

Gender in Algerian French Textbooks

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ABSTRACT: While gender in textbooks has elicited scholarly investigation in recent decades, there has been less emphasis on masculine identity as perceived through postcolonial and decolonial lenses. This article addresses the limitations in the scholarship and challenges the colonial emasculation of the Algerian man through a (re) construction of masculine identity in French foreign language textbooks. The textbooks decolonize French colonial ways of seeing through a glorification of Algeria's (pre-) colonial past and its masculine heroic leadership.

KEYWORDS: Colonial Legacy. Colonial Emasculation. Masculine Identity (Re-) Construction. Decoloniality.



Gênero nos livros didáticos de francês argelino

RESUMO: Embora o gênero nos livros didáticos tenha suscitado investigações acadêmicas nas últimas décadas, tem havido menos ênfase na identidade masculina conforme percebida pelas lentes pós-coloniais e decoloniais. Este artigo aborda as limitações na academia e desafia a emasculação colonial do homem argelino por meio de uma (re) construção da identidade masculina nos livros didáticos de língua estrangeira francesa. Os livros didáticos descolonizam as formas coloniais francesas de ver através de uma glorificação do passado (pré-)colonial da Argélia e sua liderança heróica masculina.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Legado Colonial. Emasculação Colonial. Identidade Masculina (Re-)Construção. Decolonialidade.

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1 Introduction

The topic of masculinity as seen through postcolonial and decolonial lenses, has received little attention, despite the rise in scholarly interest in gender identity construction in textbooks in recent years. In addition to Kobia's, Foulds', and Kushwaha's research, which examines masculinity and its construction from a postcolonial perspective in Kenya and India (KOBIA, 2009; FOULDS, 2013; KUSHWAHA, 2014), the rest of the scholarship (NAGEL, 1998; KUZMIC, 2000; WANNAMAKER, 2008; JACKIE, 2010; KOSTAS, 2019) focus more narrowly on the study of gender identity construction in the Western and Asian contexts. Within this context, the contribution of textbooks to the (re)construction of masculine identity remains unnoticed in Algeria, as well as in the postcolonial world. Although Foulds (2013) addresses the persistence of colonially constructed identities in Kenyan postcolonial curricula, the analysis does not engage with Kenya's colonial history nor with the ways in which it attempts to reconstruct masculine identity. Drawing on previous research limitations, this article investigates the textbooks of French, *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne* (1982-1983)¹, *Textes choisis: 4eme année Moyenne* (1984-1985), and *Lecture française: 9eme année fondamentale* (2004-2005)² with a particular emphasis on the visual and verbal content as being inextricably affected by what is referred to as the 'coloniality of knowledge' (MIGNOLO; ESCOBAR, 2009). This article provides an overview of postcolonial orientalist visuality that reiterates colonial misconceptions of Algerian masculinity in the textbooks of French. The persistence of colonial visuality lends

1 These teaching materials mark the first adapted textbooks after independence, beginning in the 1960s, for the teaching of French as a foreign language. The first *textes choisis* series was launched for the third and fourth grades in middle school by the Institut Pédagogique National, Algeria from 1962 to 1976 that constitutes a preparatory phase in the establishment of Algerian schools after independence (GUSTIN, 2007-2008). The edition used in this article is published in 1982-1983 and 1984- 1985.

2 Represents the second phase, known as 'l'école fondamentale', a reformed educational system implemented in the late 1970s and early 1980s, published by Algeria's Institut Pédagogique National. The edition used in this article was published between 2004-2005.

credence to Edward Said's claim that the modern Orient "participates in its own Orientalizing" (SAID, 1978, p. 325). Furthermore, this article investigates how masculine identity is (re-)constructed from the orientalist emasculating visuality of 'laziness', 'primitiveness', and 'decadence' in which the Algerian man was fixed, only to be (re-)constructed by reverting to an Algerian heroic masculinity of (pre-)colonial times. The literary excerpts inserted in the French textbooks for the purpose of reconstructing masculine identity mostly belong to the type of literature labelled resistance fiction. As a rethinking of the long-standing colonial clichés of decadence and laziness in which the Algerian man has been constructed, emasculated, and fixed, these extracts written by Algerian men and women writers portray male characters exhibiting values of bravery, dedication, and resistance by returning to a selective colonial and precolonial past. Masculine identity reconstruction in the textbooks of French demonstrate what Walter Mignolo terms as 'delinking' from the Eurocentric coloniality of knowledge by 'relinking' with Algeria's (pre-)colonial past, thereby securing modes of existence of (pre-) colonial times that Algerians want to preserve (MIGNOLO, 2017).

