was because of his double

privilege of gender and education. During the fifty years he lived in seclusion, al Ma'arri was able to turn his home into a center for learning. It was his students and his maternal uncle who were providing him with food and other necessities of life (al Bustani 24). An insider, on account of his gender and education, and an outsider, on account of his class, al Ma'arri's double position in Abbasid society recalls Foucault's statement that power is also extended to those who are "dominated": "It invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them (*Discipline and Punish* 27).

After his humiliation at the Salon of al Murtadhâ, al Ma'arri became, in his own words, the inmate of three prisons: his "blindness," "his home," and his body (qtd. in Taha Husayn, *Ma'a Abî al Alâ fi Sijnih* 19). Al Ma'arri's imprisonment (except his blindness) recalls Foucault's claim that punishment is a complex social function" (23), "a political tactic," and a technology of the "soul" (30) that conceals its "materiality as an instrument and vector of power" over the body. Hardly a consequence of free will, the fifty years that al Ma'arri imposed on himself illustrate the "social" and political structure underlying the Abbasid technology of power, which affected not only al Ma'arri's "soul," but also his body, his "heart," "thoughts," "will," and "inclinations" (*Discipline and Punish* 16).

c) Revisiting al Ma'arri's Male Paradise: Gender and Politics in Aroussia Naluti's Al Tawba

Born on the Island of Djerba in 1950, Aroussia Naluti belongs to the first generation of women novelists who started writing in Arabic in postcolonial Tunisia. A

one-time teacher of Arabic literature, she is now working in the Tunisian Ministry of Education. In 1975, she published her first collection of short stories *Al Bou'd al Khamis* (*The Fifth Dimension*). Then, she wrote her first novel *Maratij* (*Locks*) in 1985, and finally *Tamas* (*Borderline*) in 1995. Besides this, she has written several scripts for Tunisian film and theater. In 1992, she wrote a readaption of al Ma'arri's garden in a play entitled *Al Tawba* (*The Redemption*).[17] The play, which consists of ten scenes or tableaux, was originally written for school-theater. It was meant to present al Ma'arri in a new light to the students of the baccalaureate. In an interview, Naluti confesses that the play is part of her "unorthodox teaching" of al Ma'arri. Through this play, she wanted to present "a new vision or a new reading" of this Abbasid poet (personal interview, July 17, 2001).

In her theatrical readaptation of al Ma'arri's divine comedy, only Alî and Fâtima appear: they are introduced not through their names, but through their social status as the Emir (*Al Tawba* 4: 19) and the Lady (6: 23). In her reconstruction of al Ma'arri's divine comedy, Naluti erases the religious conflict between Shi'i and Sunni Islam and places the issue of gender outside the paradigm of Islamic religion. By referring to Fâtima in terms of her class, Naluti is recreating her as a social being, subverting thus not only her patriarchal construction in Islamic tradition as the mother of Hassan and Hussein, but also Western feminists' tendency to overlook class differences between Muslim women (Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" 204). At the same time, by downplaying the theme of religion and focusing instead on the social differences between the dwellers of Paradise, Naluti subverts the unitary discourse of Tunisian nationalism and its occlusion of the social disparities tearing postcolonial Tunisia.

Commenting on the political context in which her play was produced, Naluti states that her rewriting of *The Epistle of Forgiveness* was a means of escapism:

> The reading or rereading of a text in a particular moment is always a response to some particular circumstances even if we question an older text. In al Ma'arri's afterlife, the gehannam the damned are talking about is the gehannam of life and the prison of the wretched. This arbitrariness that we find in the anti-hero Ibn ul Qârih--the biggest hypocrite and opportunist--encapsulates all of the maladies in al Ma'arri's age. The strangest thing is that when you pursue Ibn ul Qârih, you find him living among us today. How many Ibn ul Qârihs do we meet everyday? So Ibn ul Qârih, and al Ma'arri's manipulation of his character could happen at any time: yesterday, today, or tomorrow. Even if the author is unconscious when she/he questions an old text, this rereading stems from a particular ideological framework. This rereading reveals a specific reality and searches to express something. (personal interview, July 17, 2001)

Hence, like, Mernissi, Ahmed, and Djebar, Naluti is visiting the past to engage in the present. In al Ma'arri's text, Naluti finds a vehicle through which she can carry her Marxist feminist critique of postcolonial Tunisia.

III) Claiming Muhammad's legacy: Djebar's Feminist Reinvention of the House of the Prophet in *Loin de Médine*

Born in French colonial Algeria in the town of Cherchell in 1936, Assia Djebar is the most famous and prolific Francophone female novelist and film-maker in the Maghreb. A historian by training and a novelist by vocation, Djebar is now exiled in the United States where she teaches at New York University. At nineteen, she wrote her first novel *La Soif*, followed by *Les Alouettes naïves* (1967), *Poèmes de l'Algérie heureuse* (1969), *Rouge l'aube* (1970),[18] *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1980), *L'Amour, La Fantasia* (1985), *Ombre Sultane* and *A Sister to Scheherazade* (1987). Her first film

was *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1977) followed by *La Zerda ou les chants de l'oubli* (1982). Her works--*Loin de Médine* (1991), *Vaste est la prison* (1995), and *Le Blanc de L'Algérie* (1996) deal with the rise of the Islamist movement in Algeria and the seven-year Civil War[19] (1992-97), which cost the lives of over 100,000 people. Djebar's most recent works include *Les Nuits de Strasbourg* (1997), *Oran, Langue morte* (1997), and *Ces Voix qui m'assiègent* (1999). Like so many Algerians, Djebar lost members of her family and friends in the bloodbath which tore her country in the 1990s. In *Le Blanc de L'Algérie* and *Vaste est la prison*, two literary tributes for the victims of the Civil War, Djebar attacks the FLN socialist regime for paving the way for the theocratic discourse of the Islamists, through their own political absolutism and anti-intellectualism.

In contrast with Djebar's first novel *La Soif*, which tells the story of a young woman discovering her sexuality without a hint to the ongoing Algerian Revolution, *Loin de Médine* stands out as a piece of politically committed literature. In a 1993 interview with Clarisse Zimra, Djebar states that *Loin de Médine* is "a response" ("'When the Past Answers Our Present': Assia Djebar Talks About *Loin de Médine*" 126) to the political situation in her homeland, especially to the bloody riots of October 1988, when young people took to the streets to contest the price of bread (119). Declaring her engagement in the political debate and strife shattering Algeria, she notes:

> I was derailed by the street riots of October 1988 in Algiers... For several years I had been an uncomfortable witness of the fundamentalist rise in public life--particularly among students. I told myself that the only kind of response of which I was capable, as a writer, was to go back to the written sources of our history. I wanted to study, in great detail this specific period that the fundamentalists were in the process of claiming for themselves, deforming it in the process from the standpoint of facts as well as the standpoint of intent. Médine became this interruption in my own work, a piece written at one sitting, so to speak, in my

> eagerness to enter this particular debate. In short, Médine was conceived as a response to specific circumstances. (122-23)

Rather than sitting on the margin of the dominant discourse of Islamic patriarchy, Djebar decides to answer back by reconstructing the House of the Prophet from a woman's standpoint. Just as the Islamists manipulate the sacred to justify women's seclusion and oppression, Djebar claims this powerful Muslim symbolic for the purpose of empowering Algerian women. Djebar's reinvention of the House of the Prophet through the lens of écriture féminine/French feminist aesthetics--i.e., as body, voice, and movement--is triggered by the condition of Algerian women at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. Claiming an Islamic state, Alî Ben Hadj, the head of the FIS, called for women's veiling and return home. In an article published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 22 of July 1994, he stated:

> Women's natural place for expression... is the home... In a true Islamic society, women are not meant to work and the head of state must allot them a wage. Thus, they will not leave their home but can devote themselves to the great mission of educating men. Woman produces [is a productrix of] men; she does not produce material goods but rather this essential thing that is a Muslim [male]. (qtd. in Zimra, "Not So Far From Médina: Assia Djebar Charts' Islam's 'Insupportable Feminist Revolution'" 827)[20]

a) "She Never Invents: She Recreates": Djebar's Loin de Médine as a Strategic Rereading of Islamic Chronicles[21]

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault states that "the tools that enable the historians to carry out [their] work of analysis are partly inherited and partly of their own making" (3). A historian by training, Djebar's tools in excavating the House of the Prophet are also "partly inherited and partly [her] own." In the Avant-Propos to her novel, Djebar acknowledges her indebtedness to the first Muslim historians--Ibn

Hisham, Ibn Saad, and Tabari--who wrote their chronicles two centuries after Muhammad's death (5). However, she subverts the sets of rules through which the discourses on the House of the Prophet are formed. Rather than looking for coherence, Djebar's archaeology tries to describe "the contradictions" (Foucault *Archaeology* 151) and "the different spaces of dissension" (152) in the accounts of these earlier historians. As she confesses in her interview with Zimra about *Loin de Médine*, Djebar is filling those "blanks" ("'When the Past Answers our Present'" 122) and the "dangerous/subversive" "anecdotes"/fissures in the accounts of these Muslim chroniclers (qtd. in Zimra, "Not So Far From Médina" 825).

