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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8d1587h9>

Journal

Paroles gelées, 16(2)

ISSN

1094-7264

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Publication Date

1998

DOI

10.5070/PG7162003091

Peer reviewed

Naming *la Guerre sans nom*: Memory, Nation and Identity in French Representations of the Algerian War, 1963-1992

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Introduction: History, Memory and the Nation

Historian Jean-Pierre Rioux proclaims that

De mémoire nationale française du conflit algérien, il n'y en eut pas depuis 1962; jamais ne furent rendus à cette guerre sans nom les honneurs de la mémoire. On pardonnera la brutalité de ces affirmations, qui peuvent choquer tel membre de tel groupe qui entretient avec ferveur son souvenir propre de la tragédie. Mais l'évidence est massive, à répétition, et des lors, indiscutable: dans la mémoire métropolitaine, cette guerre fut à la fois 'un fantôme,' un tabou... (Rioux 499)

Inherent in this assertion that there is no French national memory of the Algerian War even though the individual groups that comprise France may hold their own memories of the event is Rioux's proposal that such a thing as metropolitan France exists. The "metropolitan memory" in which the war is taboo does not include the memories of "certain groups" whose own recollections do not fit into the metropole's vision. Thus those who participate in the naming of the war as "la guerre sans nom," subscribing to the French national representation of the war, are properly French, whereas the marginalized groups with their own stories are not. Rioux's statement that a collective memory of the war exists (along with the absences associated with it that represent group memories, silenced by the national memory) implies that France is a country still united by a common historical experience and memory, even though segments of its citizenry lived that experience in very different ways. The nineteenth-century French historian Ernest Renan also considered the issue of memory:

L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L'investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui se sont passés à l'origine de toutes les formations politiques . . . L'unité se fait toujours brutalement. (Renan 891)

So, rewritten in Rioux's words, investigating, representing, and remembering the Algerian War would be detrimental to maintaining a "mémoire métropolitaine." The "events" in Algeria, resulting in the origin of two new

political formations, a France sans empire and an independent Algeria, were certainly violent.¹ Yet in this case, brutality brought not unity, but a terrible rupture. In forgetting, or seeming to forget the war, French hegemonic powers (the government ministries responsible for museums and memorials and schools in particular) are able to preserve a semblance of national unity. But from the very beginning of the post-war period, with the “return” of *pied noir* families to France, and throughout years of immigration from Algeria, the war memories of these disparate groups have been far from forgotten. Their representations of the war are problematic, for they compromise the idea of France as a unified nation. Rioux is sure that it is quite logical for metropolitan France to lack a coherent national memory or commemoration of the events in Algeria. But is it any more reasonable to insist on the existence of a collective memory of France’s previous wars? In creating or identifying a national memory of a war (or any other central historical event) the creators and participants in this memorializing process are also engaging in the creation of the nation itself by using the war as a means to define what it means to be a member of the nation. In briefly examining these “national memories” of the two World Wars, it should become clear that the representations of the events center upon establishing France as a nation with certain core values. In the case of the Algerian war, the lack of such a culture would suggest that the guardians of French culture, be they textbook authors or museum curators, did not deem it appropriate to defining France’s character or status as a nation. The individual group memories to which Rioux refers in his above statement effectively tear at the fabric of the *tricolore* and all it is meant to represent.

Pierre Nora, in his influential *Les lieux de mémoire*, discusses the difference between history and memory. This clarification is helpful in attempting to establish what exactly is present or absent in France from 1962 onwards in relation to the Algerian war. If we accept his definition, which follows, what seems to be absent in French national discourse is not a memory (or memories) of the war but a history, or coherent narrative, of the events in question. Taking Nora’s analysis farther, this absent history, if it did exist, would in some ways function as a meta-narrative, or as the commemorative culture that is said to have existed after each of the world wars and which was instrumental in defining the French nation.

Memory, according to Nora’s definition, is “par nature, multiple et démultipliée, collective, plurielle, et individualisée.” History, on the other hand, “appartient à tous et à personne, ce qui lui donne vocation à l’universel” (Nora xix). For Nora, history and memory are not only quite different beasts,

they are also engaged in a power struggle over the past. History, "se découvrant victime de la mémoire [fait] effort pour s'en délivrer." History's raison-d'être is to critique memory, its avowed enemy; "la mission vraie [de l'histoire] est de détruire [la mémoire] et de la refouler. L'histoire est délégitimisation du passé vécu . . . [elle n'est] pas l'exaltation de ce qui s'est véritablement passé, mais sa néantisation" (Nora xx).

Thus when Rioux claims absence of memory, when he describes what seems to be missing from official French discourse, he is actually talking about an entirely different thing, a lack of a national history of the Algerian War. What exists in France, from 1963 to 1992 (the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Evian Accords, which ended the Algerian War), is a collection of memories that historians have sought to delegitimize, relying rather on military or political analyses of the war that do not necessitate the interrogation of France as a nation. *Pieds noirs*, French veterans and *harkis* (Algerians who fought for the French army during the war), anti-war activists, and French citizens of Maghrebian descent who arrived in France before and after the war, are some of the groups that "fervently maintain" their memories of the war, not to mention the different memories experienced by men and women, and members of different social classes. These memories are maintained through autobiographies, films, novels, yearly celebrations and reunions of *pied noir* or veterans' organizations, and oral histories.² These sets of representations of lived pasts have not coalesced into a "national" memory; there is no official commemorative culture surrounding *la guerre d'Algérie*, nor is there an accepted, government-sponsored version of the war.³ However, this begs the question of why there is such resistance to writing histories or creating commemorative cultures which would enlarge the frameworks that define the boundaries of Frenchness.

Like other wars, the Algerian War has served the guardians of French culture as a tool for identifying what is and is not French. The insistence on a lack of discourse about the war and the devaluation of memories which do exist have begun to give way towards official inclusionary gestures introducing new paradigms of Frenchness, such as a 1992 museum exhibit about the war. But the exhibit is a brilliant representation of history which conceals "France" as subject, a phenomenon explained by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "[a]lthough the history of Europe as subject is narrativized by the law, political economy and ideology of the West, this concealed subject pretends it has 'no geo-political determinations'" (Spivak 271-72). The government-sponsored paradigms of Frenchness constructed as a response to the Algerian War are still based firmly in a hegemonic conception of the

nation, one which incorporates its diverse citizens into a new but still rigidly defined community that reproduces and re-authorizes the center-periphery relationship of the colonial period.