2 Self-Orientalism: The Emasculating Visuality of the Algerian Man in *Textes choisis 3eme année moyenne* and *Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne*

Although post-independence Algeria saw the appearance of adapted French school textbooks, the content of the textbooks demonstrates the persistence of French colonial legacy that defines indigenous masculinity as 'exotic', 'sensual', and 'decadent', as illustrated in figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. In this context of continuity with the colonial past and the participation of the Orient in its own orientation, Rianna Oelofsen (2015) argues that the colonized mind is linked to the internalization of the colonizer's values, which places the colonized in a state of ongoing inferiority and backwardness. As such, the textbooks of French depict masculinity

in an Orientalist³ space of decadence, indolence, and backwardness (SYED, 2021). Figures 1 and 2 convey an essentialist message that goes beyond the reiteration of the Orientalist *bédouin*⁴ stereotype, which underlies the pervasive need for the colonizer's presence as a symbol of civilization, what is commonly known as the Western burden to cultivate, educate, civilize, and modernize the colonized (SYED, 2021). Said argues that Western media had a negative impact on how the native man was portrayed, depicting him as nothing more than a 'camel-riding nomad' (SAID, 1978, p. 285). According to Said, these cinematic productions, have historically portrayed the native man of the Middle East and North Africa as a primitive, backward, and uncivilized figure. By portraying the native man in this way, Western media and culture reinforce and perpetuate negative stereotypes and prejudices, simultaneously erasing the diversity, complexity, and agency of the indigenous people in these regions. Said then exemplifies this essentialized image of the Arab man through reference to Western cinema in which "the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty...He appears ... [a] camel driver" (SAID, 1978, p. 286 - 287). The camel-riders in figures 1 and 2 reproduce French 'ways of seeing' (BERGER, 1972) through the visuality of the Algerian man wandering in the vast desert, symbolizing emptiness. This Orientalist visuality constructs and fixes Algeria as the stagnant Orient, devoid of progress and unaffected by Western modernity and civilisation (SYED, 2021). Reiteration of the camel-rider cliché implies that colonialism is far from over and that the Algerian post-colonial textbook is still caught within a state of coloniality.

3 Refers to the essentialized view of the Eastern part of the globe, particularly the Middle East and North Africa. It was often criticized for being distorted and having biased perspectives of the East. It has contributed to the marginalization and oppression of people, and the term is used to also refer to scholars who study the East from a critical and nuanced perspective that seeks to challenge and overcome the biases and stereotypes associated with Orientalism.

4 It is a stereotype that refers to the way in which *Bédouins*, a group of Arab nomadic peoples, who live in the desert regions of the Middle East and North Africa in Western culture. They are often depicted as savage, primitive, and violent and such depictions are based on a distorted and biased understanding of their culture and ways of life.

Figure 1 – Orientalist representation of the Algerian man wandering in the Algerian Desert



Source: Abdelouhab *et al.* (1982-1983, p. 17).

Figure 2 – The Bédouin Orientalist stereotype



Source: Abdelouhab *et al.* (1984-1985, p. 55).

Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne depicts another instance of coloniality in figure 3 by reiterating a prominent theme in Orientalist art. According to Zahia Smail-Salhi, Prayer characterizes Orientalist art (SMAIL-SALHI, 2008). The act of prayer is often depicted in an exoticized way, portraying it as a mysterious and exotic ritual associated with the Orient and its peoples. This perpetuates stereotypes about Islamic faith and its practices, while also reinforcing the idea of the Orient as a place of mystery and otherness. Due to its Islamic connotation, prayer in this context not only confines the role of the Algerian man to that of a devout worshipper, who is bound by religious tradition and unable to progress or modernise, but also suggests decadence, which the West generally theorises to represent the fall of the Orient. The Western narrative of the “decline” or “fall” of the Orient often associates Islamic practices and beliefs with decadence and decline, viewing them as evidence of the supposed backwardness and inferiority of the Orient.