In opposition to the principles of continuity and closure in Tabari's originary narrative, Djebar does not provide straightforward answers. In his *Chronicle*, Tabari asserts that fear pushed the Queen of Yemen to marry Aswad, the murderer of her husband. In contrast, Djebar dismisses such easy answers and leaves the question suspended: "Was the Yemenite Queen a submissive victim or a false consenting prey?" (20) Was Firouz, the man who killed Aswad, the Queen's "lover" or simply her "cousin?" (24). To such questions, Djebar provides no answers. As she puts it: "Ambiguity envelops [...] the character of the Yemenite with a lamp. She disappears into oblivion: without honors, without other commentaries... her candle is gone out: silence falls on her" (28).

Djebar relies on the traditional methodology of the hadith only to subvert it. For instance, in Ibn Saad's *Tabaqat*, the hadiths[22] about the House of the Prophet are formed by two parts: first the *isnad* ("the chain of hadith transmitters") and the text of the hadith itself. The only Muslim women he mentions as the direct transmitters of the hadith are

the Mothers of the Believers Aïsha and Um Salamah, who besides their prestigious status as the wives of the Prophet, also came from the Quraish aristocracy. In *Loin de Médine*, Djebar subversively interferes with the "enunciative reordering" (Foucault *Archaeology* 56) of the hadith, by giving the power of transmission/enunciation not only to Muslim women of the upper classes, but also to non-Muslim women like Kerama the Christian or the slaves in Muhammad's household like Aïsha's slave Barira or Muhammad's sister-in law-Sirîn, who also was a slave before becoming the mother of Abdul Rahman, the son of the poet Hassan Ibn Thabit.[23]

In her rereading of Ibn Saad and Ibn Hisham, Djebar appropriates the orality of the hadith--which is the second source of legislation in Islam after the Qur'an/the written word of God--to resurrect the voices of these Muslim women who were silenced by the male Muslim chroniclers. In opposition to Foucault, whose archaeology is not preoccupied with the hidden meaning of discourse,[24] Djebar's archaeology digs up those feminine voices, which have been repressed by Tabari, Ibn Saad, and Ibn Hisham, so as to extract meaning. Among the Muslim women she gives voice to are Um Harem, the maternal aunt of Anas Ibn el Malik (187), the famous hadith transmitter and founder of the Maliki rite (178), and her sister, Malik's mother, who spent most of her life silent (187). In reconstructing Malik's aunt as a *râwiya* ("hadith transmitter"/"story-teller"), Djebar is giving this gendered subaltern an equal status to that of the Muslim hadith scholars Bukhari, Muslim, and Malik. At the same time, in excavating this palimpsest of female voices, Djebar as historian/*râwiya*, is including herself--as the gendered subaltern--in the very construction of the sacred, turning therefore the orality of the hadith into an instrument of self-empowerment.

In *Loin de Médine*, Djebar states that her reading of the old Islamic chronicles triggered in her "the will to engage in *Ijtihad*"(6).[25] Djebar's engagement in the dominant discourse of Islamic orthodoxy and deployment of the sacred is best expressed in the quotation she takes from al Ferdousi's *The Book of Kings*:

> I may not have enough strength to reach the top of the fruit-loaded tree. However, he who sits in the shade of a powerful palmtree will be safe out of harm's way. Maybe I can find a place on a lower branch of this cypress tree, which far away extends its shade. (7)

Even though in the end, Djebar, as the gendered subaltern, can only aspire to occupy the lower branches of power, by sitting under the shade of the sacred as *râwiya* (transmitter) or *mujtahida* ("religious scholar"), she can keep herself/other women safe from the scorching sun of Islamic orthodoxy. It is from this marginal position that Djebar is returning to the House of the Prophet to advance the rights of Muslim women.

In contrast with the sacred persona of Muhammad in the Islamist narrative, Djebar's Muhammad seems a decentered and split subject. Even though he took many wives himself, Muhammad the father forbade his cousin and son-in-law Alî to take a second wife as long as he was married to his daughter Fâtima. These internal conflicts and contradictions not only reveal the "human presence" (210) of Muhammad, but also his love for his favorite daughter. Muhammad's "No" to Alî was uttered during prayer time, from his *minbar*, in the sacred space of the Mosque:

> The sons of Hichem ibn Moghira came to ask my counsel regarding the marriage of their daughter with Alî ibn Abu Talib. I am forbidding it [to them]... I shall not allow this marriage, at least as long as Alî will not have divorced my daughter [prior to it]! Then and only then will he be allowed to wed their daughter!... For my own daughter is a part of myself. Whatsoever distresses her [fait mal, hurts her] distresses me. Whatsoever unsettles her [*bouleverse*, shatters her emotionally] unsettles me.

> O Muslims, I am not forbidding you what God has permitted you! Nor am I permitting what God has forbidden you! No... But should [it happen] that, within the same place/space [i.e., Alî's home], the daughter of God's Messiah find herself side by side with the daughter of God's enemy, this I shall never allow... For I fear that, were this the case, Fâtima should find herself upset [troubled] in her faith. (74)[26]

Explaining why he is forbidding this marriage, Muhammad argues that Fâtima will be troubled in her faith and the daughter of the Prophet cannot live with Juwayriyah, the daughter of Abu Jahl, the enemy of God (71). This public refusal is made by Muhammad the caring father, not the polygamous Prophet. Muhammad's notorious love for his daughter is being deployed here as a criticism of polygamy and as a model of the father-daughter relationship.

In her feminist reinvention of The House of the Prophet, Djebar focuses on the monogamous years in the lives of Muhammad and Alî. Fâtima "was the only wife in the life of her cousin Alî," just like her mother Khadija, "who for twenty-five years was Muhammad's only wife" (57). Whereas the Islamists and the Algerian Family Code of 1984 present polygamy as the symbol of an Islamic authentic identity, Djebar constructs Alî and Fâtima as a "couple" (69).

Djebar strategically uses Muhammad's public outcry that his daughter is "part of [him]" and that "whatsoever upsets her upsets [him]" (74) to rewrite a new script for the father-daughter relationships in present-day Muslim societies. In Arabic, a man who is "without a male descendant" (58) is called *abtar*, i.e., "mutilated." Djebar's recreation of Muhammad's relationship with his daughter constitutes a strategic act of grafting the daughter (the cut off branch/limb) to the father, and thus the feminine (Fâtima) into the sacred (Muhammad).

As a response to the increasing violence against women in Algeria, Djebar creates a Muhammad who is both tolerant and loving towards his daughters. Djebar reminds the Islamists that Muhammad did not kill his daughter Zeineb when she refused to convert out of love for her husband: "His daughter Zeineb did not join Islam for a long time out of love for her husband, [Abu el 'Aç] whom she preferred to her father, who respected this love" (Djebar 61). When her husband was made captive at the Battle of Badr, Zeineb sent as a ransom the pearl necklace she inherited from her mother Khadija. Recognizing his wife's necklace, Muhammad, according to Tabari, "freed Abu el 'Aç, gave him the money and the necklace and asked him to send Zeineb back to him because she is a Muslim" (*Chronique* 3:173). Zeineb went back to her father. Later Abu el 'Aç converted to Islam and got remarried to Zeineb.

In opposition to the status of Aïsha and Fâtima as Mothers of the Believers in Islamic tradition, Djebar emphasizes their status as wives and beloved daughters. Djebar wonders why Fâtima appears in the early Muslim chronicles "only once, she is the mother of Hassan and Hussein" (62). Announcing her break with the cult of maternity so dear to the Muslim male chroniclers, Djebar declares:

> Islam, in its beginning, contented itself with adopting the maternal values found in Mary, the mother of Jesus (who remained chaste till his death). The theme of maternity has been so glorified and celebrated to the fullest in the preceding seven centuries of Christianity that it seems normal, then, to see it retreat. The Women-wives, the inheriting daughters rise, in this dawn of Islam, in a new modernity. (211)

In contrast with the construction of Aïsha in the popular memory of the Maghreb as Muhammad's favorite wife (128), Djebar focuses on her pain "as a child-bride" (275) when Muhammad married Hafça, the daughter of Umar. Also disruptive is Djebar's

reading of Tabari's account of Muhammad's repudiation of his wife Sawda. When her father and two uncles are killed by the Muslim troops, Sawda cries out in pain berating the Meccan captives and asking them why they were not killed like her father and uncles. Muhammad repudiates her when he hears that. But to keep her prestige as the Prophet's wife, she asks him to take her back, stating that in exchange, she will give all her nights to Aïsha (271). Djebar's rereading of Tabari's account of this incident is quite subversive of the institution of polygamy: "More than the status of 'the favorite spouse,' that tradition will later make prevail, it is this status of 'double spouse' that matters at present" (272). After Sawda's repudiation, Aïsha enjoyed for a year the double[27] of the affective and sexual privileges she used to have when she had a co-wife. In contrast with the first Muslim historians who are bent on reporting every detail about Muhammad's young spoilt wife, Djebar focuses on Aïsha's pain every time her husband takes a new wife and on her happiness when for a year she had Muhammad exclusively for herself (271). By focusing on the monogamous moments in Muhammad's lifetime, Djebar unearths and rewrites monogamy into the heart of the Sacred, undermining thus the Islamist narrative where Muhammad's life serves as a model to justify polygamy.

b) Looking Through the Lens of Écriture Feminine: Djebar's Reinvention of the House of the Prophet as Voice, Body, and Movement

In *Loin de Médine*, Djebar reconstructs Fâtima as the "voice of contestation" and Aïsha as the "voice of transmission" and the "parole feminine" (292). On the death of Abu Bakr, Umar rudely orders the women to stop weeping because Muhammad forbade crying over the dead. Aïsha disputes his statement: "Umar Ibn el Khattab is wrong! He did not understand" what Muhammad said. "I testify that Muhammad allows us to weep

over those who leave us." He forbade only screams, fits, and self-mutilations because they "could disturb the dead" (259). Aïsha's testimony is important not just because she is opposing the second Caliph of Islam, but also because she is standing up to defend her right to *ijtihad*, i.e., her right to interpret the hadith. Umar's attempt to stop women from crying is presented by Djebar as one of the first attempts to stifle women's voices. This is why Djebar insists that Muhammad did not "scorn singing, and singers, on the contrary..." (126). According to one of the *râwiyates*, "the Prophet charged his young wife Aïsha to send Zeineb el 'Ançariya" (125-26)--a famous singer from Médina--as a wedding gift to one of his friends among the 'Ançar. Djebar's claim that Muhammad loves singing and singers undermines the Islamist claim that a woman's voice is a *awra* ("nakedness") that has to be concealed through veiling and seclusion.