I: Imagining France after World Wars I and II, or Constructing a Nation

Collective cultures and national memories which surround wars exist because someone creates them, and they represent a selection from among the memories of an event and an erasing of those not valued in the commemorator's context. In the cases of the two World Wars, there are lovingly constructed national images and fictions to be found in "official" French discourse, that which is propagated by museums, school curricula, memorial commemorations, and statues. *La Grande Guerre*, the first World War, "malgré toutes ses horreurs, est trop belle, trop consensuelle, trop glorieuse. Elle évoque certes avant tout le deuil, le sacrifice des poilus,⁴ mais elle rappelle aussi la victoire incontestable d'une nation en armes, unie pour défendre le sol de la patrie, elle fait revivre les derniers jours d'une splendeur passée" (Frank 604). Although we might question many of the assertions about the first World War made in this statement, it is nevertheless this representation of the war that continues to serve in official capacity; certainly the "splendid past" of pre-World War I France was not quite so splendid for all sectors of French society.⁵

As Daniel Sherman suggests, during

the interwar period in France the urgency of injunctions to remember the experience of the Great War produced what amounted to an entire culture of commemoration. Just as experience itself is far from an unproblematic concept, commemoration privileges certain kinds of experience and excludes others: it deploys and organizes not only memory but forgetting. ("Monuments" 84)

Sherman views the culture that grew up around WW II as being primarily concerned with preserving the masculine cast of the French nation; thus the role of women during the war was recorded as that of passive supporters and their entry into male domains was effectively erased from the official memory of the war. In lived experience, Sherman explains, the war meant an entry for women into the workplace which had been closed to them before, while for men, the war signified separation from home and comfort. When injured veterans returned to civilian life to find newly independent women, they felt emasculated (*ibid.*). It is clear, in part from the opening of two museums celebrating the version of WW I as recorded by Frank in the

last thirty years, that this image of *la Grande Guerre* continues to be cultivated (Sherman "Objects" 50-52). The image of France as a united and patriotic nation is the one that is inscribed for posterity even though that requires the forgetting of the lived experience and memories of, for example, women. The Second World War provides an even more complicated study of remembering and forgetting in creating a commemorative culture.

Representations of the Second World War have gone through several metamorphoses since its end in 1945, but each wave has been concerned with images of France as a nation. The Gaullist version of World War II was one in which every French man, woman, and child was a courageous resistance fighter who fought against the Nazis to protect Free France. The *mode rétro* of the 1970s, however, consisted of a "wave of nostalgia for the 1940s and the Occupation." Michel Foucault and others accused adherents of the *mode rétro* idea of history of trying to bring about "a sinister rewriting of history . . . to undermine the image of heroic and widespread resistance against Nazism, an image nurtured by the recently defeated Gaullists." They also saw it as "the bourgeoisie's effort to rid itself and the nation of a heroic image of resistance with which it felt uncomfortable and that failed to coincide with its own role during the Occupation" (Golsan 139-41). The difference, of course, is that the Gaullist image of Free French parachutists is the one embraced by Gaullist textbooks, politicians' speeches, and memorial statues, such as the one I saw near the bunker associated with the Battle of the Atlantic (in Carnaret, Brittany) which, like many others, consists of a huge granite Croix de Lorraine,⁶ an image of Marianne (the female visual representation of France), and an inscription honoring the dead who fought for La France Libre (Free France). The *mode rétro*, on the other hand, was propagated by the anti-Gaullist bourgeoisie (in Foucault's eyes) and was accepted as a valid representation of France's wartime experience by political opponents of de Gaulle. The Second World War introduces another set of problems for those considering commemorative cultures of wars as compared to their memories: cultures and representations are always intrinsically tied to the current political bent of the government, and do not necessarily have anything to do with the lived experiences and memories of those who participated in the war. In each of these collective representations of the war, one set of memories was privileged above another set, and the opposing images and representations are visible only when the more recent layers of memory are peeled back.

French historian Henry Rousso has labeled the intersection of history and memory of the Second World War "the Vichy syndrome": the pattern of mourning, repression, explosion of discourse, and obsession that dominates

French memory since the end of the war. Many French intellectuals consider the Algerian war to be closely related to WW II in terms of the discourse produced about it and the problems of representing the French nation, problems that do not seem quite so glaring in the case of WW I.⁷ Historian Isabelle Lambert writes that “On a l’impression que, vingt ans après, la guerre d’Algérie n’est exprimable que par comparaison avec la Seconde Guerre mondiale . . . Le parallèle entre maquisards français et maquisards algériens est facilement fait” (Lambert 557).⁸ Rousso makes this connection explicit when he writes that:

It is no accident that these events were all associated with times of deep crisis for France’s national unity and identity. These are the times that have left the most lasting, most controversial, and most vivid memories—all the more so in that each new crisis has fed upon its predecessors: the Dreyfus Affair on the French Revolution, Vichy on the Dreyfus Affair, the Algerian War on Vichy, and so on. Memories of the past have themselves become components of the crisis . . . (Rousso 34)

Yet, as Frank writes, “[m]ême si dans les souvenirs de 1939-1945 le chagrin et la pitié l’emportent sur la gloire, il reste des événements et des héros à célébrer . . . Mais de la guerre d’Algérie que reste-t-il, sinon des morts, faciles à honorer mais presque impossibles à commémorer?” (Frank 605).

II: Lacunae: Interrogating the “Absence” of Discourse about the Algerian War

What, indeed, is left? French historians are hard-pressed to find reasons for the French to commemorate and discuss the Algerian War, but they are quite capable of explaining why it is not discussed. These accounts for an absence of discourse are based either in the specific nature of the war which does not lend itself to discussion, or to the political circumstances of post-1962 France which did not encourage commemorations of the events in Algeria. The most obvious reason for discomfort in talking about the war is related to WW II:

L’image du S.S. de la Seconde Guerre mondiale vient se superposer, consciemment ou non, avec celle du soldat français . . . ces analogies sont nombreuses. Elles sont incontestablement l’une des causes de l’amnésie collective et volontaire qui entoure la guerre d’Algérie. (Lambert 557)

Lambert also suggests that the viewing of the war as a civil war has contributed to the lack of discourse: "Ce n'est pas tant dans la guerre franco-algérienne qu'il faut rechercher les causes du silence . . . mais plutôt dans la guerre franco-française qui oppose les partisans de l'Algérie française à la France" (559). Related to this issue of a civil war is the fact that the war was never declared, and was referred to variously as a peace-keeping mission, an insurrection, or simply "events" (Stora 13-14). Rioux proposes that the Algerian War does not have a national memory surrounding it because "la France . . . n'a jamais fait de la colonisation un projet collectif à large surface sociale, idéologique et morale" (Rioux 500). He adds a concern of a more physical nature when he points out that the war, unlike WW II, did not take place in France, but in another country: "Comment . . . ne pas constater que, pour la masse des Français du métropole, cette guerre n'a ni investi ni circonscrit de lieux auxquels on puisse . . . commémorer et construire quelque effet de mémoire?" (Rioux 501). In enumerating reasons for the *lack* of a collective memory of the war, none of the historians who offer them ever interrogates the category of national or collective memory itself. Nor do they historicize notions of "French national character," such as opposition to torture. Their explanations for the silences are also problematic; the lack of an official declaration of war did not seem to create any confusion over its goal; the war's opponents and proponents both saw it as a struggle to maintain French imperial territory. Rioux uses the Mediterranean effectively to separate metropolitan France and Algeria. His definition of a sense of national territory ignores *pied-noir* and Algerian families. These women and men who would arrive by boatloads in 1962 had certainly experienced the war physically as well as politically; the absence of the war's physical presence in their new territory does not seem as though it would hinder them from talking about it. Secondly, this argument ignores the fact that the war did take place on French soil; that Paris' own streets were as bloody as battlefields across the Mediterranean in 1961 during a massacre of Algerian immigrants peacefully demonstrating in support of the F.L.N., and that southwestern France housed several prison camps for Algerian revolutionaries.⁹