Figure 3 – The representation of the Algerian man performing prayer



Source: Abdelouhab *et al.* (1982-1983, p. 117).

The visuality in figure 4 is an extension of Oriental decadence through the representation of men in a seraglio space. The depiction of men in this space often reinforces stereotypes of Eastern culture as sexually indulgent and exotic. These men are portrayed as lounging around luxurious surroundings, entertained by beautiful dancing and submissive women who cater to their every desires. This depiction underlines the superiority of Western culture, as it portrays men in the seraglio as indulgent, lazy, and in a space of decadence. This space in orientalist art conveys sensuality and what Tobias Hübinette terms as an 'ineluctable' decadence. (HÜBINETTE, 2003, p. 75). This visuality also suggests an emasculated image of the Algerian man and confines the role of men to a life of indolence (SHABANIRAD; MARANDI, 2015). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon (1963) discusses the experience of the emasculated man, particularly in the context of the colonized. He argues that the colonial powers sought to undermine the masculinity of colonized men to justify their own dominance and control. Fanon discusses the concept of the 'new man' as a response to the emasculation of colonized men under colonial rule (FANON, 1963). The new man represents a reconstruction of masculine identity, one that rejects the submissive and passive role imposed by the colonizer and instead embraces a new, independent, and self-determined masculinity. Although *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne* and *Textes choisis : 4eme année moyenne* reiterate French ways of seeing, they also suggest a rejection of colonial images and stereotypes by relinking with the colonial and precolonial past of the country to demonstrate an active, brave and virile masculinity.

Figure 4 – The representation of Algerian men in a space of decadence



Source: Abdelouhab *et al.* (1982-1983, p. 2).

3 (Re-)construction of masculine identity: The (pre-) colonial past and the celebration of masculine heroism

Masculine identity reconstruction in the textbooks of French is closely tied to the process of 'delinking' from the colonial past. Mignolo's concept of delinking refers to the process of breaking free from the colonizer's system of knowledge and power, and creating a new, autonomous space for the colonized. This delinking is possible through the rejection of colonial discourse and the construction of a new narrative of the colonised, which is rooted in their own history, culture, and experiences. *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne*, *Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne* and *Lecture française: 9eme année fondamentale* attempt to delink from the historical legacy of colonialism and the ways in which it has shaped our understanding of Algerian masculine identity in their emphasis on Algerian epic heroes that date back to precolonial

Berber kingdoms of Masinissa⁵, Tacfarinas⁶, Jugurtha⁷ and Juba⁸. These precolonial historical figures were depicted as strong, independent, brave, and self-determined. By returning to precolonial history through these depictions, the textbooks aim to liberate masculine identity from the emasculated type of masculinity imposed by colonial powers. The inclusion of national heroes and the celebration of their achievements in textbooks plays a crucial role in creating a strong and vibrant sense of pride and belonging among learners, which is particularly important in the aftermath of colonization.

It is common for French textbooks used in postcolonial Algeria to include literary excerpts that refer to the country's rich and diverse history, allowing for the emergence of precolonial knowing and telling (MARTINEZ, 2018). These excerpts often celebrate the achievement of notable figures in (pre)colonial history as a way of challenging and revising colonial epistemology that has been used to legitimise the colonization of Algeria. Therefore, the textbooks work to reconstruct and reclaim Algerian masculinity, and to reject colonial stereotypes that have sought to portray Algerian men as inferior, powerless, and in need of being civilized.

5 Commonly known in Berber language as Masensen meaning 'their master', was a king of the ancient North African kingdom of Numidia, located in what is now modern-day Algeria. He was a powerful and influential leader, known for his military prowess and diplomatic skills. Masinissa was a key ally of Rome, and his support played a crucial role in the Romans' victory over Carthage in the Second Punic War. He is also known for his cultural achievements, including the founding of the city of Cirta and the development of the Numidian alphabet.