In the chapters "Voice" and "She Who Said No to Médina," Fâtima is defined as "the well-cherished daughter who said "No." "No," to the people of Médina. "No," all the time. "No," for six months, till she died (67). After Muhammad's death, Fâtima was denied her father's inheritance including her husband's right of succession. Whereas Alî was busy with the funeral, the Medinese appointed Abu Bakr as the first Caliph in Islam. When she protested, Abu Bakr told her that Muhammad once said: "We the Prophets, we do not leave inheritance" (79). Contesting his literal interpretation of the hadith, Fâtima argued that the hadith was about the gift of prophecy not property. To Abu Bakr's literal interpretation, Fâtima opposes many others: "Seek the content of Fâtima because her content is mine" (83); "Fear what angers Fâtima because this will anger me!" (85); and "He who loves Fâtima my daughter loves me" (84). The rejection of Fâtima's

interpretation stands not only for the disinheritance of the Muslim daughter but also for women's exclusion from the field of *ijtihad.* As Djebar puts it:

> Fâtima, the one dispossessed from her rights, the first one at the head of a long and interminable procession of daughters whose disinheritance by fact [as opposed to by law] was often practiced by brothers, uncles, even sons, was attempting to install herself as legitimate in order to hold back Islam's unbearable feminist revolution during the seventh century of the Christian era. (*Loin de Médine* 79)

The ensuing political strife between the descendants of Alî and the clan of Beni Umayya over Muhammad's legacy will lead in the end to the split between Sunni and Shi'i Islam. Whereas in Islamic tradition the cause of this split is the dispossession of Alî and his two sons Hassan and Hussein, Djebar represents the disinheritance of the daughter as the latent or repressed cause for the "Great *Fitna,*" i.e., the split between the Shi'ah and the Sunna. In her rereading of Tabari, Djebar is challenging not only the Abbasid Sunni narrative where inheritance is constructed as patrilineal, but also the Shi'i erasure of the daughters of Fâtima and Alî from Muhammad's legacy. At the same time, Djebar is departing from the Shi'i construction of Aïsha as Mu'awiya's co-conspirator in the "Great *Fitna.*" Hence, Djebar's excavation of the House of the Prophet reveals that the first bloodshed between Muslims was not spilled by Aïsha as some of the Shi'is claim, but by the repression of the feminine.

In her feminist invention of the House of the Prophet, Djebar asserts that in the first years of Islam, there were no restrictions on the movement of Muhammad's wives and daughters. For instance, in the Battle of Uhud, Aïsha was a nurse. Some people could still vouch they saw "Aïsha, her ankle bracelets jingling, go back and forth to attend to the wounded and give them water" (272). Also, in the expedition to Taif,

Muhammad "took with him two of his wives: [Um] Salama and Zeineb" (201). Women's freedom to circulate unveiled was lost after the story of the necklace, in which Aïsha stood accused of having an affair with Safwan ben el Mo'attel.[28] During the expedition against the Beni Mostaliq, Muhammad took with him Aïsha. In the morning as they were leaving, Aïsha remembered that she forgot her seashell necklace where she made her ablutions. She left to look for her necklace without lifting up the curtain of her palanquin. Thinking she was still inside, the caravan left without her. In the wilderness of the desert, she met Safwan ben el Mo'attal who helped her join the caravan (278). Then, the rumors started about her alleged affair with Safwan. Whereas for Mernissi the Medinese Hypocrites attacked the House of the Prophet because of Muhammad's opposition to slave-prostitution (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 131, 180), Djebar constructs this incident as a patriarchal attempt to control and violate the female body through veiling and seclusion. Although God proved Aïsha's innocence and condemned the slanderers in the Sura of Lights (33:59), in the same Sura, Muhammad's wives were ordered to wear the hijab. Commenting on the dire consequences of this incident, Djebar observes: "The ordeal of this long month of doubt; after [this] each woman of the Community of Islam, for fourteen centuries, will have in turn to pay her share: a day, a year, or sometimes the whole of her married life!" (288). Because of this lingering doubt, the body of the "Muslim woman" has to be cloistered. In *Loin de Médine*, even though God spoke in favor of Aïsha, there is still doubt lingering over the reputation of the "Muslim woman." As Sonia Lee puts it, "Not even God's word can bend the law of Médina" ("Daughters of Hagar: Daughters of Muhammad," Kenneth Harrow, *The Marabout and the Muse* 60). In her rereading of the affair of the necklace, Djebar not

only reinscribes cloistering and veiling as signs of *isyan*, i.e., defiance of God's will, but also presents them "as a political technology of the body" (*Discipline and Punish* 30). The imposition of seclusion[29] on Muhammad's wives illustrates not only how patriarchal power relations "invest," and "subjugate" the female body, but also how they turn it "into an object of knowledge" (*Discipline and Punish* 28). This complicity between knowledge and patriarchal power is manifest in the production of the Muslim woman's body as *fitna* ("chaos") and her voice as *awra* ("nakednes"). The doubt that still exists in the "Muslim man's" heart over Aïsha's/"the Muslim woman's purity reveals a more "profound" subjugation than the Muslim woman's corporeal confinement: it is the patriarchal subjugation of the Muslim man's "soul" (*Discipline and Punish* 30). For Djebar, patriarchy is a relation of power that dominates not only women's bodies, but also men's souls. Reversing the Christian and Sufi metaphor where the soul is trapped in the physical body, Djebar shows à la Foucault that it is "the soul [that imprisons] the body" (30).

As a response to Islamic patriarchy's control of the female body, in *Loin de Médine* Djebar strategically rewrites the feminine within the sacred and resexualizes the body of the Mothers of the Believers. Revisiting Tabari's account of the last days of Muhammad's life, Djebar states that it is in the "embrace" (289) of Aïsha that the Prophet has chosen to die. And that it was in Aïsha's bedroom (13) that he was buried. Djebar insists that there were no walls between the Mosque and the headquarters of Muhammad's wives.[30] As a sexualized and female space, Aïsha's bedroom is reconstructed by Djebar as the locus of the sacred. Because he is too weak to clean his own teeth, Aïsha used to chew the *souak* with her own teeth before giving it to him. "'In

that last moment,' said Aïsha proudly in one of her hadiths, 'we exchanged our salivas'" (11). Against Islamic traditional construction of Aïsha as the asexual Mother of the Believers, Djebar focuses on the life of sterility and sexual repression she has been condemned to at the age of nineteen: "She was only nineteen when Muhammad died... Her honorific title [Mother of the Believers] caused her to be devoted to a life of sterility" (43).

The torture of a satirist-poetess unnamed by Tabari at the hands of Muhadjir Ibn Omayya, the executioner, provides another example of how power relations invest the female body. In the Wars of the *Ridda*,[31] a poetess from the tribe of Beni Kinda wrote many satires against the Prophet. As a punishment, Mouhadjir pulled out her teeth and cut off her hands:

> She does not breathe, she doesn't utter one scream. "Why my teeth?" She wonders, her head spinning, about to faint [...] As she falls down, she understands: her voice will whistle, her voice will squeak, her voice won't sing any of the stanzas, which at that very moment, were pressing up in her heart, as warm as the blood she was spitting. (121)

In describing the brutal unvoicing and dismembering of the poetess's hands, Djebar seeks to illustrate Islamic patriarchy's control of the female body through the exercise of brutal force. The predicament of the poetess of Beni Kinda provides a perfect example of what Foucault calls the "political technology of the body" (26), which aims at dominating and subjugating the body, through the brute exercise of power. Djebar's grafting of this poetess's tongue, turns out to be a prophetic reading of Algeria's present, where intellectual women and men are having their throats cut by the FIS and the GIA.