These explanations for the lack of discourse on the Algerian war are not satisfying, but the most difficult to accept is Rioux's statement that Algeria is not discussed because it simply did not matter, or perhaps did not even exist, for metropolitan France. Before examining how integral Algeria was to France's idea of nation by looking at schoolbooks, the colonial exhibits in Paris of the early twentieth century, and other sources to determine how Algeria was represented in "French national memory" before the war, one must first acknowledge that such a statement was written after the

loss of the war, after Algeria's independence, when it would have been much easier to suggest that colonialism was never extremely important to France. There is a difference between looking at what textbooks, politicians' speeches, and posters said vis à vis Algeria's importance for French citizens and what French citizens actually thought about Algeria and the colonial project. But even if one cannot gauge the relative importance of Algeria in the imagination of the French masses, the emphasis placed on colonial projects by the government leaves no doubt that Algeria was indeed important to the ruling elite in France, if to no one else. The government, however, was not to produce official discourse about the war after its loss, while writers, artists, and filmmakers were left to represent the different ways the war affected them (and the many different viewpoints of class, political orientation and consciousness, gender, and other factors led to many different views of the colony).¹⁰

Algeria was, technically, a part of France in the same way as the Savoie: Algeria was divided into three *départements*, which was the unit of territory used to divide metropolitan France administratively. Thus Algeria's independence "would . . . profoundly damage the integrity of the nation itself" in an official sense at the least (Loughlin 153).¹¹ As Elizabeth Ezra points out in an article describing the Miss France D'Outre-mer contest of 1937, in which the competitors were "nées de l'alliance d'un Français avec une Indigène de nos colonies," the interwar French government was extremely concerned with the country's declining birthrate (which was seen as leaving France vulnerable to Germany) (Ezra 50). The contest, whose official name was Concours du Meilleur Mariage Colonial, was designed to encourage Frenchmen to marry suitable indigenous women to raise the birthrate through "l'amalgame de ces races prolifiques avec la nôtre" (Ezra 52). As Ezra points out, this "was not the first time that France had appealed to its colonial empire for a solution to its manpower problem: the use of colonial subjects . . . as cannon fodder in World War I has been well documented" (Ibid.). The year 1930, of course, was also the centennial of Algeria's status as a French colony, which was celebrated with great fanfare (Ageron 561, Guilhaume 187). Colonialism, especially the French presence in the Maghreb, created a situation where populations shifted back and forth between metropole and colony; Algerian men often emigrated to France to work in factories, and brought their families along after a few years. The population of Algerians in France grew from 22,000 in 1946 to 805,000 in 1992 (Hargreaves 12-15). Like France's other territories, Algeria provided important material benefits to residents of metropolitan France—whether or not they were aware of it. Posters at the Exposition Coloniale of 1931

exhorted the French to understand the intrinsic link between France and its colonies; one reads: "FRANÇAIS, tes colonies t'achètent, chaque année, des produits valant 14,000,000,000 frs. et mettent à votre disposition en matières premières 8,000,000,000 frs" (Ageron 582).¹²

Algeria was also essential for less material reasons. As official discourse in the form of textbooks and colonial exhibitions makes clear, colonialism was an essential part of France's moral development. A 1933 geography textbook for first year high school students explains, "L'expansion coloniale de la France lui était impérieusement commandée pour des raisons géographiques, politiques, sociales, économiques et morales" (Fallex and Gibert 447). Among these moral reasons cited are the need for men to escape the suffocation of old European states and the fact that it is the role of "civilisations dites supérieures d'élever jusqu'à elles les peuples inférieures" (Fallex and Gibert 451).

Stora injects another element into the discussion of the memory of the Algerian war when he traces the twists and turns French political and economic life took after 1962; representations of the war were always related to the changing fortunes of France's leaders. He writes that the "wind of modernity" blew out the "last glimmers" of the war, that "lorsque le soldat français rentre des Aurès ou de Kabylie et la famille '*pied noir*' d'Oran débarque à Marseille, ils découvrent une société française lancée à grande vitesse dans le changement" (Stora 211). Structural changes in agriculture ended the existence of a French peasantry and the population in cities exploded (Stora 212). In addition, the war also marked Charles de Gaulle's return to power, and the Gaullist program emphasized the "unified character" of the French nation. During the 1960s and 70s, forty-three military museums opened their doors all over the country; they were dedicated to WW I, the D-Day invasion, and WW II's Resistance movement (Stora 221). De Gaulle, because of his own Resistance experience, relied heavily on the imagery of WW II during and after the Algerian War and thus silenced representations of the more recent conflict (Stora 222). Propaganda posters from 1954 to 1962 reflect the Gaullist tendency to emphasize the past and the personal achievements of de Gaulle; one announcing his tour of France's overseas territories in August 1956 proclaims:

De Gaulle arrive! **Le Général de Gaulle l'Homme qui sauva la France de la défaite et du déshonneur, De Gaulle, le Chef de la RESISTANCE et le Libérateur de la PATRIE, arrivera . . . venez en grand nombre, sans considération de race ni de parti venez témoigner votre Reconnaissance à celui qui nous sauva de l'esclavage Allemand.** (Lefranc and Guichard 19)

Later posters often echo the same images from the 1940s, but those surrounding the student revolts of 1968 reflect what can be read as representations of the Algerian War: both are in lurid red and black, and both are supporting de Gaulle in the June 1968 elections. One shows a barricade, a burning car, and waving flags and reads “PAS ÇA! Mais la réforme avec de Gaulle,” while the other shows a bust of Marianne on a pedestal, as a black hand drops a bomb underneath it. “Ne vous endormez pas!” the poster screams, “La république est toujours en danger” (Lefranc and Guichard 32).¹³ Those who participated in the 1968 revolts used the slogan “CRS-SS” (the CRS is the French security police) which evoked for them memories of Algeria; but which others saw as an excessive comparison with the actual SS and the events of WW II (Stora 224). In the 1980s, the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National gave rise to another series of representations of the Algerian War, this time much more directly. In a 1987 speech addressed to “jeunes beurs” (young second-generation Maghrebians), he remarked, as the audience shouted “Algérie française” and “F.L.N. terroriste”:

Si vous prétendez vivre dans vos lois, vos moeurs à vous, avec votre culture, alors il vaut mieux que vous rentriez chez vous, sans cela tout se terminera très mal . . . Je voudrais dire à un certain nombre de beurs arrogants que certains des leurs sont morts pour leur donner une patrie, et non pas pour qu’ils viennent dans la nôtre. (Stora 289-90)