6 He was a Numidian warrior who was known for his rebellion against Roman rule in the 1st century AD. He served in the Roman army, but later turned against the Romans and led a rebellion in the province of Africa. Despite being vastly outnumbered, he was able to hold off the Romans for several years, using guerrilla tactics and his knowledge of Roman military strategy. He was eventually defeated and killed, but his rebellion served as a reminder of the ongoing resistance to Roman rule in North Africa.

7 Berber king who ruled the kingdom of Numidia from 118-105 BC and was known for mounting a fierce resistance against foreign invaders. He was the grandson of King Masinissa.

8 Son of Juba I and was king of Numidia and Mauretania. Juba II was known for his resistance against Roman Empire which sought to expand its territory and control over Numidia. He was also a noted scholar and author; he is credited with writing several works on history, geography, and other subjects.

Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne celebrates masculine heroism through a literary excerpt taken from Mohand Cherif Sahli's *Le message de Yougourtha* (1947). The text establishes a relinking with the precolonial history to epically depict Masinissa as a great leader and king who was able to reign over a kingdom including modern-day Algeria and Tunisia, "*Masinissa avait à pétrir et à façonner un vaste royaume englobant toute l'Algérie actuelle et une partie de la Tunisie.*" (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 162). Known for his decolonial thoughts in his writings, Sahli's literary texts are widely used in textbooks. Sahli (1947) depicted Masinissa as the precursor of the country whose achievements had a positive impact on his people. To everyone surprise, Masinissa was able to transform his land, which had previously been regarded as barren and unproductive, into a prosperous agricultural land where he succeeded in growing a wide variety of crops:

Avant lui... toute la Numidie était inutile et considérée comme incapable de sa nature de donner des produits cultivés. C'est lui le premier, lui seul, qui montra qu'elle peut les donner tous, autant que n'importe quelle autre contrée, car il mit en valeur de très grands espaces... Les [nomades] ayant pourvus de terres et transformés en cultivateurs, il les groupa dans des bourgs fortifiés et dotes d'institutions municipales. (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 162).

Sahli (1947) glorifies Masinissa's greatness and highlights his enduring legacy and his role in bringing together different people and inspiring them to love their homeland, "*Son culte se perpétua à travers les siècles. Masinissa n'était pas moins sensible à l'exemple des autres civilisations*" (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 162). Masinissa is remembered as one of the greatest rulers of ancient North Africa, and his legacy continues to be celebrated in modern Algeria.

Sahli's Le message de Yougourtha (1947) is emphasised again in *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne* in its celebration of Jugurtha, another historical figure in the precolonial history of Algeria who is known for his resistance and military campaign against the

9 Is a writer, historian, and an avant-gardist intellectual. He edited *El Hayat*, a militant paper on colonialism. He published *Le message de Yugourtha* (1947) and *Décoloniser l'histoire: introduction à l'histoire du Maghreb* (1965).

Roman Empire. Sahli (1947) praises Jugurtha's bravery and fearlessness through his hunting skills and devotion to striking ferocious beasts and lions:

[...] remarquable par sa force, ne se laissa point corrompre par le luxe et la mollesse... A la chasse, qui occupait une grande partie de son temps, toujours des premiers à frapper le lion et d'autres bêtes féroces, il en faisait plus que tout autre, et c'était de lui qu'il parlait le moins. (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 163).

Jugurtha is revered for his military prowess and his rebellion against the Roman empire made him even more well-known. Thanks to his victories, Jugurtha is respected among his people and enemies as a fierce warrior, "*on faisait appel à Yougourtha qui, volant de victoire en victoire, devint la terreur des Numantins et l'idole des Romains*" (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 163). *Lecture française: 9eme année fondamentale* equally praises Jugurtha, In '*L'art militaire de Jugurtha*', an excerpt from Mahfoud Kaddache's (1972)¹⁰, *L'Algérie dans l'antiquité*. Jugurtha is celebrated as "*le Numide*" (BELKHIR, et al., 2004-2005, p. 19), emphasising his identity and suggesting the origin of the Algerian nation and Algerians' pride of belonging.