In response to the claim of the FIS leaders that a woman's place is the home, Djebar reconstructs the women of Islam on the road. In the "avant-propos," Djebar states

that she wants to resurrect "women in movement," whether "geographically or symbolically" (5). Djebar's women are either by themselves in the desert, in exile, runaways, in the Mosque, fighting in battles, or wandering in the desert. For instance, Um Salama, the fifth spouse of Muhammad, used to go to the Safa Hill where she would cry over the departure of her first husband Abu Salama, who migrated with Muhammad to Médina (53). Likewise, Muhammad's daughter Ruqayya and two of his wives, Um Habiba and Sawda, exiled themselves to Abyssinia to avoid the persecution of Quraish (215). Running away from her family in Mecca, the fifteen-year old Um Kolthum--the half-sister of Uthman Ibn Affan, the third Caliph in Islam--crossed the desert to join the Muslims in Medina (159).

It was also in the public and sacred space of the Mosque that Fâtima claimed her father's legacy. Addressing the Medinese during prayer time, she defiantly reprimands them for witnessing her disinheritance in silence: "Tell me O Believers, what has delayed you from coming to my rescue? What takes possession of you to the extent that you watch calmly my dispossession?" "Have you forgotten the Prophet when he said that every person is perpetuated in his children?" (82).

Also, in her resurrection of Esma the daughter of Abu Bakr--who is known in Islamic tradition "as the woman with the two belts" because she used to smuggle food to a cave where Muhammad and her father were hiding from Quraish--Djebar mentions that Esma was pregnant and crossing the desert by herself when she was bringing food to the Prophet and Abu Bakr (51). In "'Filles d'Agar,' Dit-Elle," Djebar brings Ishmael's mother back to life. Abandoned by Abraham, Hagar--whose Arabic name *Hajar*[32] means exile--is the first woman in Arabia to be denied the legitimate/sacred line. Looking for water,

the wandering mother goes back and forth between Safa and Merwa. Almost "naked" (302), Hagar is dancing and praying under the watchful "eye of the sun" (303). Her body seems possessed by an "uncontrollable" and frenetic dance (302-03). To appease the "fever" of the "maternal body," Ishmael digs into the sand and the holy water of zem-zem springs forth. In this scene, Djebar is reinscribing the female body into one of the founding myths of Islam and Arab nationalism. After all, it is the movement of the female body that millions of Muslim pilgrims celebrate during al Hajj when they reenact Hagar's wanderings between Safa and Merwa. In this rereading of the story of Hagar, the holy water of zem-zem is rewritten as an amniotic miracle that comes about through Hagar's prayer through her body. This reinscription of the amniotic into the heart of the sacred is also evident in Djebar's presentation of the venerated persona of Aïsha[33] as *ma' al hayat* (the water of life) (264). By including the female body as part of the foundational myths of Islam, Djebar like the mystical poet Ibn Arabi, is emphasizing the feminine dimension of the divine. Thus, in Djebar's novel, female agency is located not only on the level of the symbolic--through her engagement with the patriarchal discourse of Islamic orthodoxy--but also on the transgressive site of the semiotic. The novel ends with a symphony of women's voices and on a note that emphasizes the pre-symbolic relation between mother and child (Hagar and Ishmael) and the redemptive powers of the holy water of zem-zem, which Djebar reconstructs along the lines of what Kristeva calls the "chora."

c) The House of the Prophet and the Question of Female Agency in Loin de Médine and The Satanic Verses

In contrast with the death of the author in Foucault's archaeology, Djebar presents herself as a committed author. In her interview with Zimra, Djebar confesses that her novel is triggered not only by the street riots in Algeria, but also by the Rushdie Affair:

> Hence, I date this unexpected swerve in the level road that was my writing from the fall of 1988. As it so happened, four months after the street riots in my country, what became known as "the Rushdie affair" started. I was in London at the time and much racked by it all. I understood that I no longer had the luxury of choice. Thus *Médine* is, above all, a piece of committed literature with regards to actual events in contemporary Algeria. ("'When the Past Answers Our Present'" 123)

Djebar's statement that her novel is a response to "the Rushdie affair" invites us to compare Djebar's feminist invention of the House of the Prophet with Salman Rushdie's postmodern construction of this Muslim symbolic in *The Satanic Verses.*

One of the central issues that led to the fatwa[34] against Rushdie is his desacrelization of the House of the Prophet. In his postmodern rejection of all monologic discourses, Rushdie undermines the religious authority of this Muslim symbolic by turning it into a brothel. In *The Satanic Verses*, the House of the Prophet is sullied morally and spatially. On the ethical level, the twelve whores working in The Curtain (name of the brothel) have assumed the identities of the twelve wives of the Prophet. Under the prostitutes' insistence, Baal, the pimp-poet, accepts the role of "husband of the wives of the former businessman, Mahound" (383). Spatially, it is as an anti-mosque (383) or anti-Qaaba that Rushdie presents The Curtain:

> So in the Prophet's absence, the men of Jahiliya flocked to The Curtain, which experienced a three hundred per cent increase in business. For obvious reasons it was not politic to form a queue in the street, and so many days a line of men curled around the innermost courtyard of the brothel, rotation about its centrally positioned Fountain of Love much as pilgrims rotated for other reasons around the ancient Black Stone. (381)

In *The Satanic Verses*, the equation between the House of the Prophet (sacred) and The Curtain (profane) has a double function: first to denounce women's seclusion and second to undermine the institution of polygamy. In Arabic the word *hijab* means not only the word "curtain," but also the "veil." In the Qur'an, the Sura of the Veil designates the House of the Prophet as a space that is visually and morally forbidden:[35]

> O ye who Believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. For that would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when ye ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for heir hearts. (Sura 33, Verse 53)

Before dying Muhammad has decreed that none of his wives should marry after him. As a result, the "Mothers of the Believers" became sexually forbidden (*muharramat*). Today, this Sura is often quoted to justify women's seclusion and oppression. According to Mernissi, the wearing of the veil in early Islam was the demarcating line between free women and slaves. It is the hypocrites who pushed Muhammad to accept "a slave-holding solution" (*The Veil and the Male Elite* 178), whereby only free women had to wear the veil and thus be protected; the slaves remained unveiled and subjected to *ta'arrudh* i.e., "sexual abuse." From this perspective, Rushdie's equation between the brothel and the House of the prophet implies that far from being a sign of respectability, the veil stands for the degradation of Muslim women; both the secluded woman and the prostitute are enslaved by patriarchy.

The parallel between the House of the Prophet and The Curtain reveals a parallel between the institution of polygamy in Islam and the practice of polyandry in Jahilia. When he returns to Jahilia, Mahound closes down the brothels and arrests the prostitutes (390) because they are committing what the Qur'an views as *zina* ("fornication"), a sin punishable by flogging if the "culprit" is single, and stoning to death if married. If Islamic tradition constructs Jahilia as pre-culture and dismisses it as a period of moral decadence, it is because women's sexual self-determination was asserted in pre-Islamic Arabia. All those practices in which a woman could choose more than one sexual partner are condemned by orthodox Islam as *zina*. Therefore, in equating polygamy (The House of the Prophet) with polyandry (The Curtain), Rushdie is deconstructing the institution of polygamy by basing it on *zina*.

Whereas in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie creates a dichotomy between a monologic and male-centered Islam and a polyphonic gender-transgressive Jahilia, Djebar creates the feminine and the polyphonic at the heart of the sacred. In resurrecting the daughters of Islam, Djebar is creating a symphony of transgressive female voices inside the house of Islam. Rushdie's novel raises many questions in regard of Muslim women's agency: What are the political consequences of criticizing Islamic patriarchy by deploying the language of blasphemy and by ascribing gender-transgressive agency to the profane (Jahilia)? How can the "Muslim woman" speak in a text that already erases her agency?

While not denying the subversive power of irony, my reading of the history of Islamic feminism makes me question the universalist claim under Bakhtin's[36] assertion that parody is the only effective site of critique. For Muslim activists, Rushdie's

postmodern equation of the House of the Prophet with a brothel as well as his erasure of female agency within an Islamic symbolic order are quite disabling. In locating female agency within the Jahilia period, Rushdie tends to endorse the Islamist narrative where the issue of women's rights is quickly dismissed as either *kufr/jahl*[37] ("un-Islamic"/"ignorance") or an instance of cultural imperialism. For instance, in the year 2000, Saïd Saadi, the Moroccan Secretary of State for Social Affairs, was accused of apostasy because he wanted to reform the *Mudawana* (the Moroccan family/*Shari'a* laws).[38] Because he received some financial aid from the United Nations Development Program to carry out his reforms, the Islamists inside Le Parti de la Justice et du Développement (PJD) launched a campaign throughout the country denouncing his reformist project as a new form of "colonization financed by the Occident and the Zionists" (Benchemsi 36).

It is also from a Western perspective that Rushdie embraces the social and sexual rights of Muslim women. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie traces women's seclusion to the birth of Islam. However, recent research indicates that veiling was apparently not introduced into Arabia by Muhammad, but already existed among the Jewish and Christian populations. As Ahmed has demonstrated in *Women and Gender in Islam*, Islam had brought no radical changes to the existing lifestyles in Arabia. It is Rushdie's position as outsider that makes him see Islamic civilization as disbarred from that pre-Islamic Middle Eastern past. In contrast with Rushdie, who leaves no room for the agency of the Muslim women in his self-Orientalist construction of the House of the Prophet, Djebar reinvents this powerful symbolic from the exclusive standpoint of Muslim women (Zimra, "'When the Past Answers Our Present'" 124).