For the extreme right in the 1980s the war was an event that served to fundamentally divide French and Arab, Algeria and France. The war, for Le Pen, should have stopped immigration into France and preserved “French” culture. One sees that political life and events in France have continued to influence the layering of official, or political, representations of the Algerian War.¹⁴

III: Representing the Algerian War from the “Margins,” Unofficially

The infinite number of representations of the Algerian War are the products of both the “certain groups” who produce them as well as members of “metropolitan,” that is, “mainstream,” society. Among the sectors of French society remembering and representing the war are French veterans and former anti-war activists or opponents of the war,¹⁵ the “rapatriés”—*harkis* and *pieds noirs*—as well as Algerian immigrants to France. Over two million soldiers were sent to fight in Algeria from 1954 to 1962; in 1988 the association for veterans of the war (the FNACA) listed 310,000 members, which included soldiers who had fought in Morocco and Tunisia (Stora 7, Rouyard

545). There were 70,000 *harki* troops during the war, 50,000 of these were sent to France in 1962. A 1989 survey places the current *harki* community (the original *harkis* and their French-born descendants) at 450,000 (De Wenden 191-93).¹⁶ As for the *pied noir* population, 930,000 people were “repatriated” from Algeria in 1962 (Stora 256).¹⁷ The statistics on Algerian immigrants to France have been given above. All three of these populations faced hostility upon arriving in France. Algerian immigrants faced and continue to face racism in their movement to the metropole; soldiers were seen as torturers, and saw themselves as having been “des chiffres insignifiants dans l'énoncé truqué d'un problème sans solution” (Stora 220). *Harkis* were similarly rejected, as André Wormser, an administrator in the repatriating of the *harkis*, writes. “L'ensemble de nos compatriotes, l'ensemble de la population métropolitaine, a considéré . . . tous ces harkis comme étant des traîtres” (Stora 207).¹⁸ *Pied noir* families were greeted upon disembarkment by disgruntled bureaucrats forced to return from vacation to process their papers and by metropolitan French who called them “petits blancs,” “artisans de leur propre malheur,” and “blousons noirs” (Hureau 287-88). Each of these populations, as well as the different sectors of metropolitan society who spent the war within the hexagon's boundaries, carries its own set of representations of the war.

The voices of soldiers, *pieds noirs*, women, and immigrants are those heard most often in the literature and films about the Algerian War. The works examined in this paper range in date from 1963 to 1992, though they are concentrated in the 1980s.¹⁹ They are not always the products of members of the group whose experience they seek to represent, but in that respect they reflect the extent to which those who are not members of Rioux's marginal groups have access to a system of representations to describe the experiences of a soldier, a *harki*, and others. The texts have little in common save their reference to the Algerian War; some are set during or immediately following the war itself regardless of when they were written, others are set in the 1980s and discuss the war in retrospect. Occasionally, the works address (often implicitly) the issue of silence surrounding the war; in doing so they respond to the reasons produced by historians to explain the lack of discourse about it. These films and books often represent the war in ways official discourse could not, and push at the boundaries of “Frenchness.” These texts are valuable not only because they produce sound where there is said to be silence, but also because they testify to the existence of memories of the Algerian War that challenge the notion that there can be one “national” experience of history. Some works go so far as to implicitly chal-

lunge the primacy of the nation itself; they do not locate the nation at the center of the narrative, as the official cultures surrounding the two World Wars invariably do.

The issue of discourse and silence, and the reasons for each, is most explicitly addressed in works that focus on the experiences of soldiers, such as *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*, Alain Resnais's 1963 film, *Quel petit vélo à guidon chromé au fond de la cour?*, Georges Perec's 1966 novel, Guy Vidal and Alain Bignon's 1982 comic book *Une éducation algérienne*, and Mehdi Charef's 1989 novel *Le harki de Meriem*.²⁰ *Quel petit vélo*, while the second work in chronological order, focuses on the earliest stage of being a soldier: conscription in France. In a deeply ironic critique of the military's discourse about the army and the Algerian war, Perec, with a manic gift for untranslatable word-play, tells the story of Karatruc (literally, Kara-thing; Perec continually changes the second half of his character's name) and his attempts to evade being sent to Algeria.²¹ Karatruc announces one day to Henri Pollak (another foreign name!), a friend who serves as a marshal in the army, that

le Haut, le Très Haut (béné soit-il) Commandement aurait décidé, l'on ne sait avec précision si c'est sur le coup d'une implosion subite ou après mainte et mûres réflexions, aurait décidé donc, le Haut Commandement, de confier à M le Capitaine Commandant . . . l'exténuante tâche de préparer la liste de ceux-là d'entre nous qui, à la prochaine occasion, iront nourrir de leur sang ces nobles collines d'Afrique dont notre histoire glorieuse a fait des terres françaises. Il ne serait pas impossible, il serait même probable que le nom que ma famille porte avec honneur et dignité depuis cinq générations, et qu'elle m'a livré sans tache, figurât sur cette liste. (Perec 20)

The god-like army clearly has no interest in the lives of the men it sends to Algeria, according to Perec, nor does it respect the multicultural nature of its population sent to defend "French lands": the name Karatruc wears so proudly is ridiculed throughout the book. His friends, nevertheless, resolve to help him fake an injury which will keep him from being sent off at least for a while, during which time "peut-être que les Algériens, ils finiraient bien par la gagner leur sale guerre et que le cessez-le-feu il sera conclu et que la paix elle est signée" (Perec 70). Although the "dirty war" is described as belonging to the Algerians, the young men in this book see an Algerian victory as inevitable and do not subscribe to the military's doctrine that "la France et Dieu comptaient sur eux . . . et qu'ils tenaient bien haut le flambeau sacré de la civilisation occidentale en péril (jaune)" (Perec 35). In the end, the plan fails, and Karatruc is indeed sent off to Algeria rather than being allowed to stay in Paris. His friends, remaining at home, mourn his fate: "nous pensâmes à la guerre, là-bas, sous le soleil: le sable, les pierres et

les ruines, les froids réveils sous la tente, les marches forcées, les batailles à dix contre un, la guerre, quoi. C'est pas joli joli la guerre, ça non" (Perec 94). For them, the discourse of colonial pride foisted on them by the military is meaningless; these young men know the truth about the war.