In an attempt to understand the detrimental effect of colonial representations of masculinity, *Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne* participates in the same discourse on masculine identity reconstruction. In an excerpt from Ahmed Akkache (1968)'s¹¹ "*La liberté, la terre!*", Tacfarinas is recognised as a historical and precolonial

10 He is an Algerian historian who has extensively written about the history of Algeria and the development of its national identity. He is known for his work on the different invasions that Algeria has faced throughout its history and the ways in which these invasions have shaped the country's identity. Kaddache has authored a number of books that deal with the themes of identity, resistance, and nationalism in Algeria and the broader Maghreb region, *La vie politique à Alger de 1919 à 1939* (1970), and *L'Algérie dans l'antiquité* (1972).

11 Algerian writer and militant during the war of Independence. His literary works often focus on resistance and war. Some of his notable works include *Tacfarinas* (1968), *Capitales étrangers et libération économique: l'expérience algérienne* (1971), *L'évasion* (1973), *La résistance algérienne de 1845 à 1945* (1972), and *La révolte des saints: roman* (2006). He was deeply committed to the struggle for Algerian independence and was an influential voice in the country's literary and political spheres.

figure who is honoured for his contributions. He is described as, “*un précurseur de la nation algérienne*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 102). Through his address on resistance, the excerpt emphasises Tacfarinas’s importance as a precursor of the Algerian nation and is an exemplary role model:

Peuple de Numidie,
 Tes enfants te parlent.
 Debout pour défendre ton territoire, lève-toi !
 Les romains nous pillent et nous exploitent.
 Debout pour reprendre les terres de nos aïeux.
 Vous tous qui préférez la liberté à l’esclavage Debout!
 (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 102)

The speech is as much about resistance and the need to take back possession of ancestral land from Roman occupation, as it is about the influence of his speech on his people. His persuasive speech was disseminated across North Africa and liberating the land from foreign invasion became one of the most fundamental tasks to achieve:

Gravé sur les planchettes, recopié sur des papyrus, appris par cœur et répété d’un village à l’autre, il allait se répandre rapidement dans toute l’Afrique du nord, discuté, commenté, enrichi d’informations et embelli de récits, d’exploits et de faits d’armes. La liberté, la terre!
 (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, pp. 102-103).

The textbook sheds light on the question that follows the reading text, “*En quoi Tacfarinas fut-il le ‘précurseur’ de la nation algérienne?*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 103) to instil a strong sense of belonging and the spirit of resistance in learners. In *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne*, Tacfarinas is equally represented as “*Chef de la révolte des africains contre la domination romaine, sous le règne de l’empereur Tibère, Tacfarinas a lutté durant huit années pour l’indépendance de son pays*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 160). This illustrates the epic hero’s tenacity in his revolt against the Roman emperor Tiber, which echoes Algeria’s eight-year-long national struggle for Independence. Due to his reputation as one of the best leaders in precolonial Algeria, Tiber offered a huge reward to everyone who could capture Tacfarinas, “*J’offre un million de sesterces à qui me ramènera sa tête!*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p.

161). Romans offered huge rewards to anyone who would betray Tacfarinas, but the latter was welcomed as a liberator, and peasants welcomed him into their homes and considered him their hero.

Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne illustrates masculine heroism through Assia Djébar¹²'s poem "Juba" (1964). The poem honours king Juba II and emphasises the splendour of his era:

*C'était au temps du roi Juba
Et de sa fille Cléopâtre
Un poète vint de Cirta
Fier comme un jeune pâtre
Il voulait voir le prince sage
Lui apportait un lion en cage
C'était au temps du roi Juba*
(ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 168)

Djébar's poem joins Sahli, Kaddache and Akkache writings in their precolonial tellings that acknowledge the spaces of Algerian indigeneity and ancestry. The choice of the literary excerpts from the writers' novels in the textbooks seeks to replace and reimagine colonial thinking with indigenous epistemologies (DEI; JAIMUNGAL, 2018) by referring to precolonial figures and their heroic trajectories. Djébar illustrates Juba's pride in his ancestry that inscribes within an old line of heroes who have made significant contributions to the country's history, asserting his kinship to Jugurtha, "*je suis du sang de Jugurtha*" (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 168). *Français: 4eme année moyenne* (DJILALI et al., 2007-2008), a textbook of French of the more recent years, celebrates indigenous epistemologies through Malika Mokeddem's *Les hommes qui marchent* (1990). Mokeddem, an Algerian Francophone woman writer from a nomadic family in the southern Berber region of Algeria, known as Tuareg, celebrates her nomadic ancestry and writes about her indigenous identity, "*Nos ancêtres trouvèrent un autre désert pareil au leur. Ils s'y établirent. Nous descendons de ceux-là, des "hommes qui marchent"*" (DJILALI et al., 2007-2008, p. 118). Growing up around her grandmother's stories, Mokeddem voices