In his postmodern reading of the Prophet's House, Rushdie creates a scene where a fifteen-year old prostitute tries to turn on the grocer Musa by assuming the identity of Muhammad's young wife Aïsha:

> The fifteen-year old whispered something in the grocer's ear. At once a light began to shine in his eyes. "Tell me everything," he begged. "Your childhood, your favorite toys, Solomon's-horses and the rest, tell me how you played the tambourine and the Prophet came to watch." She told him, and then he asked about her deflowering at the age of twelve, and she told him that, and afterwards he paid double the normal fee, because "it's been the best time of my life." "We'll have to be careful of heart conditions," the Madam said to Baal [the pimp]. (380)

Blotting out the historical context where early marriages were a common practice among Muslims, Jews and Christians alike, Rushdie reconstructs Muhammad's love for his young wife Aïsha as a pedophiliac desire, leaving no chance for Muslim women to empower themselves by claiming Muhammad's legendary love for his wife. In contrast, in *Loin de Médine*, Djebar displays a subversive reading of Aïsha's childhood. The fairy tales that Aïsha used to tell her playmates are turned into a symbol of women's voices (300). Aïsha was also on the swing playing with her friends when her Mother Um Rouman calls her in to dress her up for her betrothal to Muhammad (270). The mother's call for her daughter to go inside--as Arab customs required the brides to do--marks the beginning of Aïsha's seclusion once she has become a wife, later to become the Mother of the Believers. This leads us to examine the dichotomies Djebar creates between spiritual and political Islam on the one hand and Arab culture and Islam on the other hand.

d) Beyond the Ghetto of Cultural Essentialism

Like Mernissi and Ahmed, Djebar creates a strategic dichotomy between political/orthodox Islam and spiritual Islam. Whereas Umar, Khalid Ibn el Walid, and Mouhadjir stand for a political and violent Islam, Muhammad and Abu Bakr represent a more tolerant and humane version of Islam. Upon hearing what happened to the poetess of Beni Kinda, Abu Bakr sends a letter of reprimand to Mouhadjir in which he states: "Neither a Muslim nor an apostate, she could, by the poetic power which is her weapon, choose whomever she wanted to be a victim of her satires" (122-23). It is on the basis of this spiritual Islam that Muslim feminists like Mernissi, Djebar, and Ahmed build their feminist agendas in Morocco, Algerian, and Egypt.

In contrast with her other novels (notably, *Fantasia* and *A Sister to Scheherazade*), in *Loin de Médine*, Djebar presents an essentialized and a homogenous view of Arab culture. Commenting on the consequences of the story of Aïsha's necklace, she observes: "Each woman of the Community of Islam, for fourteen centuries, will have [to pay the price] a day, a year, or sometimes the whole of her married life!" (288). Djebar's "mummification" (Bhabha 78) of Arab culture might stem out of a position of political insurgency against the patriarchal oppression of women in Civil War Algeria, however, by ignoring the heterogeneity of Islamic tradition, and its constant change through time, Djebar not only dehistoricizes Arabic/Islamic culture, but also falls within the ahistorical time of the Islamist/Orientalist narrative. Djebar's ambivalence embodies the "doubled vision" (*Technologies of Gender* 10) of the feminist subject, who, according to de Lauretis, inhabits a space that is inside/outside the dominant ideology.

Djebar's construction of the "Muslim woman" as voice and her presentation of the veil as a fixed negative signifier also recall the logocentric division between

silence/speech in French écriture féminine. Even more problematic are Djebar's views on the Arabic language. In her interview with Zimra, Djebar states that she refuses to translate *Loin de Médine* into Arabic and that she will allow its translation only if she can "work right along with the translators" (127). Because of the religious conventions in Arabic, which put a lot of constraints on the author, she prefers to write in the secular and "neutral mode" of the French language" (129). Comparing Arabic to the status of Latin in Medieval Europe, she writes:

> I am not obliged to give my personal opinions in my writing and that could not be achieved without my using French, by tradition the language of laicity. This is not to imply that Arabic is deficient, of course. But a staid conformism has bogged the language down for the past five or seven centuries. A comparable situation prevailed in Europe, say, when people had to write in Latin, Europe's religious language. *Médine* thus became victory in the field of fiction. (129)

Djebar's statement that conformism has impeded the growth of Arabic displays a colonial or Eurocentric evolutionary understanding of time and culture. In equating the status of Arabic with the status of Latin in Medieval Europe, Djebar places herself into the "panoptical time" of French culture and language and relegates Arabic language and culture into what McClintock calls "an anachronistic" space (*Imperial Leather* 36-7).

Djebar's assertion that Arabic has not grown over the last "five or seven centuries" implies that Arabic as a language and culture is dead (129). This also betrays an implicit view that associates backwardness and religious fanaticism with Arab culture and language. Explaining why she refuses to translate her book into Arabic, she states:

> Non-Arabic people must realize that, wherever or whoever one is, even if one is a communist writer writing a communist piece, as soon as one writes or pronounces the name of the Prophet, one must immediately follow it with the requisite formula, "may the

> blessing of God be with him." Were one to omit the formula, it would immediately signify hostility to Islam. (129)

Two questions surface here: if she refuses to translate her book into Arabic, then how can Djebar, the politically committed writer,[39] reach out for the millions of Algerian women who are either illiterate or speak only Arabic? Secondly, if Arabic is such an oppressive language, does this mean that the "Arab Muslim woman" can speak only in English and French? Djebar's statement that Arabic has not grown for seven centuries would seem to ignore the recent transgressive Arabic literature written by Maghrebian women such as Naluti's *Tamas* (*Borderline*) and Ahlam Mostghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (Algeria).

In separating Islam from Arab culture, feminists like Ahmed, Mernissi, and Djebar, are not simply defending Islam against the Christian West, they are also sending back to the West its recently constructed dichotomy between an oppressive Arab culture and a tolerant and spiritual Islam. In the 1990s, the U.S. politics of cultural liberalism made it politically incorrect to slander Muslims and Islam; Arabic as language and culture, however, remained somewhat suspect. Since the events of 11 September 2001, this binarism, which was initially situated on the left, has been recuperated and deployed by the nationalistic war propaganda to justify the war against Afghanistan: "We are not attacking Islam. Islam is a peaceful religion! We are not after the Afghan people! We are after the members of al Qaeda, those foreign Arab terrorists who have destroyed Afghanistan."

What the excavation of the House of the Prophet reveals is that the script of Islamic domesticity has never been static or monolithic: it gets changed and reinvented for various ideological reasons. The four works examined in this chapter reveal four

different or contradictory scripts of Islamic domesticity. The novels of Rushdie and Djebar in particular reveal two contradictory models of domesticity: Whereas in *The Satanic Verses* the "Muslim woman" is produced as powerless and degraded by Islam, in *Loin de Médine* she is educated, eloquent, powerful, and free.

Focusing on the enunciative sites from which these discourses on the House of the Prophet are made, this chapter reveals that it is the privilege of education and gender that made al Ma'arri reject the House of the Prophet as a technology of power and live isolated from the rest of the world. Similarly, Naluti's emphasis on the class conflict in her reinvention of the House of the Prophet reflects her double marginalization as a left-wing gendered subaltern. In contrast with Rushdie, who erases Muslim women's agency through his reproduction of the universalism underlying Bakhtin's gender-blind theory of parody, Djebar engages in the dominant discourse of Islamic orthodoxy and claims the House of the Prophet for the purpose of advancing women's rights in Algerian society. Eventually, just as the "Muslim woman" has been reinvented for various political reasons, the model of domesticity underlying the House of the Prophet--as an enclosed space and a political economy with direct implications on the lives of Muslim women--has always been an unstable yet powerful signifier.

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[1] All of the quotations from Tabari and Djebar from the French are mine unless otherwise indicated. I am using the conventional English spelling of the Arabic proper names.

[2] Alî Ibn Abi Talib (656-61) is Muhammad's son-in-law and the fourth Caliph in Islam.

[3] For more information see Tabari's *Chronique 5/6*.

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, all the quotations and references in English are from G. Blackenbury's 1943 translation of *The Epistle of Forgiveness*. The Quotations from the *Luzumiat* are all mine.

[5] *Risalat al Ghufran* is believed to have been written in 1032, but there is no unanimous agreement over this matter among Arab critics. The dates for the other works are not known.

[6] The Arabic names are spelled exactly as they were in Brackenbury's 1943 translation.

[7] According to Ahmed, the Abbasid imported the custom of secluding women from Byzantium and Iran. See *Women and Gender in Islam* (55).

[8] He is the son of Alî, son of Hussein, son of Alî, son of Abu Talib killed by the Abbasids. He appears in al Ma'arri's Paradise with his brother Muhammad along the side of their grandfather Hussein.

[9] It is possible that the absence of Hassan is caused by his abdication in the year 41 of the Hijra. After his murder, his children and all the family of Alî went to live in Mecca with Hussein, who came to symbolize what is left of Muhammad's household (Tabari, *Chronique* 5/6: 14, 17).

[10] According to Tabari, Ruqayya married Uthman after she was repudiated by her husband Utba, son of Abu Lahab (Muhammad's uncle), who fought against the new religion his nephew brought to Arabia. Muhammad's other daughter Zeineb was also repudiated by Abul 'As because she was the daughter of Muhammad. However, because he loved her, her husband later converted to Islam, and took back his wife (Tabari, *Chronique* 3: 172-73).