Albert, the protagonist of Vidal and Bignon's comic book *Une éducation algérienne*, knows too. Although neither the text nor the illustrations are particularly well done, this 1982 work still creates a representation of a young soldier's life that echoes the testimonies of veterans in a popular format more likely to be consumed by the public than the gymnastic writing of Perec. Vidal and Bignon's depiction of military life leaves little to the imagination: they recreate a brochure given to soldiers in the 1960s called "Un ancien te parle," which assures the new soldiers that they'll soon find friends, that they will become men whom women will adore, that their health and spirits will improve, and that they are doing their duty, unlike the intellectuals. Then the authors set about showing what military life was really like. The men spend all day grumbling about what they will do after the war is over, bemoaning their lack of sexual contact ("Toute l'Algérie française pour un seul cul!") or turning to each other for sex (to the chagrin of Albert, who is aroused by dancing with "ce pédé de Jean-Claude") (Vidal and Bignon 9-11). The soldiers spend their nights listening to the screams of Algerians being tortured, which prompts Albert to curse himself for not having deserted (Vidal and Bignon 12). When he questions his commander about the use of torture as a military technique, he is told "Ne faites pas trop de reproches à l'armée. Si nous avons vraiment voulu nous transformer en S.S., nous pouvions le faire" (Vidal and Bignon 12). At the end of the book, after eight of his fellow soldiers are killed by friendly fire, Albert is jailed for insubordination (he refers to Indochina and Algeria as big wastes) and eventually returns to France physically unharmed. This text speaks to many of the reasons given for the lack of discourse about the war, or, more specifically, about the role of the French army. It shows the soldiers wondering why they are defending rich *pieds noirs* and a land they don't care to dominate, why their army practices torture, and why their comrades are killed by their own army rather than by the Arabs they are taught to fear or the O.A.S. that they truly fear.²² Vidal and Bignon make use of many free-floating representations of the Algerian experience in their story: the army of torturers, the O.A.S. terrorists waging war against the French state, and the detestable *pieds noirs*, among others. The utilization of these symbols, which immediately conjure up "Algerian War" in the French imagination, indi-

cates that there is a common frame of reference to discuss the war, even though people from different backgrounds might not interpret these representations in the same way.

Muriel ou le temps d'un retour addresses explicitly the question of memory and reasons not to remember: more than once, characters protest, "Let's not dig up the past," or explain "It will be a long time before I can talk about it," or laugh sadly, "Excuse me, I have no memory, I forget everything." *Muriel* is a ghost story; its main characters are all haunted by someone or something. Hélène struggles to stay afloat in a city whose street names and bombed-out buildings keep the Second World War firmly imprinted in its citizens' lives. Her stepson Bernard lives in his own world of war memories and constantly replays an old film of his company while reliving the torture and death of "Muriel," an Algerian woman. Bernard's tape never shows Muriel, but he recounts in spectacular verbal detail her torture and death. "I felt nothing," he says calmly as he watches the film, "I went to bed, slept well." Yet he watches it incessantly and becomes enraged when anyone touches the tape or his equipment. When Bernard's comrade Robert, the leader in Muriel's torture, returns to town, Bernard nearly goes mad, and in fact kills him by the film's end. The fight between them was sparked by Robert's mocking of Bernard's obsession. "You want to discuss Muriel," Robert accuses, "Well, Muriel, that's not talked about." *Muriel* addresses the question of how to represent and talk about torture, but all of the characters struggle with memories they do not necessarily want to keep with them. The soldier in this movie is unable to reinsert himself into mainstream society mostly because he cannot possibly express his experiences to his acquaintances. All of the characters in Resnais's film, which is in fact a representation of the effects of the Algerian War, say that it is impossible to talk about the war. But Resnais talks about it by emphasizing its silences and absences, and presents this as an equally valid representation of the experience of the war.

Mehdi Charef's Azzédine, the protagonist of his 1989 novel *Le Harki de Meriem*, is also a veteran who "returns" to France after the war 1962. His children are ridiculed in school by other Arab children and cannot understand how their father could possibly have fought with the French against his own people. Most of the novel consists of Azzédine's painful remembrances of his experiences in the French army, which he joined because of economic necessity, including several scenes of rape and torture. As he tells his wife after returning from his service, "C'est eux ou nous . . . voilà pourquoi j'ai tué . . . J'ai torturé aussi, pour savoir où nous attendaient ceux qui voulaient notre mort, je leur ai fait peur pour pouvoir dormir en paix" (Charef

128-29). Though it is clearly a shameful thing to have served in the French army, as all Azzédine's neighbors remind him daily, he cannot help but speak of his experiences and try to explain them to his wife. Charef's novel raises uncomfortable questions about Algerian identity as it relates to class; as he experiences the war and its aftermath, Azzédine has forfeited his Algerian identity because he could literally not afford to keep it. For him, the war was a nightmare adventure that had much in common with the experiences of the cartoon soldier in *Une éducation algérienne*.

Other texts are more concerned with representing the war and people's memories of it in ways that do not make the war itself, or France and Algeria themselves, the central focus of the work. These novels and films showcase the many different ways that the people who now live in France may have experienced the Algerian War, and often comment on the way people's identities color their representations of it. One of the most evocative presentations of the world of the wealthy *pied noir* elite is Brigitte Rouan's 1991 film *Outremer*. The story is told in three parts, by the three sisters of a rich family (one of the sisters is Rouan's mother), a device which makes clear that even those who share the same background still experience and therefore remember and represent the war in different ways. Each sister recounts the same events from her perspective; thus by the end of the film, all the gaps have been filled in our understanding of the family's life. The oldest sister, Zon (the filmmaker's mother) begins the story in 1949, complaining about the interference of the rebels in the lives of the *pieds noirs* ; the music for the wedding that opens the film has to compete with the Muslim call to prayer. Zon's facade of a perfect marriage and beautiful children fades quickly as the audience learns that her husband, a naval officer, is rarely around and has just been sent away for an extended tour of duty. She keeps up a strong *Algérie française* front in her household, singing "Les Africains" at Christmas with her sisters ("C'est nous les Africains . . . loyaux à la patrie, nous serons là pour mourir à ses pieds, le pays, la patrie, les Gaulois") instead of Christmas songs and correcting a daughter who remarks that the Arabs must be our brothers too as she learns her catechism. Malène, the second sister, is also involved in a less-than-perfect marriage in which her husband, the owner of a large winery, does little work and leaves it all to her. She, unlike her husband, is cordial with the Arab workers and knows some of them by name; but Malène is a firm believer in French Algeria. As the war intensifies, her husband is threatened several times, and they begin to suspect that their workers are planning to kill them. Gritte, the youngest sister, is a nurse in an Arab neighborhood who begins an affair with an F.L.N. fighter she meets there. For every comment or reference to

the war, however, Rouan shows her viewers a shot of the family's beautiful villa, a panoramic view of the ocean and beautiful people sunbathing, the sisters playing tennis together. She is engaged in representing the world her mother knew, of which the war was just one part.

Outremer is also one of the few major works to focus exclusively on the stories of women in the war; almost all of the other works examined here leave women on the sidelines and do not address the fact that they may have experienced the war very differently from the men in their own social groups. For Zon, the war meant the loss of her husband, who was reported dead after having been missing at sea for two years. She herself became ill after his death was reported and finally died wearing his uniform. Malène, who was forced into the male role in her family, was killed by someone trying to shoot her husband because it was she in the driver's seat rather than he. Gritte survived, but her lover was one of the men killed in an ambush on her sister Malène's land. She flees to France at the end, and the movie closes with her seeing and hearing her sisters as she stands at the wedding altar. Rouan tried to capture the lives of her mother and aunts as women and *pièdes noirs*, and succeeded in introducing another set of experiences of the war, those of women. Their version of the war, or at least Rouan's representation of it, related much more to their personal lives (marriages, children, lovers) than did male versions of the war.