12 Algerian novelist, translator, essayist, poet, and filmmaker. She was born in 1936 and grew up speaking French and Arabic languages. Djébar's literary works explore the lives of women in North Africa and the issues of colonialism, cultural identity, and gender. She was the first woman from North Africa to be elected to the Académie française.

her identity and the identity of Algerian people who come from Sahara. Her pride in her family history can be seen as a decolonial reaction to the Orientalist discourse, which stigmatized Algerian men as being stereotypical Bédouins.

Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne focuses on the aspect of Berber ancestry as seen through the lens of Malek Ouary¹³ in his literary text 'Le boutiquier philosophe' excerpted from *Le Grain dans la meule* (1956). The literary excerpt centres around Brirouche¹⁴, also commonly known as Vrirouche, a secondary male character in Kabyle culture. Brirouche is featured as a wise and influential figure in his community, drawing on the legacy of his Berber ancestry, "*un maitre à la façon des anciens. Une colonie de disciples gravite autour de lui.*" (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 29). Thanks to his epochal legacy of wisdom and intelligence, he is revered as the leader of his people whose opinion is central to any decision:

Boutiquier de son état, Brirouche est philosophe par vocation, non certes de haut vol. Il a limité ses prétentions à une sagesse au ras de la terre qu'il a codifiée en formules concises, de celles qui passent à la postérité sous forme de dictons. Toutes proportions gardées...Sa réussite personnelle est un sûr garant de la valeur de sa doctrine. (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 29).

Ouari emphasises the authenticity and cultural significance of the story, which is set in pre-colonial Kabylia¹⁵ and is grounded

13 He was a writer and journalist born in Ighil Ali, a village in Kabylia, Algeria. Ouary was deeply interested in preserving and promoting the culture of the Kabyle people, an indigenous Berber population in the Kabylia region of Algeria. He dedicated much of his work to collecting and recording Kabyle poems, texts, stories, and ritual songs, to preserve this cultural heritage. He published articles and the reports on Kabyle way of life in various magazines, such as "Ici Alger".

14 He is a recurring character in children's stories and myths in Kabyle culture. He is featured as a clever and resourceful hero who overcomes obstacles and adversaries (ogre and ogress) through his wit and intelligence, rather than relying solely on Kabyle strength. Therefore, symbolizes the superiority of the spirit over force thanks to his cunning.

15 It is located in the Atlas Mountains in northern Algeria. It is home to the Kabyle people, who are an indigenous Berber population. Kabyle language, Tamazight, is spoken by most of the population in Kabylia. The region has a rich cultural heritage and a long history dating back to ancient times. It has played a significant role in resisting against foreign rule and has a strong tradition of cultural and political activism in music and literature.

in the ancestral heritage of the Kabyle people, “*je l’ai [novel] situé intégralement dans la Kabylie pré-coloniale. Toute la trame de Le Grain dans la meule repose sur un socle social authentiquement Kabyle*” (FRIDI, 2017, p. 157). Ouari denies any colonial influence on his novel’s plot which aims to reject the colonial discourse that portrays North African cultures as uncivilized and lacking any cultural richness. Instead, the author demonstrates the significance of preserving and valuing indigenous cultures and traditions in order to challenge and resist. *Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne* emphasises the importance of Brirouche’s masculinity through reading comprehension questions that follow the literary text, “*Relevez les expressions qui définissent la sagesse de Brirouche, En quoi Brirouche rappelle-t-il les sages de l’antiquité?*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 31). These questions were designed to help learners identify key phrases from the excerpt that best exemplifies Brirouche’s wisdom. Both questions highlight the importance of oral tradition in passing on knowledge from one generation to the next and remind learners of the importance of storytelling in maintaining cultural memory and ancestral wisdom. Elders, who are keepers of cultural knowledge and history, have traditionally been the ones to pass on oral traditions. As a written record, Ouari’s text (1956) is a more permanent and tangible way to keep the indigenous knowledge and ancestral wisdom of past generations alive in people’s memory.