[11] I shall return to the story of the necklace more fully in the section on Djebar. For more information on this alleged affair see Tabari (*Chronique* 3: 237-39).

[12] The word *fitna* also means power of seduction.

[13] Muhammad's other wives are: Sawda (daughter of Zama'a), Aïsha (daughter of Abu Bakr), Hafsa (daughter of Umar), Zeineb (daughter of Khozama), Um Salama (daughter of Abu Umayya, son of Moghira, his cousin.), Zeineb bint Jahsh (divorced by his adoptive son Zaid), Juwayriyah (daughter of 'Harith. From the tribe of Beni Mostaliq), Um Habiba (daughter of Abu Sufyan.), Maimunah (his cousin), Safiyya (a Jewish woman after his expedition to Khaybar). He also took two concubines: Maryam the Copt (she was given to him as a gift by Moqauqas. She became the mother of Ibrahîm) and Rai'hana (a captive from the Beni Quraizha).

[14] See al Bustani (117-18).

[15] In his *Luzumiat*, al Ma'arri's misogyny is undeniable. "Castration," he says, "is better than marriage" (II: 47). To keep at bay women's evil, he advises men to teach them "home spinning, weaving, and let aside writing and reading" (I: 63). However, to present al Ma'arri as the epitome of Abbasid misogyny is a one sided reading of his oeuvre, for there are many passages in the *Luzumiat* and *The Epistle of Forgiveness* where he openly expresses his sympathy towards women. His ambivalent attitude towards women has to do with his pessimistic view towards life and mankind in general. It is "woman" as the symbol of life and procreation that he has issues with. Addressing *al donia* ("life")--which is gendered as female in Arabic--he writes: "Were you my wife I would divorce thee, but you are my mother, how can I escape thee?" (II: 148) This love/hate relationship is also clear in another verse where he describes himself as a dog barking over the rotten corpse of life: "Dogs gathering or barking over a corpse, and perhaps am I the meanest of them all" (I:114).

[16] It is reported that the Fâtimid Caliph al Mustansir bi illah offered him financial assistance, but al Ma'arri refused (al Garradi 39). As the Egyptian scholar Taha Husayn put it: "Glory and benefit were never inaccessible to him, but he resisted their temptation," *Tajdid dhikra Abi al Alâ* 6th ed. (Cairo: Dar al Ma'arif, 1963) 155.

[17] Even though the play was produced for Tunisian school-theater, it has never been published. I am using here a copy of the original script that Aroussia Naluti has written for the play.

[18] Djebar's only book in Arabic.

[19] The civil war broke out between the Algerian government and the Islamist groups because of the failure of the FLN socialist regime, the high unemployment, and the severe economic crisis in the 1980s, all of which led in the end to the victory of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) in the municipal elections in June 1990. The government arrested the FIS leaders Abbas Madani and Ali Ben Hadj. Even though they were freed shortly thereafter, Madani and Ben Hadj were once more sentenced to twelve years in prison in July 1992 because the FIS was about to win the legislative elections. In December 1991, the government cancelled the elections claiming that the FIS was committing electoral fraud. Both the Kabileans and women of Algeria took to the streets because they were afraid that the establishment of an Islamic state would lead to the Arabization of the country and the loss of women's rights. Then the armed conflict between the government and the Islamists broke out. President Chadhli Ben Jedid resigned and was replaced by Muhammad Boudhiaf, a former FLN leader, who despite his political reforms, was assassinated on 29 June 1992. The bloodshed continued till Abdelaziz Bouteflika won the presidential elections in 1999 and negotiated a truce with the FIS. The government will grant total amnesty for the Islamists provided that they surrender and give up their weapons. The FIS leaders, notably its leader Abbas Madani accepted his plan. But the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), an extremist faction which broke away from the FIS, is still continuing the war against the "apostate regime" of Bouteflika.

[20] Zimra's translation.

[21] "She never invents: she recreates." These words originally describe Aïsha's power of transmission in *Loin de Médine* (300).

[22] For more information on the feminist revisions and deployment of the hadith by Mernissi, Djebar and Driss Charaïbi, see George Lang's essay: "Jihad, *Ijtihad*, and Other Dialogical Wars in *La Mère du Printemps*, *Le Harem Politique*, and *Loin de Médine*," in Kenneth Harrow's *The Marabout and the Muse*.

[23] As *um walad* or "mother of child," a Muslim woman who is a slave can no longer be sold according to Islamic law.

[24] For Foucault, "archaeology tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations, that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules [...] [Archaeology] does not seek another, better-hidden discourse. It refuses to be allegorical (*Archaeology* 138-39).

[25] "*Ijtihad*" means intellectual effort in matters of religion. It is usually perceived as a male prerogative by Islamic orthodoxy.

[26] I am using Zimra's translation of this passage in "Not So Far From Medina" (831-32).

[27] In his early days in Medina, Muhammad was married to Aïsha and Sawda only.

[28] Aïsha was accused of having an affair with Safwan ben el Mo'attel, and not Soffyan ben el Mo'attel as Djebar wrote in *Loin de Médine*.

[29] In *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Mernissi claims that it is political Islam--i.e., the strong male opposition to Muhammad's egalitarian project--which led to the imposition of the veil and thus to the failure of spiritual Islam (179).

[30] During Muhammad's lifetime, there was no separation between the apartments of his wives and the Mosque. It was the Umayyad who destroyed the apartments of Muhammad's wives and turned everything into a Mosque. Ibn Saad recounts this hadith: " 'Ata al Khurasani heard 'Umar Ibn Abi Anas say: I saw the apartments of the wives of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, constructed of palm leaf stalks and

on their doors were curtains of black hair (wool). I was present when the epistle of al Walid Ibn 'Abdl al Malik was read containing the order to take the apartments of the wives of the Prophet, may Allah bless him, within the Mosque of the Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him. I never saw (people) [more weeping] than on that day" (*Tabaqat* 1: 593).

[31] In the Islamic master narrative, the Wars of the *Ridda* are those wars waged by the first Caliph Abu Bakr against the Arabian tribes who declared apostasy and rebelled against Islam after Muhammad's death.

[32] The word *hijra* ("immigration or exile") refers also to the Islamic calender which starts with the date of Muhammad's exile from Mecca to Medina.

[33] In Arabic, the verb *yarwi* (present tense) means both to "tell" and to "quench one's thirst." As storyteller or râwiya, Aïsha (whose name means life in Arabic) embodies this duality between transmission/life or telling/birthing.

[34] In February 1989, the Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa or religious decree against the author and publishers of *The Satanic Verses* for blasphemy against Islam.

[35] I am using here Fatima Mernissi's terminology in *The Veil and the Male Elite* (93).

[36] See "Carnival Ambivalence," *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*, ed. Pam Morris (London: Edward Arnold, 1994): 206-07.

[37] In Arabic, both the words *jahl* and *jahilia* signify ignorance. In the Islamic master narrative, the pre-Islamic period called *Jahilia* is constructed as a period of *jahl* ("ignorance") and pre-culture.

[38] Saadi wanted to abolish polygamy and unilateral repudiation, impose divorce courts, and raise marriage age for women from 15 to 18.

[39] Djebar talks about her political commitment in her interview with Zimra ("When the Past Answers our Present" 122-23).

Conclusion

As this dissertation demonstrates, the "Muslim woman" as a fixed category has always been invented and produced to serve various political ends, whether in the discourse of Maghrebian feminism, Female Orientalism, French psychoanalytic feminism, or Tunisian nationalism. In the writings of the two Muslim activists Mernissi and Djebar, the early "Muslim woman" is strategically reinvented as eloquent, free, and independent to show that gender equality rather than being a Western import is at the heart of Islam's egalitarian project. The invention of the "Muslim woman" from this theological framework is important because as Azza Karam puts it: "[Any] feminism that does not justify itself within Islam is bound to be rejected by the rest of society, and is therefore self-defeating" (*Women, Islamists and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt* 11). The second chapter has examined how the "Muslim woman" has been instrumental in defining Eberhardt's European identity as the Other Within. In this sense the Maghreb with its geography and women becomes a technology of space where European identity is projected and negotiated. Chapter three argues that the construction of the veiled "Muslim woman" as silent and voiceless in French psychoanalytic feminism derives not only from the primacy of the specular in Western metaphysics, but also from the same Orientalist impulse which Said discusses in *Orientalism*. In the writings of Bourguiba and al Haddad, the invention of the "Tunisian woman" as the mother of the nation and symbol of the *umma* is part of the Tunisian nationalist project, which, to resist the French politics of assimilation, has claimed an authentic pre-colonial Islamic identity. The last chapter argues that the House of the Prophet has always been deployed as a technology of power. Because it is constantly being claimed by the hegemonic and

marginal groups, the script of domesticity underlying this powerful Muslim symbolic has always been plural and unstable. Whereas in the Islamist narrative Muhammad's wives and daughter are veiled and secluded, they are free and independent in Djebar's feminist reinvention of this sacred Muslim symbolic.