Etcherelli's *Elise ou la vraie vie* tells the story of Elise's Algerian War, which is essentially the story of her relationship with her Algerian lover Arezki and her politically-oriented brother Lucien. Elise, unlike her brother, had very little consciousness of the Indochinese war; she referred to it as "une guerre lointaine, discrète, aux causes imprécises, presque rassurante, une preuve de bonne santé, de vitalité" (Etcherelli 23). Older, she moves to Paris and wonders at her surroundings: the newspapers devote large amounts of space to the deeds of the F.L.N. and Elise wonders if the Algerians on the bus next to her are members of the group (Etcherelli 92). The first anti-war meeting she attends is with Lucien and his lover; it is sponsored by the workers' union to protest the death of one of its members in service in Algeria. As Elise begins to get involved in the union, the overseers warn her: "N'allez pas vous mettre dans les pattes d'un syndicat. Et ne parlez pas trop avec les Algériens!" (Etcherelli 118). The first time she goes out in public with Arezki, she realizes the unusual nature of her situation: "J'étais avec un Algérien" (Etcherelli 134). Elise slowly enters Arezki's world, in which people have no fixed address, live in fear of the police, and attend secret meetings. Though she becomes quite well-versed in the daily events of the war and develops a strong anti-war consciousness, Elise expresses the war

in relation to the man she loves: "Il n'était pas souhaitable, en ce début de 1958, d'être un Algérien à Paris . . . Arrestation, chômage . . . Arezki ne s'indignait de rien . . . Et il riait de mes révoltes" (Etcherelli 226). But while she attends a demonstration organized by the unions (which Arezki had mocked as meaningless), he is arrested in the metro. Having recently been fired, he has no papers and is thus at the mercy of the police. The book ends with Elise's hopeless, frantic search through Paris streets for Arezki. "Je pourrai bien crier," she says, "qui m'écouterà? S'il vit, où est-il? S'il est mort, où est son corps? Qui me le dira?" She finally admits that she will never see Arezki again (Etcherelli 271-72). For Elise, the memory of the Algerian War is certainly the memory of her union meetings and demonstrations, but it is also the memory of her lover. Her representation of the war could well be one of absence, the absence of Arezki's grave. It is also a representation of the war based in the metropole, which challenges Rioux's assertion that because the war was a distant event, there was no memory of it.

Many Beur²³ novels also focus on the Algerian War specifically and France's colonial history in general as experienced in France; they concern themselves with the way the war has become part of the identity of anyone living in post-colonial France. Nacer Kettane's *Le sourire de Brahim* (1985) and Leila Sebbar's *Shérazade 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts* (1982) both address this issue in radically different styles. Kettane's earnest, awkwardly written, mostly autobiographical novel reads more like a speech than fiction but nevertheless provides readers with an idea of the kinds of experiences an Algerian family living in Paris during the war could expect to have. Its most affecting sequence is the opening one, a description of the F.L.N.'s March 17, 1961 demonstration. Brahim, Kettane's then eight-year old narrator, remembers that

Tous semblaient à la fête, pourtant ce n'était ni Noël ni l'Aïd. C'était ou plutôt ce devait être beaucoup mieux: le début d'une nouvelle vie. Cette manifestation devait dire non une bonne fois pour toutes à la situation de sous-hommes faite aux Algériens de Paris: après vingt heures, impossible d'acheter des victuailles, de prendre l'air ou d'aller rendre visite à des amis. Une idée géniale de Maurice Papon, préfet de police . . . (Kettane 16)

But the idyllic chanting of Arabic slogans is disrupted by the invasion of CRS forces, and Brahim's little brother Kader is killed. The papers the next day made little mention of the event even though, Brahim says, the quays of the Seine were littered with corpses and blood had flowed under the bridges (Kettane 23). The rest of the novel is a collection of anecdotes

that each keenly demonstrate the fact that Kettane's alter ego and his family do not hate the French; one of Brahim's best friends is Patrick, the son of *pieds noirs* who were forced to leave Algeria by the O.A.S. (Kettane 36). His father, who fought for France during WW II and spent time in prison for it, later joined the F.L.N. and went to prison again: but he never learned to hate (Kettane 46). The war in *Le sourire de Brahim* is an epic, heroic event, a proud point of reference for Beurs. Its memory is inscribed in the immigrant community in France not only because of events like the 1961 demonstration, but because it offers them an identity other than that imposed on them by the native-born French.

Sebbar's *Shérazade* concerns itself with trying to account for every possible representation of the Algerian War in the identities of her creations. Its cast of characters includes Beur and African teenagers, their families, the marginalized white French teenagers who round out their group, and the middle-aged white Frenchman who has an open-ended relationship with the seventeen-year-old Shérazade of the title, the daughter of Algerian immigrants. Each chapter is a brief two or three page vignette narrated by a different character; it is not infrequent to find a reference to the Algerian War in many different contexts. Julien, Shérazade's would-be lover, remembers his mother's activity as a nurse-midwife before and during the war and his parents' lives in France after 1962, and uses the war as a marker for his own life (he was born one year before it) (Sebbar 20, 111). Farid, one of Shérazade's crowd, reads "avec passion tout ce qui concernait la guerre d'Algérie qu'il n'avait ni vécue ni connue . . . il avait retrouvé l'exaltation, la détermination de ceux qui préparaient la guerre de libération algérienne" (Sebbar 56). Krim, another friend, calls Shérazade "harki" when she answers him in French rather than Arabic (Sebbar 139). Rachid laments the fact that his Jewish ex-girlfriend was so aware of Jewish history, whereas he knows nothing of the Algerian war "parce que personne ne lui en avait jamais parlé" (Sebbar 164). The war is never at the foreground of the lives of these characters—drugs, sex, music and money are—but it is often a point of reference or an attempt to create a proud, positive ethnic identity in the 1980s mixture of ethnic groups that populate Paris' immigrant neighborhoods.