Incorporating the histories and experiences of anti-colonial leaders is another step in the process of undoing colonial ways of seeing. The textbooks selectively return to the early years of colonial past of the country to provide instances of struggle and masculine resistance while also correcting colonial representations of masculinity centred around themes of laziness and decadence, as discussed earlier in this article. Emir Abd El Kader¹⁶ is considered

16 Was an Algerian religious and military leader who was best known for his resistance to French colonial rule in the mid-19th century. He was born in 1808 in the city of Mascara, western Algeria, and grew up in a family of religious scholars. In the 1830s, he began to organise resistance against the French occupation of Algeria, and over the next two decades he led a successful campaign against the French military, earning him respect and admiration of many people in the Arab world.

a national hero in Algeria and is remembered for his ‘heroic epic’ (BOUYERDENE, 2012) resistance to French colonial rule in the mid-19th century. He is often depicted as one of the founders¹⁷ of modern resistance in Algeria, and is celebrated for his courage, his religious devotion, and his commitment to the cause of Algerian liberation. In *Lecture française: 9eme année fondamentale*, Emir Abd El Kader is pictured as an influential leader who succeeded to bring together an army to perform military campaigns in Oran, in West Algeria, “*L’Emir Abd El Kader réunit une armée de cavaliers de 8000 cavaliers et de 1000 fantassins pour mener une expédition sur Oran*” (BELKHIR et al., 2004-2005, p. 24). His strong sense of leadership and crucial role in the anti-colonial resistance is emphasized to correct colonial depictions of this leader, which often represented him in a position of submission and defeat (CHAUVEAU, 2013). In addition to organizing resistance against the colonizer, he also worked to promote the unity of the nation and initiated many social reforms, such as literacy and spreading education, fighting moral corruption, and working on long-term policies to build a strong society that can resist French occupation for many years.

Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne demonstrates Algeria’s pride in its leaders of the colonial past in a literary passage excerpted from Mouloud Feraoun’s *Le Fils du pauvre* (1950), in which Feraoun (1950) expresses pride in the heroic figures of national culture by drawing a comparison to well-known male figures from European literature and mythology, “*Nous avons encore de nombreux poèmes que chantent des héros communs. Des héros aussi rusés qu’Ulysse, aussi fiers que Tartarin¹⁸, aussi maigres que Don Quichotte¹⁹*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 15). By drawing

17 Many other resistance movements prior to and after Emir Abd El Kader’s resistance were led by men and women leaders like Sheikh El Haddad (1790-1873), Sheikh El Mokrani (1815-1871), Lalla Fadhma n’Soumer (1830-1863), and Sheikh Bouamama (1833-1908) represent l’Emir Abd El Kader’s successors of insurrection against the French during the second half of the 19th century. Numerous literary and cinematic works have been produced by these leaders and their fight against French colonialism.

18 He is one of the characters in Alphonse Daudet’s *Les aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872).

19 He is also known as Don Quixote, the internationally known character in Miguel de Cervantes Saveedra’s work in *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605).

attention to national figures and emphasising their heroic qualities of intelligence, pride, and commitment, the textbook promotes the idea of decolonising Algerian education and encouraging a sense of pride in Algerian culture and its heroes while also suggesting the idea of decolonising mythology and eurocentrism. This is an important way of challenging the dominant narratives imposed by colonialism and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the past. *Textes choisis: 4eme année moyenne* also illuminates the image of the freedom fighter, “*Ce ne sont pas des spectres maigres mais des hommes*” (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1984-1985, p. 71). The textbook celebrates the masculinity of the men who led the War of Independence, and suggests that their masculinity was an important factor in achieving independence. *Textes choisis: 3eme année moyenne* sheds light on anti-colonial resistance and tells the story of Si Fodil, a male combatant during the national liberation struggle excerpted from Kaddour M’Hamsadji’s *Le silence des cendres* (1963). The character of Si Fodil is depicted as a hero, characterised by his fighting skills and bold spirit:

[...] un combattant, au cours de la lutte de libération nationale [...] Si Fodil semblait dormir. Mais il était pareil à un fidèle chien de garde l’oreille à demi dressée, la paupière légère, les narines gonflées d’air frais, l’élan facile...il était un gardien pouvant aimer ce monde ou le trahir [...] Si Fodil éprouvait la joie du héros. (ABDELOUHAB et al., 1982-1983, p. 170).