In a nineteenth century American play *Mohammed, The Arabian Prophet: A Tragedy, in Five Acts* (1850),[1] the House of the Prophet is reinvented from a Western patriarchal point of view, even though its author George H. Miles was claiming to tell "the naked history" (v) about Muhammad. Whereas Khadija and Fâtima are constructed after the Victorian model of the angel in the house, Aïsha is presented as a castrating figure because of her excessive sexuality and transgression of women's traditional gender roles. In this American tragedy, the faithful and dutiful wife Khadija dies "victim of excessive love" (43) for her "Lord" and master Muhammad. In contrast with her eloquence and rebellion in the narratives of Tabari and Djebar, the nineteenth century American Fâtima is silent, except in those passages where she expresses her love and loyalty to her husband Alî. When Muhammad asks her to leave her husband whom he wrongly suspects of having an affair with Aïsha, Fâtima refuses to listen to her father: she is a wife first, a daughter second (142).

When Aïsha first appears on the stage, she is introduced through her excessive Oriental sexuality:

> Her brushing cheeks, made fragrant by her breath,
> Excels the Persian rose,--her ruby lips
> Mother unblemished pearls,--upon her brow
> Aspiring scorn divided empire holds
> With soft attraction, and with every motion
> New graces flutter round her buoyant limbs. (89)

As soon as Muhammad sees her, he becomes her slave. Umar, who witnesses the scene says: "She'll govern him!" (90). At the battle of Beder, Fâtima stays at home after bidding farewell to her husband Alî. In contrast with this model of patriarchal womanhood, Aïsha, the "enchantress" (122), is "reveling in blood" (110) and fighting alongside Alî in the male space of the battlefield. Whenever the Muslim fighters forsake "hope" and "[embrace] despair," she would encourage men to go back to battle. In the field of war as well as love, Aïsha's manliness constitutes a threat to Alî's masculinity:

> In the field of Beder, she follows Ali:
> What a pretty sword!
> How clean and bright!--bright as thy glancing
> Eye.
> Ali: Bright!--would it were--
> Ayes. What?--out with it!
> Ali. Red!
> Red as thy coral lips!--Forgive me, lady,
> But I have promised to achieve a name,
> Ere night, or perish; and the day declines,
> And hark!--the contest burns, --whilst I, chained here,
> When every Moslem wields a dripping blade,
> Flourish this gewgaw! (103)

The conflation of the sexual and war imagery in this passage points to Alî's fear of emasculation. Whereas the other men's blades are burning and dripping in blood, Alî feels "chained" and effeminized by Aïsha's flirtatious behavior. As her eyes linger on his sword/phallic weapon, he stops fighting and starts stuttering. Reflecting the nineteenth century patriarchal construction of war as the symbol of masculinity, Alî runs away from Aïsha to make a "name" for himself at the battle of Beder.

In this American tragedy, Muhammad's tragic flaw seems to be his inability to control his home, especially his young wife's sexuality. He dies poisoned by Aïsha and Sufyan. When Alî and Fâtima come to his rescue it is too late, the poison has taken its

effect. Muhammad asks forgiveness from Alî (150) and gives him the Caliphate (152) instead of Umar. As a punishment for Aïsha, Muhammad declares that none of his wives shall be permitted to marry again after his death: "Henceforth my soul must be thy only love" (152). Miles adds a footnote in the end of his play explaining that this "punishment so far as concerned Aïsha, was rather formal than real" (166).

In this American invention of the House of the Prophet, Muhammad's affection for Aïsha--which is being reclaimed today by Muslim feminists to advance women's rights--is dismissed and condemned as lust. When Muhammad asks Aïsha why she betrayed him after he had "showered" her with "the wealth of ransomed cities" (126), she reiterates the Medieval Christian construction of Muhammad as a lascivious false prophet:

> When man discards
> The pearl of chastity, he cannot ask
> His wife to treasure it. Ay, make the earth
> As full of houris as thy Paradise!
> Free all thy slaves, and marry all their wives!
> Indulge thy lust-- (125)[2]

This play reflects not only Medieval Christianity's construction of Muhammad, but more importantly, it betrays the patriarchal anxieties over women's roles in nineteenth century America. In this American tragedy, rather than reflecting a more historically realistic understanding of Muhammad's household, the House of the Prophet--as a domestic space and a political economy--was instrumental in redefining and negotiating gender identity in nineteenth century America.

In a like manner, the shift in Bourguiba's construction of the veil as the symbol of Islamic identity in French colonial Tunisia to his postcolonial construction of a mythical Punic past where women were unveiled shows that cultures rather than being fixed, are

always invented and negotiated in the present. Bourguiba's ability to claim a past and a future for the Tunisian woman suggests that culture rather than being a given, is primarily a relation of power. Similarly, the three fatwas against Rushdie, al Haddad, and Bourguiba's PSC, the public humiliation of al Ma'arri at the literary salon of al Murtadha and his seclusion afterwards for almost half a century show that patriarchy is a relation of power that subjugates and dominates both men and women.

As this dissertation demonstrated, the discourses on the "Muslim woman" are never monolithic: they are different and contradictory at times, depending on the configurations of power involved in the process of enunciation. In contrast with Said's claim that in the imperial field "race takes precedence over both class and gender,"[3] this dissertation has demonstrated that class and gender are as important as race in the construction of the "Muslim woman" in the fields of female Orientalism, nationalism, and feminism. This dissertation also shows that no discourse is situated outside power; power visits even the dominated like Al Ma'arri, Djebar, Eberhardt, and al Haddad.

This examination of the process of enunciation invites a further investigation of the reception of these discourses. Who is reading the books of Djebar, Mernissi, and Rushdie? Why is al Ma'arri almost unknown in the West? Why didn't *Loin de Médine* despite its English translation achieve in the West the notoriety of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* or even Djebar's other novels like *A Sister to Scheherazade* or *Women of Algiers*? Of all the rich Medieval Arabic literature, why is *The Arabian Nights* almost the only Arabian medieval tale taught in American universities?

First, neither an exotic Oriental text like *The Arabian Nights*, an autobiography of an oppressed Muslim woman, nor a tale about Oriental despotism and tyranny, *The*

Epistle of Forgiveness continues to remain absent from all discussions of Arabic culture and literature in the Western academia despite its English translation in 1943.[4] Second, as Said puts it, one way of denying a people their humanity is to deny them literary creativity; hence the scarcity of critical material and courses containing Arabic literary masterpieces in American universities. Suzanne Pinkney Stetkovych's "Intoxication and Immortality: Wine and Associated Imagery in al Ma'arri's Garden" is one of the very few articles written in English about *The Epistle of Forgiveness*. Even though Stetkovych focuses exclusively on al Ma'arri's mingling of Qur'anic and pre-Islamic poetic imagery--with no reference at all to the theme of homosexuality in this Abbassid divine comedy--her article was published in a book called *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature* (1997). This shows--with few exceptions like Najib Mahfuz--that only the "deviant" sexuality and misogyny of the Oriental are marketable; neither her/his literary creativity nor his/her humanity sells.

The popularity of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Djebar's *A Sister to Scheherazade* or *Women of Algiers* cannot be dissociated from the commodification of Islamic otherness in the Western world. The publication of works written by postcolonial writers does not mean that the relations between the "First" and "Third World" have become less hegemonic. This unequal balance of power manifests itself in the choice of books and authors published and studied in Western academia. It is almost as if the only books marketable in the West were those written about Muslim women's oppression, Muslim men's tyranny and Islamic fundamentalism.

It is also this same marketability of the "Muslim woman" that Laura Bush is trying to sell on her 17 November 2001 radio address. Justifying the war under the cloak

of feminism, she states that "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women." Laura Bush's claim that this war is fought on behalf of Muslim women and children raises many questions: Why did the suffering of the "Muslim woman" in Afghanistan become visible only after 11 September 2001? Why is the suffering of women and children in Iraq and Algeria still invisible? To whom is Laura Bush selling her discourse on the oppressed "Muslim woman"?

Perhaps more important than securing the support of the Muslim world in the U.S. war against al Qaeda and the Taliban regime, this so-called noble and feminist war is for the purpose of reassuring American women about the possible loss of their rights in the rise of the Christian right-wing groups to power. The frequently broadcast scene of the monstrous "Muslim man" shooting the veiled and helpless Muslim woman in the head[5] serves as an instrument of ideological manipulation aimed at relieving American women's anxieties over the loss over their sexual rights. This commodification of the Muslim Other is also ideologically instrumental in eliding the class struggle in America and in making everyone believe that they are free and enjoying the blessings of freedom and democracy.