IV Representing the War from the "Center," Officially

"La France en guerre d'Algérie: 1954-1962," created by historians Rioux and Benjamin Stora in collaboration with curator Laurent Gervereau, ran from 4 April to 28 June 1992 at the Musée d'histoire contemporaine, Hôtel

des Invalides in Paris. The exhibit signals the beginning of an attempt by France's officialdom to begin synthesizing representations of the war from numerous sources to create what could be called a commemorative culture of the war, then thirty years past. The exhibit, according to Gervereau, "bien qu'étant sur un sujet extrêmement controversé, n'a pas, bizarrement, reçu d'attaque, ni du côté de l'armée, ni du côté des différentes associations ou interlocuteurs présents en France" (Gervereau). While the exhibit may not have been attacked, *Le Monde*, one of France's major newspapers, devoted only a short column to reviewing it and dismissed its creators as having "les yeux plus gros que le ventre" in trying to create such a synthesis (Guerrin "Regards"). Perhaps the reviewer from *Le Monde* was not merely being dismissive when he wrote that the creators of the 1992 exhibit "La France en guerre d'Algérie" had eyes bigger than their stomachs: he wonders how their attempt to synthesize every possible representation of the Algerian War could be consumed by a public trying to understand or come to terms with it. "La France en guerre d'Algérie," with contributions from male and female Algerian and French historians, may be seen as the first step in the creation of a "national French memory" of the Algerian war that reflects what it means to be French after colonialism, anti-colonial struggles, and the emergence of newly independent nations. Unlike the war museums opened under de Gaulle, this exhibit is designed not only to expose its audience to uncomfortable topics (the use of torture by the French army, the terrorism of the O.A.S., the treatment of *pieds noirs* and *harkis* by metropolitan France) but to make the emphatic statement that all these subjects *must* be represented to create the fullest picture of what the war signified. The contribution to pushing back the boundaries of "Frenchness" by the authors of the texts discussed earlier in the realm of fiction is appreciated in the exhibit, which addresses the multiplicity of voices talking, writing, and painting about the war. Gervereau, Rioux and Stora framed their project as a way to talk about national identity and the Algerian War: Hureau's section on the *pieds noirs* concludes by explaining that the reason the memory of the Algerian war is so important is because it is an essential part of their identity and must "être, sinon partagé, au moins connu de la communauté nationale à laquelle ils appartiennent" (Hureau 288-30).²⁴ Stora also discusses *harkis'* representations of the war in terms of struggling with their identities as French, Muslim, and Algerian (Stora "Harkis" 292). The exhibit, say its makers in their conclusion to the catalogue, was necessary because, thirty years after the war, a large part of the French population persists in believing that "ce drame de huit ans n'a pas posé en métropole une réelle question d'identité" (Gervereau, Rioux and Stora 304). The cre-

ators also focus on the ways in which the personal and political spheres interacted to create specific representations of the war. The inclusion of tabloid magazines and top-40 records next to war photographs is the best way to recreate the war as it may have been experienced by a "typical" French citizen. Their finished product documents both the official history of the war (battles, statistics, treaties, parties) and the experience of *la guerre d'Algérie* by the different groups in France, and suggests that it might be possible to create a national memory of the Algerian war that is more reflective of the experiences of the entire population than are the collective cultures surrounding the two World Wars.

It is hard to object to an exhibit that its creators describe as an attempt to introduce questions about French identity. But "La France en Guerre d'Algérie" is nonetheless a project that shares its origins with what Daniel Sherman has identified as the cult of masculinity that arose after the first World War and with the cult of *Résistance* France cultivated by de Gaulle after the Second World War. This 1992 cultural production must be seen as yet another elaboration on the "national project," the attempt to create and recreate new visions of the French nation, with "nation" being the operative word. In many ways, the exhibit's inclusionary tactics mask its participation in the historically constituted process of nation building. Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us that it is difficult to, as he puts it, "liberate history from the metanarrative of the nation state." He explains that "the reason for this lies in what European imperialism and third-world nationalisms have achieved together: the universalization of the nation state as the most desirable form of political community" (Chakrabarty 19). Chakrabarty's concern lies with histories which claim to incorporate the experiences of non-Europeans into "world" histories which ultimately subsume these other narratives under the meta-narrative of the nation, which is a European construct, without ever questioning how the nation came to be paramount. I borrow his point about Indian historiography here to argue that while Gervereau, Stora, and Rioux were among the first to incorporate the diverse voices and memories of the peoples who experienced the Algerian war in an officially-sanctioned commemorative production, their final product is still concerned with *la France*. They recreate France as a multicultural community, but this representation ultimately acts as a re-authorization of certain hegemonic discourses about nation. The exhibit's creators have added lower-class soldiers, *harkis*, anti-war activists, pre-1962 Algerian immigrants, and *pièdes noirs* to the "traditional" mix (Brigitte Bardot movie posters, debates between Camus and Sartre) and stirred; the colonized and those carrying post-colonial baggage have been brought into the fold. The boundaries of

the French nation have only been enlarged; but the historical contexts in which they have been inscribed have not been interrogated, nor have the frontiers simply been abolished. When official culture represents the nation as all-inclusive, it does not really need to question the nation and its construction, its right to primacy, and its universal desirability.

Conclusion: The National Project and the Dangling Conversation

In a 1992 survey of 17 to 30 year olds conducted by Paris' Institut du Monde Arabe, 66% responded that it would be very useful for the future of French society to talk seriously about the Algerian war (Bernard). The utility of such a discussion cannot be overemphasized, especially when people like Jean-Marie Le Pen mobilize certain representations of the Algerian War to make explicitly xenophobic comments about North African immigration. Considerations of the significance of the war are also essential in a climate in which it is possible to argue that colonialism was never really an integral part of the French past. But such conversations *have* been held since 1954, some of them led by the artists whose work was discussed earlier. The existence of memories and representations of experiences of the Algerian War has never been in question, though it has never had an official commemorative culture surrounding it. The problem with these representations of the war is that they often involve realigning or abolishing "French" borders, in terms of both geography and identity. The commemorative cultures surrounding the two World Wars also revolved around difficult attempts to define what it meant to be French; Vichy's scars have still not faded from the French political and moral landscape. Yet in both those cases, French hegemonic powers have identified national memories of the wars, which continue to serve as representations of those periods through the media of textbooks, museums, and statues. The lack of a commemorative culture surrounding the Algerian War is not something to be lamented, but rather an occasion to reject such a nation-building enterprise which tries to disguise its own aims and ambitions. The unofficial artistic representations of memories of the Algerian War, as depicted by people originating from many different places (gender, religion, class, country) in the larger francophone world, sometimes escape Chakrabarty's prison of the nation-state and focus on other locations as the central points of their narratives. These fragments should continue to serve as the commemorations of the Algerian War. Rioux is justified in saying that there is no "metropolitan

memory” or official culture of commemoration of the war, but there should not be as long as the colonial genealogy of nation and metropole is left unquestioned.

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The author would like to thank the following people for their help in the writing of this paper: fellow student Ansu Kuruvilla, and professors Madhavi Kale and Azade Seyhan, all of Bryn Mawr College.

Notes

¹ As Anne Donadey points out, “This stable regime [the Fifth Republic] of which the French are so proud, was born out of the Algerian-French conflict, a source the French prefer not to remember” (223).

² I cannot explore these other representations and memories of Algeria and the war in this paper, but a brief perusal of *Le Monde* on significant dates relating to war anniversaries reveals several meetings or rallies being held across France. For a discussion of oral testimonies of *pieds noirs* and of veteran organizations’ attempts at commemorations, see Anne Roche, “La Perte et la parole: Témoignages oraux de pieds-noirs” and Frédéric Rouyard, “La Bataille du 19 mars,” in *La Guerre d’Algérie et les Français*.

³ In fact, until 1983, history classes taught to students in their last year of school before university ended with the Second World War (Donadey 216).