Si Fodil represents bravery, heroic conduct, and a commitment to resistance struggles. *Lecture française: 9eme année fondamentale* emphasises anti-colonial masculine resistance through the character Ali, another heroic figure in the national struggle for independence in Mouloud Mammeri’s *L’Opium et le Bâton* (1965) (cf. MAMMERI, 2020). Ali is described as the youngest of the children who joined the maquis (a group of resistance fighters), “*le plus jeune de ses enfants qui avait rejoint depuis deux ans les combattants du maquis.*” (BELKHIR et al., 2004-2005, p. 89). Ali and other characters are depicted as modern heroes, patriots, brave, and daring individuals who are seen as the founders of modern-day Algeria. The passage references events that took place in November 1954 and

suggests that these individuals played a significant role in shaping the nation, "*Ces hommes de novembre 54 [...] étaient les pionniers d'un peuple*" (BELKHIR et al., 2004-2005, p. 22). Men freedom fighters are even emphasised in the more recent textbooks of French as "*héros*" (AYAD et al., 2014-2015, p. 146), "*patriotes*" (AYAD et al., 2014-2015, p. 148) and "*courageux et téméraire*" (AYAD et al., 2014-2015, p. 152), illustrating Algeria's pride in its masculine leaders. Examples from Mammeri's and M'Hamsadji's novels resonate with their cinematic works, *L'Opium et le bâton* (1969) and *Les Hors-la-loi* (1969), also known as cinema Moudjahid²⁰ or freedom-fighter cinema, in mythologizing Algerian male freedom fighters who are depicted as fearless figures willing to sacrifice their flesh and blood for the revolution (SHARPE, 2014). The textbooks emphasise virtues of sacrifice, dedication, and anti-colonial resistance.

4 Final Considerations

Masculine identity (re-)construction in postcolonial textbooks of French in Algeria reveals an attempt to delink from the French coloniality of knowledge. The textbooks of the post-independence period and of the recent decades attempt to decolonize French ways of seeing by teaching the country's (pre-)colonial history as a long record of heroic masculinity and leadership. The textbooks refer to the resistant, brave, and active Algerian masculinity of the past to correct images of emasculated native men as conveyed in Orientalist literature and art, as discussed earlier in this article. By challenging and disrupting the narrative of masculinity that has been imposed by colonial powers, and by incorporating the perspectives and experiences of ancestry into the curriculum, textbooks seek to create a more inclusive and equitable educational

20 Refers to cinematic production focusing on the Algerian War of Independence and the role of freedom fighters during the revolution. Algerian cinema was born out of war and served it (SALMANE 1976). These films often featured male freedom fighters as the main characters and depicted their struggles and sacrifices during the struggle for independence. Cinema Moudjahid was active until the late 1970s, and its films played a significant role in shaping the discourse of post-independence discourse in Algeria.

system based on authenticity. Ultimately, masculine identity reconstruction in French postcolonial textbooks represents an important step towards creating an authentic identity, one that reflects the diverse experiences and histories of indigeneity. The process of reconstructing masculine identity in postcolonial Algeria, as depicted in French language textbooks, has been highlighted in a hyper-assertion of masculinity in the public space. This has led to a systematic suppression of women from this space, as the revised conception of masculinity is tied to the idea of men as the protectors of the nation. This article concludes that a more thorough assessment of these textbooks is needed in terms of a decolonial approach to fully delink from the coloniality of knowledge. This suggests that a decolonial approach would involve a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of masculinity and gender roles that does not rely on the reiteration of colonial gender hierarchies. This would allow for a more equitable and inclusive gender identity, in which both men and women are able to participate fully in the public space and contribute to the nation.

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