Before September 11, neither the Algerian Civil War, nor the oppression of women in Afghanistan aroused the interest of the American Mass media who were too preoccupied with Bill Clinton's paramours to notice the tragedies unfolding in the rest of the world. In *Time* magazine for instance, there was only one article on Algeria. The article "Drumbeat of Death" shows two gory pictures of a morgue in a village and a murdered young boy lifted from a well, where the Islamists dumped his body after slashing his neck (*Time* October 6, 1997). The article, however, gives only dates with no

analysis of the raging civil war in Algeria. If the voice of the suffering "Muslim woman" in Algeria is still unheard in the U.S. news, it is partly because of indifference and partly because of the billions of dollars the U.S. oil companies Exxon, ARCO, and Bechtel are making in Algeria. As Laura Flanders reports, not one single American life was killed in Algeria. The American gas and oil workers "toil in a virtually autonomous militarized zone in the south, from which most Algerians are barred by military guards" ("Algeria Unexamined-Tens of Thousands Dead and It's Barely News" 6). In 1996, when tens of thousands of Algerian women, children, and intellectuals were slaughtered by the FIS, Graham E. Fuller who was asked by the U.S. army to examine what would happen to Algeria should it fall under the hands of the FIS, wrote:

> The Islamic Salvation Front will almost surely seek to impose a level of Islamic austerity as a way of life--in dress (especially for women), ban of public sale of alcohol, and censorship of films and TV. It will not oppose women in the workplace but may strive to separate them from where readily feasible. It will probably adopt separate-sex educational institutions...
>
> [However, the] adoption of these practices should be of no strategic concern to the West unless gross violations of human rights should take place outside the context of austere Islamic law. (qtd. in Flanders 6-7)

Likewise, when the Taliban came to power in 1996, and at a time when reports were already coming from RAWA (Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan) about the oppressive rules the Taliban imposed on women, the October 14, 1996 issue of *Time* magazine wrote: "For its part the US cares little who governs Afghanistan as long as it is governed and stable--and not led by radical Muslims" (Anthony Spaeth, "A Peace that Terrifies: Tough Islamic Laws Rule in Afghanistan and the U.S., Russian and Pakistan Warily Eye the Fundamentalists" 62). The article raises

many questions: Who is a radical Muslim? Or rather, when does one become a radical Muslim? Why aren't these tough "Islamic laws" in Algeria and Afghanistan alarming to Fuller, Spaeth, and the American government? Both Fuller's statement and Spaeth's article on Afghanistan in *Time* magazine present the violence against women in Algeria and Afghanistan as part of the "austere" Islamic culture. In the name of multiculturalism, we must remain silent and accept these atrocities committed against women. As Bronwyn Winter superbly argues, "the two superficially contradictory" discourses of "Orientalism" and "multiculturalism" are not "as contradictory as they appear: "They are different faces of the same essentializing and dehistoricizing of Muslim culture" ("Fundamental Misunderstandings: Issues in Feminist Approaches to Islamism" 2).

In her address at the United Nations International Women's Day Conference on Women's Rights, May 4, 1999, Hillary Rodham Clinton rejects such cultural relativism and argues that women's oppression cannot be justified under the banner of culture:

> [The oppression of women in Afghanistan] is an example that we must carefully examine because it is being justified in the name of culture and tradition. It is, as the Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, often says, "no longer acceptable to say that the abuse and mistreatment of women is cultural--it should be called what it is: criminal."

In her 26 March 1999 "Women's Rights-Address" in Tunis, Hillary Rodham Clinton also addressed the issue of violence against women in Algeria and Afghanistan. However, these beautiful feminist sentiments were of no political consequences for the women of Algeria and Afghanistan. The First Lady's feminist concern for her oppressed "Muslim sister" has been silenced by Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Politician, who is too enmeshed with Corporate America[6] to take any action to stop the atrocities against women in Algeria and Afghanistan.

In 1998, at the same time the Taliban regime was hosting Bin Laden who had already bombed the American embassies in Kenya and Nairobi, the "American Oil giant UNOCAL was hosting [Taliban] delegates to the U.S. and praising them in Washington" ("Afghanistan's Forgotten Women," *Genders* 2). Even though the Senate passed the Boxer-Brownback Resolution[7] on the treatment of Afghan Women in March 1999, the U.S. government continued to give its blessing to the Taliban regime, first by doing nothing, and second by meeting members of the Taliban government. During the visit of the Taliban official Sayed Rahmatuallah Hashimi to Washington D.C. on 20 March 2001, Afghan women and men as well as members of the American Feminist Majority picketed outside the buildings of the U.S. government with "signs reading, 'Save Afghan Women,' 'Give me Liberty,' 'Stop Gender Apartheid' and 'U.S. Don't Recognize the Taliban'" (Joanne Stato and Karla Mantilla, "Afghan Women Protest Taliban in Washington" 1). According to Stato, one of the possible reasons for the meeting is to stabilize the region "in order to clear the way for a proposed oil pipeline from Central Asia, through Afghanistan, to Pakistan. The pipeline project has been planned by American companies since the mid 1990s" (2).

Because the giant American oil companies[8] were making billions of dollars, and because those who were being slaughtered were not American citizens, the Sunni Taliban regime (the sworn enemies of the Shi'i regime in Teheran) and even a possible FIS government in Algeria, could only be read by Fuller and Spaeth as moderate Islamic regimes, their atrocities justified and hidden under the banner of Islamic culture. Prior to 11 September 2001, the construction of the "Muslim woman" in America was caught between two contradictory imperatives: the discourse of cultural liberal humanism, and

the U.S. imperialist or neocolonial policies, which gave tacit support to fundamentalist Islamic regimes like the Taliban.

To the question "can the Muslim woman speak?" I would like to say yes; however, I have reservations about essentializing and holding Muslim women's voices as the unique sign of their liberation. Perhaps more than their voice or their orgasm--which became the fixation of the American mass media and even Arab feminists like Evelyn Accad--what Muslim women want is access to education and social and economic opportunities for themselves and their families. Perhaps more than Uncle Sam's manna, the "Muslim woman" wants to keep her children alive, safe from the U.S. cluster bombs and the Russian grenades. Rather than dismissing the discourse of human rights as an imperialist or neocolonial mode, I believe in the strategic use of humanism.[9] Even though universalism was and continues to be at the service of imperialism, this concept needs to be critiqued, reevaluated, and deployed as part of a "transnational"[10] or planetary humanism that is based on social, economic, and political justice. Spivak's pessimistic presentation of humanism as "white men saving brown women from brown men"[11] ought to be strategically revised as "humanity saving humanity for and from humanity."

After the September tragedy, many American secular humanists and feminists stood up to condemn the violence against the Arab and Muslim communities in America. All over the country, there were conferences where men and women from all faiths were invited to explain the social, economic, and political reasons behind the September 11 attack. This is important because the big networks still insist that the attacks were triggered by envy, jealousy, Satan, Arab violence and misogyny, insecure masculinity, God's wrath, irrational hatred for America and the Jews--anything but America's share of

responsibility in what happened. Even though it is small, this interest in hearing and understanding the other side reflects a new awareness that whatever happens outside the U.S. national borders will sooner or later come back to haunt America at home. The sophisticated communication technology, the internet, and the rampant infiltration of the giant Multinational capitalist corporations all over the world economies, has turned the world into a beehive where everything is connected and interdependent. We can no longer remain silent over the genocides, epidemics or starvation occurring in other countries, because it is indeed by reaching out across the borders of nation, faith, class, race and sexuality that we define our common humanity.

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[1] The introductory "Advertisement" section of the play mentions that *Mohammed* won one thousand dollars for being the best "tragedy, in five acts" in 1849.

[2] The reference here is to Muhammad's betrothal to Zeineb bint Jahsh, who was divorced by Muhammad's own adopted son and ex-slave Zaid Ibn Haritha. In the Preface to the play, Miles states that he was inspired by Goëthe's and Voltaire's accounts of Muhammad (VI).

[3] Quoted from "Media, Margins and Modernity: Raymond Williams and Edward Said," in the appendix to Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989) 196-97.

[4] According to al Garradi, the first English translation of al Ma'arri's garden was by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, "The Risalatu'l Ghufran by Abu'l 'Alâ al Ma'arri," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1900): 637-721. I was however unable to have access to this first translation. Only Blackenbury's 1943 translation was accessible to me.

[5] See Saira Shahl's film "Inside Afghanistan: Behind the Veil," broadcast only once on CNN before 11 September 2001, and many times afterwards.

[6] It is equally hard to believe Albright's concern for the plight of the Muslim woman after declaring on 12 May 1996 in 60 Minutes that the sanctions against Iraq would be sustained at any price, even the lives of over half a million Iraqi children. The Muslim woman is not just oppressed by her "Monstrous Muslim Husband/Father," but also by Albright's genocidal policies.

[7] Resolution 68 states: "It is the sense of the Senate that the President should instruct the United States Representative to the United Nations to use all appropriate means to prevent the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan from obtaining the seat in the United Nations General Assembly reserved for Afghanistan so long as the human rights violations against women and girls in Afghanistan continue." The resolution also states that the "United Sates should not recognize any government in Afghanistan that is not taking steps to improve the rights of women and girls in that country" (information released by the United States Information Agency in 1999 under the title "Women's Rights: 1848 to the Present").

[8] According to the 28 November 1998 issue of *Genders*, the giant oil company UNOCAL wanted to make a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan that goes through Afghanistan and needed the cooperation of the Taliban to stabilize the region against drug dealers, "Muslim terrorists," and Shi'i Iran. In their 12/21/98 update on the situation in Afghanistan, the editorial staff in *Genders* wrote that "UNOCAL [had] pulled out of the pipeline deal for [the moment], but recently American mineral/mining exploration executives visited the Taliban in Kabul looking for deals ("Afghanistan's Forgotten Women" 3).

[9] I am indebted in my discussion of humanism to Robbins's "Race, Gender, Class, Postcolonialism: Toward a New Humanistic Paradigm?" and Anthony C. Allessandrini's "Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said," *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwarz & Sangeeta Ray (Malden: Blackwell, 2000).

[10] I am referring to Anthony Kwame Appiah's notion of "transnational" or "ethical" humanism in "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. P. Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996) and *In My Father's House* (New York: Methuen, 1992).

[11] "Can the Subaltern Speak," Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* (93).

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