⁴ *Poilus* is a term used to describe French soldiers in WW I

⁵ Eugen Weber titles the first chapter of *Peasants into Frenchmen* “A Country of Savages,” and cites countless characterizations of 19th century peasant life as uncivilized, sinful and miserable; peasants were said to live “two or three centuries behind their fellows” in terms of morality, intelligence and physical health. The latter half of the 19th century was dedicated to civilizing the peasant (4-5). Perhaps this would have brought them into the splendid 19th century mentioned in reference to WW I.

⁶ The type of cross associated with Jeannet d’Arc; it was appropriated by de Gaulle and his RPR party.

⁷ Rousso points out that the relationship between WW II and the Algerian War is not only evident in post-1962 historiography, but was perceived by French citizens during the Algerian War itself:

The war in Algeria, observed from the metropolis, was indeed a reprise of the guerre franco-française, but only insofar as old cleavages reproduced themselves in people’s minds. What they saw, then, was not an image of the past but a transformation of that image to suit contemporary conditions. (82)

⁸ On the connection between la Seconde Guerre mondiale and la guerre d’Algérie, Frank echoes Lambert in describing the French inability to recognize the torture practiced by their own army on Algerians, given their recent history with Nazism, as a major factor in the lack of discourse (604).

⁹ The events of March 17, 1961, which could very well serve as a possible date for a commemoration, are also linked to WW II. Maurice Papon, the police official responsible for the orders to fire on the marchers, was convicted in April 1998 for his role in the deportation of Jews during the Vichy regime.

¹⁰ Claire Etcherelli's 1967 novel *Elise ou la vraie vie* contains an interesting analysis of this question. Elise's lover's co-revolutionary, disdainful of her participation in communist and union-sponsored anti-war rallies, tells her that the French proletariat cares about Algeria only because the war has driven up prices, and suggests that the only reason any French citizens ever concerned themselves with or thought about Algeria was in its economic relation to them (212).

¹¹ Loughlin continues his analysis by saying that the successful war for Algerian independence led regional separatists in metropolitan France to conclude that they too could break away from Parisian hegemony; the idea of "France" as a unified nation was thus attacked from within as well as without (160).

¹² The poster continues,

Par contre, tu dois assurer à ces
60,000,000 de travailleurs repartis sur 15,500,000 Kil. carrés
LA PAIX. LA LIBERTÉ DE TA CIVILISATION;
pour cette oeuvre que donnes-tu?
165,000 soldats coloniaux
2,000,000,000 frs.

22,000,000,000 frs. d'affaires
assurés seulement par
2,000,000,000 frs. de dépenses,
Trouves-tu souvent un tel placement pour
tes capitaux?

¹³ The refrain on the metro warning passengers to be ceaselessly vigilant shows that this 1968 poster still finds resonance for the French government and police forces.

¹⁴ "Political" in the sense of representations made by political figures.

¹⁵ These two groups were not mutually exclusive; the men called to fight in Algeria sometimes resisted the war. The years 1955 and 1956 saw many anti-war demonstrations on the part of soldiers, up to 400 protested the war through desertion, and 25 texts produced by soldiers during the war for public consumption detailed the methods employed by the French army in waging war against the F.L.N. (Liauzu 276-77).

¹⁶ In 1991, Prime Minister Edith Cresson responded to the demands of the *harki* community for "reconnaissance de dignité et d'identité" as well as a rehabilitation of their role in the war "dans la mémoire nationale" in the form of a statue honoring fallen Muslim soldiers by devising a plan which dedicated 100 million francs for the families of former *harkis* (Rollat 6).

¹⁷ They, like the *harkis*, demanded reparations and acknowledgment from the French government. In 1970, President D'Estaing provided 19 million francs for this purpose (Stora 260).

¹⁸ Wormser continues to say that the label "traitor" was bestowed on the *harkis* by the media, teachers and politicians (especially on the left). He judges the French harshly, explaining that the Algerians may have the right to call the *harkis* traitors, but that the French cannot possibly consider traitorous men who, believing themselves to be part of the French empire, wore the French uniform and fought against their countrymen. While this paper does not allow for a detailed discussion of the motives Algerians had for joining the French army, Wormser's remarks raise important questions about the boundaries of identity in a colonial setting: the issue of how *harkis* chose to identify themselves (and how others identified them) is important in looking at fictional representations of the war.

¹⁹ This is only partially a reflection of the increased production of literature and film about the war in the late 1970s and 1980s; it owes more to the resources available to me in the fall of 1997 when this paper was written. I should also point out that I do not intend to provide a thorough literary analysis of these novels, for such a critique; see Philip Dine, *Images of the Algerian*

War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), which was helpful in locating appropriate novels and films. See also Alec G. Hargreaves, *La Littérature Beur: Une Guide Bio-Bibliographique* (New Orleans: CEFLAN Edition Monographs, 1992), which was also useful.

²⁰ These are fictional works; there is also a growing body of literary and cinematic testimony from veterans of the Algerian War. One of the most recent is *La guerre sans nom*, Bernard Tavernier and Patrick Rotman's 1992 documentary featuring a group of veterans relating their experiences in the war.

²¹ The hapless Karatruc's mercurial name is described as "peu banal, un nom qui vous disait quelque chose, qu'on n'oubliait pas facilement," though of course the narrator continually "forgets" Karatruc's real name, as he is an Armenian, a Bulgarian, "une grosse légume de Macédoine, enfin un type de ces coins-là, un Balkanique, un Yoghourtophage, un Slavophile, un Turc" (Perc 13). Karatruc, who is being asked to die for France, is not "French," and many of the names of his fellow soldiers also originate from other parts of the world. Perc alludes to the fact that the glorious country whose interests the military spoke of defending was not the "purely French" state they praised.

²² L'Organisation armée secrète was the army of *pieds noirs* who felt betrayed by de Gaulle's acceptance of Algeria's eventual independence and attacked Algerians and French "collaborators" alike.

²³ *Beur*, slang for Arab, has been claimed as a name by many second-generation Maghrebian immigrants. Or, as Azouz Begag and Abdellatif Chaouite define it in their "Lexique des idées arrêtées sur des gens qui bougent...(dans le désordre)":

Beur: mot désignant une substance alimentaire, grasse et onctueuse (voir Petit Robert). De plus en plus écrit de cette façon par les journalistes (grosse faute d'orthographe!...) Voudrait maintenant désigner une population issue de l'immigration maghrébine . . . on a eu *Pain et Chocolat*... manquait le Beur. Décidément, l'immigration ça se mange bien au petit déjeuner! (Begag and Chaouite 9-10)

²⁴ Hureau's analysis of the *piéd noir* community's desire to make the French nation understand their past is supported by the 1992 observances around the 30th anniversary of their "exode d'Algérie." They and the *harkis* organized a weekend-long program to "célébrer la mémoire mais aussi de mettre en valeur des traditions d'hospitalité, des exemples d'intégration réussie, et d'inscrire la communauté dans 'le futur paysage culturel européen'" ("Plusieurs rassemblements").

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*Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouvait ici
l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.*

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

PAROLES GELÉES

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